



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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No New War in the Middle East

BILL BRANSON

From the National Office

After Vietnam Veterans Against the War's (VVAW) 47 years, we are again witnessing the US at war in Iraq and Syria. Our country seems to be on the warpath, doomed to make the same mistakes yet again, not having learned the real lessons from our war.

Instead of learning from the Vietnam War, our leaders have once again attempted to whitewash the terrible truths with the Department of Defense's Vietnam War Commemoration (www.vietnamwar50th.com), and documentaries like *Last Days in Vietnam*. Under the guise of celebrating the service and the contribution of the troops, the heroism, and the spreading of "democracy," the government sweeps under the rug the after effects of our warfare, like the deaths caused by Agent Orange, the lack of benefits for veterans "dishonorably" discharged, the results of bombing a country into the Stone Age, and the political destabilization of an entire region.

How else would we find ourselves illegally bombing Iraq

and Syria in 2014? Yes, the genocide ISIS has been carrying out is wrong and yes, the international community should address it. But the US led response of bombing ISIS targets in Iraq and Syria is the same knee-jerk reaction that produced the current chaos in the Mideast, in the first place. When has bombing ever solved anything? It has repeatedly been the gateway to a much deeper and bloodier conflict.

First, we are illegally bombing Iraq, and now Syria. President Obama did not bother with Congressional approval or United Nations sanctioning before bombing ISIS. To say that this is within the President's power or that it falls under the laws Congress passed in 2002 to attack Iraq is a gross exaggeration and misinterpretation of US presidential powers. President Obama, now the fourth president in a row to be engaged in war with Iraq, seems doomed to follow Lyndon Johnson's legacy after Vietnam. Obama, like Johnson, began his presidency with a much-needed focus on domestic reform. Johnson launched "The Great Society," which included

the Civil Rights Act, the Older Americans Act, and the creation of Medicare. But he ended up remembered most notably for taking the US to war with Vietnam.

President Obama took office with promises of closing Guantanamo, immigration reform, and healthcare reform. His leadership led to the greatest social reform since Johnson through the creation of the Affordable Care Act ("Obamacare"). But he has fallen short on many of his other promises and seems to be leading us back to an unnecessary and illegal war. Will his legacy be another war in the Middle East?

VVAW calls on President Obama and Secretary Kerry to end the illegal bombings in Iraq and Syria. Trying to bomb ISIS and Al Nusra out of existence will not work. We are killing innocent men, women, and children in the process. We are galvanizing the very people we want to "protect" by bombing cities where there are not clear enemy targets, including urban and rural targets with civilians and terrorists living side by side.

The US doesn't seem to have

learned this yet, but the Middle East is a geographic region where western powers have imposed artificial borders. It is not homogenous like Germany or Japan was after World War II. We cannot use bombs and soldiers to install democracy (a truly ironic statement if there ever was one) in areas with such diverse and mixed religious and ethnic cultures.

There ARE other ways to have an impact, and a positive one at that. The US has other strengths beside weaponry and bombs. If we truly want to eliminate terrorists like ISIS and Al Nusra, we have to be part of an international effort to provide support and resources, not bombs and casualties. We can't continue to be the source of destabilization and ultimately radicalizing groups in the Middle East and expect to end terrorism and walk away with our hands clean, with a victory in our pocket.

One of the primary roots of the ISIS easy victories has been the failure of the Iraq government to share power with the Sunnis. Congress and the White House

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It Really Is Life Or Death

MAGGIE MARTIN

This year Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) celebrates a decade of struggle. Unfortunately, I am reflecting on this milestone through the fog of intense grief. On September 18th, 2014 we lost our brother Jacob George to suicide. Jacob spent the years after returning from Afghanistan speaking out against war and

militarism, standing up for justice and self determination for the people of Afghanistan and speaking to the need for veterans to heal as part of a community. He carried the load of PTSD, moral injury, and the sickness in the society he came home to as he rode his bike for thousands of miles across the US, singing



IVAW At Climate March in New York City, September 21, 2014.

songs and telling stories as an act of resistance and of hope.

IVAW was born of that same need to resist, that same instinct to believe another world is possible. Trying to get there is not easy. We've had 10 years of extraordinary ups and downs,

with beautiful transformation and painful ruptures. Moments where we felt powerful and unified peppered in between long periods of struggle, hard work, infighting and isolation. For every answer we find we seem to uncover infinite

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From the National Office

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must make this sharing happen, even though it means admitting the failure of our "nation building" and twisting the Iraq government's arm. How about we stop arming the so-called "friendly" rebels in Syria and work for a regional solution to the civil war? These alternatives will require hard work, and perhaps a long-term plan, but bombing and eventual boots ON the ground will only lead to further chaos.

And while the US is almost solely focused on the Middle East, what about addressing our own problems for once? We have such institutionalized racism that African American teenagers being murdered are all too common – Oscar Grant, Trayvon Martin, and Michael Brown to name a few. Neighborhoods, like Ferguson, that are overwhelmingly composed of people of color are governed by nearly all-white police forces. Since post 9/11, these police departments have been armed by federal government grants providing military-grade

vehicles, weapons and body armor. And all-too-often the police don't have the proper training for the appropriate uses of such equipment and tactics. This has to change.

As an organization that struggles for veteran's rights and benefits, we must also address the April VA scandal. The secret patient lists at the Phoenix VA contributed to the deaths of more than forty veterans and prevented 1,700 veterans from seeing a primary care provider at the Phoenix VA. This is horrendously tragic for veterans to have to wait so long to just get through the door to see a primary care doctor. But it is also not new. The VA is the largest health care system in the United States and the demand is growing. Vietnam-era veterans are now beginning to seek out care from the VA for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), conditions related to Agent Orange exposure and much more. At the same time, we've created a new generation of veterans that desper-

ately need access to health care at the VA. This means 700,000 new patients added to the system in a few years.

There are those in Congress who succeeded in their call for Veterans Affairs Secretary Shinseki to resign, and are also calling for VA care to become privatized. But they are simply using the Phoenix VA scandal as a lightning rod for their own agenda. These are the same elected officials who could care less that veterans with less-than-honorable discharges have no access to VA services. The US Senate voted down both Senator Gillibrand's Military Justice Improvement Act and Senator Sanders' Veterans Omnibus Bill last spring.

These are the same officials who fought against expanded Medicaid, which would have provided health care to 250,000 veterans in the states that chose not to expand the program because they weren't required to. Our country has an access to care problem, whether or not you are a veteran.

Former Secretary Shinseki had spearheaded the effort to de-

crease the backlog in processing veteran disability claims, which had gotten so much better in the last year. It is a shame that Shinseki, not those who kept his hands tied, has been forced into being the fall guy for the latest scandal. Now is not the time for politicians to be reactionary or to use this tragedy to further their own agenda. Instead, it's the time for us to fight for a stronger VA system that can meet the needs of ALL veterans.

There is much work to be done. Join VVAW in our calls to:

- Stop the bombings in Iraq and Syria;
- Stop militarizing our police departments;
- And start appropriately funding and prioritizing the restructuring of the VA system from the bottom up.

We hope you enjoy this issue of The Veteran!



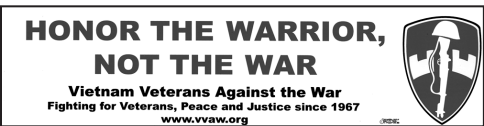
BILL BRANSON IS A VVAW BOARD MEMBER.

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A Visit to the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University

MEG MINER

In the Spring 2014 issue of *The Veteran*, Jen Tayabji summarized a trip made by VVAW Board members and staff to the Wisconsin Historical Society's (WHS) archives in Madison. WHS serves as the official archives for historical records of VVAW's National Office, and they will accept donations from VVAW chapters and individual members that relate to their VVAW organizational activities.

Staff have been collecting and donating the organization's records to WHS since the late 1970s. This work includes sending official publications and records of VVAW events and meetings to WHS. For the long term, the VVAW Archive Project has a wider goal. In addition to saving the organization's records, we are interested in identifying ways VVAW members can save their personal photos, letters, journals, or artifacts from events and actions that took place prior to membership. Service-related material from members will not

be able to be part of VVAW's collections at WHS. The staff there suggested that we contact our local or state historical archives to see what items they may be interested in preserving. While that is an option for individuals, there is another archive that is devoted to telling the story of every perspective involved in the Vietnam War, The Vietnam Center and Archives (VNCA) at Texas Tech University in Lubbock.

During a recent trip to northern Texas, Assistant Archivist Amy Mondt provided me with a tour of The Vietnam Center and discussed the ways in which VVAW might be able to create an online resource for both direct VVAW activities and with images from members' personal collections. With the latter, we also discussed the ways that VNCA might provide a safe and accessible home for the original artifacts so that they will be available for future use.

The Vietnam Center's archives stand ready and willing



to take personal memorabilia. VCNA was established 25 years ago and shares a large facility with archival collections related to local and university history. While their facility is large, their capacity for 3-dimensional artifacts is limited. Even so, this archive is able to accept most everything else: papers, books, films, audio, moving images; including non-VVAW material from any point of view related to the war.

The mission of the Vietnam Center at Texas Tech University (TTU) is to support and encourage research and education regarding all aspects of the American Vietnam experience. The aim is to promote a greater understanding of this experience as well as the peoples and cultures of Southeast Asia. The Vietnam Center seeks to provide a forum for all points of view and for all topics relating to Indochina, particularly, but not limited to, the American military involvement there. It is as important to us to preserve the records of US veterans, who served in Southeast Asia as well as civilians active on the homefront including the anti-war movement. In addition to its mission of collecting these

materials, the Vietnam Archive currently administers two projects, the Oral History Project and the Virtual Vietnam Archive. (www.vietnam.ttu.edu/general/)

As we near the 50th anniversary of VVAW, the Archive Project is interested in creating an online collection that hosts some digitized content of both the organization's events and members' experiences. We feel that no one is in a better position to provide evidence of and context for our experiences with the future than we are. The question remains, what can we do with the original records when the digital collection is built? The Vietnam Center and Archives at Texas Tech will accept material not suited for the focus that WHS has with our organization's artifacts. By working closely with our members, WHS and TTU, we hope to create a freely accessible, well-organized record of our experiences in Vietnam and afterwards. Stay tuned for details on how you can contribute to this legacy!



MEG MINER IS A GULF-ERA
VETERAN, MEMBER OF VVAW AND
VFP, AND AN ARCHIVIST.



Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Many of us have called for the end of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the bringing home of the troops. For expressing these ideas we get called isolationists. Same same if you opposed taking military action against ISIS. Presumably isolationism is a bad word. Isolationism is where the United States was supposed to be before World War II showed us the right direction, the right direction being heavily involved militarily just about everywhere.

It's not exactly as if the US was totally isolationist before World War II. From the shores of Tripoli to the invasion of the Philippines to military actions in Central America and World War I, the US actively intervened on behalf of American capitalism long before World War II. The period of what's called isolationism really only refers to the years just before World War II. Then, after the carnage of the Great War, plenty of Americans wanted no more. Then the Depression hit, and people were more concerned about the domestic front. FDR was wondering how he could mobilize a war effort. Pearl Harbor solved that problem. FDR got his mobilization. We had WWII. After that there was no more isolationism. In the seven decades since, we've fought half a dozen wars, had dozens of smaller actions and sponsored others in their wars while we've shown the flag all over the globe. While doing these things we have brought into existence a military armed with the most effective and technologically advanced equipment with more firepower than anybody ever had.

So how's all this military activity going for you hawks out there? In the smaller actions the US has done pretty well. After all, we defeated Grenada. Not fair, I suppose. We did bring under control some bigger countries - like Panama. Haiti. Dominican Republic. Small flag showing actions aren't always perfect. We had the barracks blown in Beirut, and we lost hundreds of Marines. Usually, however, overwhelming firepower in small places works for a short time where we want to impose our will.

How about wars? Wars and football share several metaphors. You throw a bomb or blitz and so forth. In football you win, lose or tie. So, how's the US military doing? We started out with an

eight game winning streak. The Revolutionary War. The War of 1812. The Mexican War. The Civil War. The Indian Wars. The Spanish American War. The Great War. World War II. Then came Korea - a tie. Vietnam - a loss. The Gulf war - a win. Results in Iraq and Afghanistan may take years to determine, but that looks like a loss and a tie or likely two losses. So after that eight game winning streak our team has one win, three losses and a tie. Doesn't take an anti-war person to figure this out.

So before World War II you had a couple of decades of isolationism which was not consistent with our history. Today isolationism is only a word used by hawks when they want to go to war. After World War II we've had seven decades of excessive military intervention. These interventions have not been generally successful and have caused war weariness on the homefront. Next should be some kind of synthesis between all the military actions and the war weariness. Probably this means a withdrawal of sorts from Middle East activities and more use of the Navy, especially in the Pacific around the South China Sea. I think Obama wants to move this way although events in the Middle East keep pulling him back. And then John McCain and his three friends amp up the call for more war against ISIS or the terror group du jour. What Obama wants is to be more involved with that Pacific strategy. There we can check some of China's economic expansion. In that area you have Asian states (including Vietnam) which are modernizing and want a US presence. The region also has numerous deposits of oil and natural gas, and most importantly, much of the world's trade is moving through these seas which connect the Indian Ocean and the Pacific.

When the US begins to focus on these areas, with the possible exception of the Korean peninsula most activity will be air and sea. If things develop that way anti-war and anti-imperialist forces in the homeland may have to play different roles and have different arguments. Before we get there, however, it's hard getting out of the Middle East. One step out and you get sucked back in like a quagmire. If it's not the Taliban, it's Al Qaeda in Yemen. If it's not Al Qaeda in

Yemen it's the Islamic State.

The Bush administration made several bogus assumptions when it decided to wage war on Iraq. Among those assumptions was that this was a viable nation as opposed to a collection of diverse people living within an area that was drawn on a map by foreigners. The state of Iraq includes Shiites, Sunnis, Kurds, Turkmen, Assyrians and subgroups of these. The lines that define Iraqi borders were drawn on the map at the end of World War I. This was called the Sykes(a Brit)-Picot(a Frenchman) Agreement. With all the superior colonial attitude they could muster, the Europeans neatly divided the areas of influence and created new states from this land which had been part of the now defeated Ottoman Empire. Borders were neatly drawn and artificial states were created just like Europe and Europe's colonies. They would be easy to administer, right? They even created monarchies. The problem is that people in the area didn't think with Western minds. Their power structure started with families which made up clans which made up tribes. That is where loyalty is, not determined

by lines on a map.

The artificial boundaries held as long as the British and the French were the strong arms in the area. They held while Western powers, including the US, held up sultans and dictators like Saddam. Some of those lines on the map define countries which are stable for periods of time and have loyal people trying to make their states work. However, in other places it doesn't work. Loyalties are elsewhere. And thus entities like ISIS come into being. The Islamic State is vicious and oppressive, but it has unfortunately struck a chord with some in the Arab world. It doesn't look to be going away easily as long as some of the tribes and clans are willing to fight for it. Now the US has to figure out how to escape this quagmire caused by ISIS and move into 21st century imperialism. We, and more so the British and the French, are responsible for this bloodbath. Yet more intervention is not an option. It only gets you more stuck.



BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN, AUTHOR AND VVAW MEMBER IN THE CHICAGO CHAPTER.



McFarland

"[Ehrhart is] one of the great poets and writers of nonfiction produced by the Vietnam War" — *The Nation*

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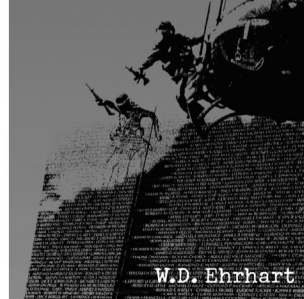
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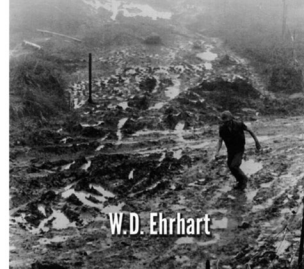
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Notes From the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

I was sitting around the other day, fully aware that the deadline for the next *Veteran* was fast approaching, and experiencing my usual trauma associated with that realization. I got nothing to say, I'm thinking. So I had a couple of beers and thought - wait a minute, I just retired after 35 years as a probation officer. I can tell some really funny stories about my child molesters and drunks and drug dealers. That'll bring the house down. Better yet, I can just e-mail Jeff a couple dozen pictures of my grandkids. That'll fill up two or three pages. Needless to say, neither of those ideas sounded quite that clever the next morning. I decided I needed a Plan C.

So guess who came to my rescue? The Veterans of Foreign Wars! I got my monthly magazine, which contained an article entitled "Teaching The Vietnam War." Some readers may recall that I have been doing that at the local high school since the late 1990's. I admit to some trepidation here, however. What if I read the article and discover a couple of dozen things I've been doing wrong? Or what if it's written by some Curtis LeMay lookalike or one of Westmoreland's grandkids trying to salvage his reputation? As it turned out, the article was written by someone a lot more knowledgeable than I, and was not, well, what I expected out of the VFW. With one or two exceptions, I thought that it was pretty well written.

Most of the courses to which the article refers are college ones, and most are not taught by Vietnam veterans. But to the credit of the instructors, they go out of their way to bring into their classrooms as many Nam vets as they can find. The obvious advantage of this is that the students hear from

everyone who changed flat tires in a base camp to those who - what's the word? - got shot at. Readers will understand that, MOS's not withstanding, we usually didn't have a hell of a lot of choice where we wound up. And even the guys pounding a typewriter at Cam Ranh have their story to tell.

Of course, those guys changing flats and pounding typewriters in base camps, God love them all, have one slight disadvantage. Every single Vietnamese they met loved them. "GI number 1, VC number 10," they used to say. "They," by the way, were the bartenders, laundry women, drug dealers and prostitutes who constitute about 90% of a base camp indigenous population. Did it ever occur to these guys that they were paying the Vietnamese to be nice to them? They weren't all that happy to see us out in the field.

Further to the credit of the instructors, they insist that they're not on a mission either to defend or to criticize the war. Quite the contrary. As one professor explained, "I don't teach them what I think was right or wrong about the war. I want our students to pound this stuff out and make their own decisions about the war." Having said that, asking a Vietnam veteran to avoid the judgment issue entirely may be asking too much.

Most of the time it's not, though. I learned a long time ago that I'm a lousy lecturer, so I just start out with a brief history of what I did in the Army, then turn it over to the students for questions. The teacher has been asked to make certain that they have some, and they seldom disappoint me. And most of their questions are not all that ideological. "Did it ever rain while you were there?" "Did you eat a lot at McDonald's?" "Did your iPhone work in the

jungle?" OK, that's not true. The students ask some very good questions. When the question is something like "How big were the monkeys?", it would be difficult, and probably unethical, to turn the answer into a ten-minute monologue on the virtues of Ho Chi Minh. Inevitably, though, I do get "Do you think the war was just?" Something there about the rubber meeting the road.

Of course, my first inclination is to bring out a VVAW banner and start with "1,2,3,4, we don't want..." You remember how that goes. But I don't do that. I start by saying, quite honestly, that while I am not a supporter of that war, I'm able to take that position with the benefit of fifty years of hindsight. I tell them that males in my generation grew up on Randolph Scott and Audie Murphy movies (say who?), and for most of us it was unthinkable that America would invade a foreign country against the wishes of the vast majority of its citizens. And our government certainly wouldn't lie to us. Seriously, that was one of the reasons why I volunteered for Vietnam. I finish up with reminding them that, even though good old Tail Gunner Joe McCarthy was long gone, the 60's were still part of the Cold War. Fifty years ago, Americans took that seriously, along with the old domino theory argument about the dangers of international Communism and the need to "stop them somewhere."

I then trot out the usual litany of lies, beginning with our support of French colonialism between the end of WW II and Dien Bien Phu; our refusal to allow free country-wide elections in 1956 as called for in the 1954 peace agreement; the Gulf of Tonkin lie - completely unacknowledged by the VFW as recently as last month, by the way; and on down the line of ruthless South Vietnamese dictators we supported until the war's end in 1975. And in the interest of what we proudly trumpet as our commitment to self determination, I mention Eisenhower's statement, in his memoirs, that if free elections had been held in 1956, Ho would have garnered something like 80% of the vote nationwide.

What else strikes me about this VFW article? An instructor at the US Naval War College notes that his students spend a lot of time talking about "media biases, specifically the press always and

unfairly bashing US troops" during the war. To tell you the truth, I don't remember that. But you know the old saying: if you can remember the 60's you weren't there. I probably shouldn't go down that road. But there was certainly a lot of troop bashing going on in this country back then. I have spoken with dozens of veterans who recount being cursed and spat upon when they appeared in uniform, and I'm certain that they're telling the truth. The reason I'm so certain is that there has never been a shortage of stupid people in the world. As old Bobby Zimmerman said, we were just pawns in their game.

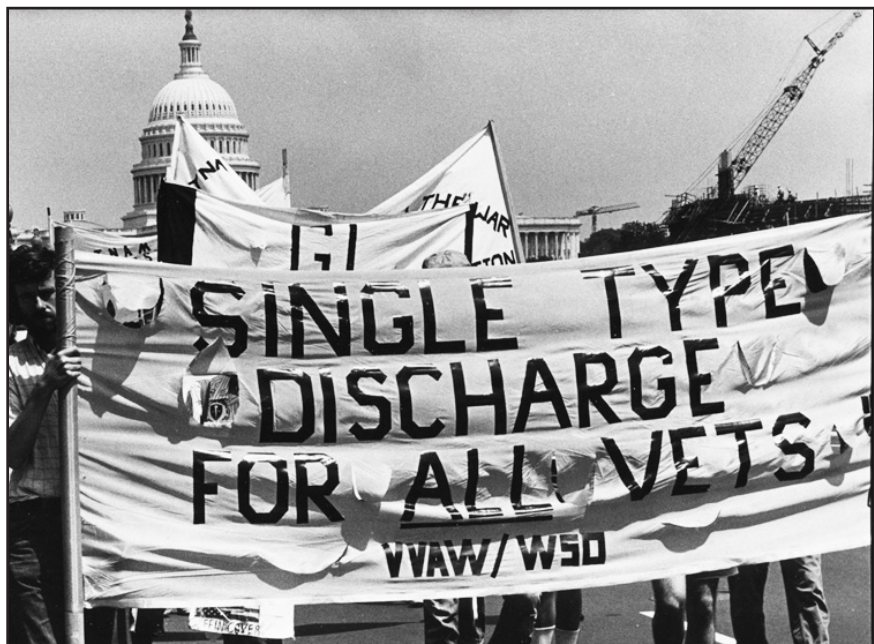
One instructor said something which didn't surprise me, although I guess I just hadn't thought of it before. "In the 70's, no one wanted to admit he was a Vietnam veteran. Today you have people who fake being one." Oh yes, and it is certainly disgraceful to do that. Contrary to the feelings of the VFW and the American Legion, however, I agree with the criminal justice system that lying about one's service record is only actionable (criminal) if one profits significantly from that lie. You can tell me about your bogus Silver Star until the water buffalo come home. I don't have to believe you, and the longer you go on about it the more obvious that lie will become.

You know what really frosted me in this article? I quote: "One time, an anti-war protester who had gone to prison to avoid going to Vietnam came in and tried to share his views. He was not at all popular with the students, (the instructor) said, laughing." Oh yeah, that was a real knee slapper. While I'm preaching to the choir on this subject, one good thing came out of my having read this part. I guarantee that the next time I walk into a classroom to talk Vietnam, I will tell them precisely why those Americans who went to Canada, based upon their sincere opposition to the Vietnam War, should be regarded as heroes. If they don't agree, it won't be because I haven't told them.

Oh, and 1,2,3,4...we don't want your f'in war! (I had to throw that in.)



PAUL WISOVATY IS A MEMBER OF VVAW. HE LIVES IN TUSCOLA, ILLINOIS. HE WAS IN VIETNAM WITH THE US ARMY 9TH DIVISION IN 1968.



VVAW in Washington, DC, 1974.

The Arrogance—and Ignorance—of Power

W. D. EHRHART

As I watch events unfolding in Iraq over the last weeks, I find myself wondering if Iraq War veterans are feeling the way I felt in March and April of 1975 when the fiction that was South Vietnam collapsed like a house of cards. Eight years earlier, I had arrived in Vietnam as an 18-year-old Marine, convinced of the rightness of our cause, and eager to save the Vietnamese from the scourge of communism. I left Vietnam thirteen months later, wounded in body and spirit, struggling to process the reality that our Saigon allies were corrupt and incompetent, their soldiers largely unwilling or unable to fight, while my Viet Cong enemies were dedicated and relentless.

When, seven years after my return, the entire edifice crumbled in a matter of weeks, even after more than twenty years of US support and a decade of massive US military effort, I was neither surprised nor angry nor jubilant. I just felt empty. Utterly empty. Fifty-eight thousand dead Americans, some of them my friends. Millions of Vietnamese and Laotians and Cambodians.

And for what?

Years later, Dean Rusk blamed our defeat on the failure of the American people to have the will to soldier on to victory. Peter Braestrep blamed it on the liberal media who, he argued in his book "The Big Story," made the US victory at Tet 1968 look like a US defeat. The redoubtable Col. Harry Summers, Jr. (Ret.) argued that we never lost a single battle. Others blamed the anti-war movement or the meddling politicians who made the military "fight with one hand tied behind its back."

It never seems to have occurred to any of these very bright and powerful people that Vietnam was not and never had been ours to win or lose. It never occurred to them that Vietnamese dedication, motivation, determination, and an ancient proclivity to resist the presence of armed foreigners in their midst—might have had something to do with the US defeat. One might reasonably argue not something, but everything.

Now, once again, we are witnessing the incompetence, corruption, and inability of a

government we created and have supported for over a decade. And once again, according to a June 14, 2014, op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* written by a prominent counterinsurgency expert, "by declining to provide a long-term security assistance force to an Iraq not yet able to handle the fight itself, we pulled defeat from the jaws of victory." He goes on to argue, "We are reaping the instability and increased threat to US interests that we [emphasis in the original] have sown through the failure of our endgame in Iraq . . . There is a clear lesson here for those contemplating a complete withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan."

It does not seem to occur to him or those who agree with him, as it did not occur to the politicians and generals who created and persisted in the disaster that was the Vietnam War, that Iraq was never ours to win or lose. Just as we could not train our Saigon allies to become self-sufficient in spite of massive US aid and intervention, now we seem to have failed to create a viable and self-sufficient government in Baghdad, and it's all our fault because we pulled out too soon instead of having the moxie to stay the course. It has nothing to do, according to this point of view, with the motivation,

composition, determination (or lack of determination) of our allies and their opponents; it is all about us, US.

The Iraq War is not, of course, the Vietnam War. The differences are myriad. But there are two similarities, and these two trump all the differences: 1) in each case, US policymakers tasked the military with achieving goals that were and are unattainable by force of arms; and 2) when you send scared and heavily armed kids into a hostile environment they have no hope of understanding or navigating, nothing good will result. Oh, yes, there is one more similarity, and that is the arrogance of bright and powerful people who persist in imagining that American military might can accomplish whatever they desire, and in blaming their failures on anything and anyone but their own ignorance.



W. D. EHRHART HOLDS A PH.D. FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF WALES AT SWANSEA, AND TEACHES AT THE HAVERFORD SCHOOL IN SUBURBAN PHILADELPHIA. HE IS THE SUBJECT OF THE LAST TIME I DREAMED ABOUT THE WAR: THE LIFE AND WRITING OF W. D. EHRHART (McFARLAND 2014).

Credo of a Sore Loser

(a cut & paste found poem)

Are you fucking kidding me?
Because we spurned the sacrifices
of our own soldiers, there is a real
chance that Baghdad will fall.
The American government made
gross errors, preventable errors like
not training and equipping
the Syrian freedom fighters,
giving al-Qaeda a new lease on life,
the renewed Sunni insurgency,
abandoning our allies in 1975,
Pakistan, Taliban, Afghanistan,
a threat greater than the fragile Iraqi
government can handle on its own,
but we would not pay the much
smaller price to secure the peace.
Although we accomplished little
on the ground, we managed
to succeed in the nick of time
until our negligence and dereliction
of duty pulled defeat from the jaws
of victory, an expedient
but short-sighted decision
reaping the instability and renewed
threat that we have sown, what
my friends fought and died for.
We fumbled the ball at the goal line.
Entirely predictable.

—W. D. Ehrhart



Anti-Nixon demo, Chicago, 1974.

The Last Time I Dreamed About the War: Essays on the Life and Writing of W.D. Ehrhart

JOE AND JACK MILLER (REVIEWERS)

*The Last Time I Dreamed About
the War: Essays on the Life
and Writing of W.D. Ehrhart*
Edited by Jean-Jacques Malo
(McFarland Publishing, 2014)

JACK: Let's get to the heart of any review: why read this book?

JOE: The importance of this collection of essays by an international group of scholars and poets (including Vietnam veterans and one Iraq war veteran) lies in the fact that readers will finally be introduced to (or reminded of) the full range of W. D. Ehrhart's writings. Those who only know him through his poetry are treated to in-depth and personal discussions of his memoirs and essays, his speeches and lectures, and his editorial writings. Those who only know him as the author of *Vietnam-Perkasie* (1983) or *Passing Time* (1989) are introduced to the poet whom many consider "troublesome," to use a term found in the essay by Dale Ritterbusch (p. 99), another Vietnam veteran poet.

JACK: That was certainly my experience. To me, Ehrhart was primarily a poet, and if I even knew he wrote essays and memoirs, I certainly didn't grasp just how essential they are to his body of work, so learning about them was a broadening experience for me, and a fairly painless one. I admit I came at this collection with some apprehension—I don't read much in the way of essays, and

fled academia as soon as I could. I was surprised at how readable the pieces were; some of the more "scholarly" works made me feel like I was grading papers, but many of these pieces are honest and personal, more conversational in tone.

Some pieces hit hard, in the best way. I was floored by Yoko Shirai's moving comparison of Ehrhart's poetry with the visual art of Chimei Harada, which underscores the universal nature of both the human brutality of war and the equally human desire to end it. For me, probably the most valuable piece in this collection was editor Jean-Jacques Malo's interview with Ehrhart—there aren't many out there, and as plain-spoken as his poetry is, I found that Ehrhart's forthright responses to Malo's questions lent me some valuable perspective on his work. I also loved how many of the essays focused on Ehrhart's role not just as a witness to history, but also as someone committed to the next step: education.

JOE: After reading Bill's poetry for many years, I came across the first two volumes of his memoir in the late 1980s, just before I was to begin teaching a course on the Vietnam War at the University of Illinois. As mentioned by many of the authors in this collection, I realized that these works were the perfect way to introduce young college students of that day to the realities of the Vietnam War. Vietnam veteran Edward Palm

writes that "Ehrhart is first and foremost committed to truth-telling—telling it like it was." (p. 168). Beyond that, it was important for students (and others) to hear Bill's voice directly. This is also made clear by a number of the authors in this volume. That meant bringing him into class, especially after the students had read his work. For, in his poet's voice or in his essayist's voice, Bill is a teacher.

JACK: That's one thing that became very clear to me after reading this book: he's not primarily a poet, because the poetry is a means to an end. He is, above all else, a teacher; I don't think the man knows how not to be one. As he says himself, he "knows things worth knowing" and he has a fierce need to pass them on. Connecting the dots, I could say that he wrote poetry (and essays, and memoirs) about the horrors and consequences of war so I would never have to, and I'm grateful for that.

Overall, I gained something important from this book. I feel a new intimacy with poems I've known for decades; I read "Mostly Nothing Happens" aloud to a group of friends recently and there was an immediacy I'd never appreciated before. And the book has made me crave more Ehrhart—I don't usually read essays and memoirs, yet now I want to read his non-poetry work, too. Here's hoping this collection brings more attention to an author

and teacher who richly deserves it.

JOE: That is a very important thing to hear from a younger writer like yourself, whether veteran or non-veteran, and I want to tie things together by highlighting something pointed out by Jan Barry, a founding member of VVAW. In his essay he informs us that the Warrior Writers project for veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has used many of Ehrhart's poems and essays "to help spur participants to tackle war demons." (p.165)

So, from Bill's Vietnam work, through his studies of Korean war writers, to veterans of our most recent wars, it is clear from this volume that writer/teacher/poet W. D. Ehrhart will continue to speak to and influence readers across generations and territories for some time to come.



JOE HAS BEEN READING EHRHART'S
POETRY AND OTHER WRITINGS SINCE
THE PUBLICATION OF WINNING
HEARTS AND MINDS IN 1972.
HE FIRST MET BILL IN 1988. JOE
INTRODUCED HIS SON JACK TO BILL'S
POETRY IN THE LATE 1980S. JACK
IS ALSO A PUBLISHED POET AND HAS
ALWAYS BEEN INTERESTED IN BILL'S
POETRY. WE WROTE THIS REVIEW
AS A "CONVERSATION" BETWEEN
FATHER AND SON ABOUT THE RANGE
OF ESSAYS IN THIS VOLUME AND WHAT
THEY SHOW ABOUT BILL EHRHART,
POET, ESSAYIST, EDUCATOR AND
WITNESS.



Chicago, October 25, 1971.

On IVAW's 10th Anniversary

VVAW

Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) congratulates our younger brothers and sisters in IVAW on your 10-year anniversary. VVAW has dedicated its work over the past 47 years to preventing more wars like Vietnam. We have worked for peace, justice and the rights of all veterans.

After the 9/11 attacks, VVAW stood up against the wars with Afghanistan and Iraq. We held local demonstrations and took part in national days of action against these unjust wars in the Middle East. We hoped that there would not be a new generation of veterans, knowing all too well the burdens and struggles which the victims would bear. We would not have wished that on anyone, let alone a whole generation. As the

US seemed determined to repeat history, we welcomed the veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan and we were honored when you looked to us for a name, guidance, and ideas.

Since IVAW's formation, our organizations have worked side by side. Individually and organizationally, VVAW has been with you since the beginning. IVAW joined us in speaking to high school students about our experiences. Together we challenged the recruiters targeting innocent students. Like us, you have found ways to channel your experiences into art that transcends the accepted norms about war, racism and sexism. As we commemorated our 40th anniversary in Chicago in 2007, we did so with IVAW members

present.

One of our proudest moments was supporting IVAW's Winter Solider: Iraq and Afghanistan event in Washington, D.C., 37 years after our own Winter Soldier Investigation. VVAW was able to support the event financially and logistically. We saw the torch passed to the newest generation of veterans speaking truth to power. You inspired us with your determination, dedication and tenacity.

The work for VVAW and IVAW goes well beyond the end of our wars. Early on, VVAW served as a family for Vietnam-era veterans as we struggled with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, Agent Orange, and everything else that life threw our way. In

the last ten years, the camaraderie has developed into a sense of family between IVAW and VVAW. We are all comrades in misfortune, dealing with PTSD, Traumatic Brain Injuries, Military Sexual Trauma, and more. As we lose brothers and sisters to the aftereffects of our wars, we join together to pay witness to their lives, to mourn, and to move on.

Our common experiences bring us together. Our commitment to peace, justice and the rights of all veterans carry us forward. As VVAW approaches its 50th anniversary, we truly hope that IVAW's 50th consists of a celebration of peace, not a melancholy welcoming of the next generation of veterans.



It Really Is Life Or Death

continued from page 1

questions. So what does it all mean?

Making meaning is part of our journey, both by coming to terms with our experiences, and finding ways that they may fuel change. Popular education is about sharing ourselves and the understandings gained from experience. These are some of the key reflections from my time with IVAW and from lessons passed down by those who built this organization before I came.

This work is full of contradictions and nuance. Over simplification and unwillingness to yield can stop the work, just as brushing off concerns or rushing through decisions can do the same or cause the team to quickly unravel. We've had disagreements about either/or when the answer was both. Do we work to stop the wars or to take care of ourselves and other veterans? Are we going to have national initiatives or do the chapters lead the work? Do we need to focus on building community or do we challenge the power structure? Looking for intersections in our perspectives

helps accomplish the work we are passionate about as part of a larger effort.

Working collectively, we have the answers to the issues we are facing. Any one person who says they know it all is full of shit. There is no charismatic leader in our organization, no one person we look to for ultimate authority and that's as it should be. We are many leaders with many different skill-sets, strengths, and weaknesses. We are at our best when we are working in concert with each other, when ideas are shared freely and openly and when the best ones rise to the top with support from the whole.

Change takes time. Early in our existence, IVAW members thought that if we simply told the truth about the wars the American people would demand their end. Then we would be on our way to winning care for veterans and reparations for the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. Many years of speaking out as the war machine continued to rage on lead us to look into strategic campaigns. Now we have a long-term vision for the

world we want to see and we ask ourselves with every decision if it is taking us closer to that vision.

We need to be able to fight both locally and nationally. The energy of campaigns challenging the power structure give our organizations the power to transform into movements that will win sweeping victories. Building momentum and strategic campaigns takes community, commitment, and leadership development. With members spread across the country, we do best when we are active members of our local communities standing with other like-minded organizations, building powerful ties, practicing our skills and meeting people who care about the work we are doing.

IVAW's active members are the lifeblood. We draw our power from the members and supporters engaged in the organization. If we stop writing, making art, gathering, taking action, teaching, learning, and sharing those results with the world, we will cease to exist. However, as long as we continue, we are a community. No matter what we face, no matter what our name is. There is nothing sacred about our non-

profit structure or even the name that we call ourselves. What is sacred is the bond of resisting and hoping together.

Take care of each other and ourselves. If someone told me today that they thought doing this work was easy, I wouldn't believe them. This work is not easy. It's gut wrenching and soul consuming. We're dealing with life and death situations where we feel next to powerless. The odds are against us in every visible way, yet somehow it is still worth it. Even still, it's worth it for so many because it feeds us, too. We are up against so much already, we need to be hands of support and words of encouragement to each other. That too, is a matter of life and death.



MAGGIE MARTIN IS A CO-DIRECTOR OF IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR. SHE'S BEEN A MEMBER WITH IVAW SINCE 2007. MAGGIE WAS IN THE ARMY FROM 2001-2006, SHE DEPLOYED THREE TIMES; TO KUWAIT IN 2002 AND IRAQ IN 2003, AND 2005. MAGGIE HAS A M.A. IN SOCIAL JUSTICE.

Alternatives To Incarceration for Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans

JIM MURPHY

The Tompkins County/Ithaca Veterans Alternatives To Incarceration (ATI) Project.

Approximately 1.6 million American troops have served in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) and/or in Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom). Noteworthy are national reports regarding the frequency of these returning veterans with mental illnesses and/or substance addictions. War-related illnesses may contribute to escalated suicide attempts, arrest, incarceration, divorce, domestic violence, homelessness and despair. Due to the anticipated increase of these veterans appearing in our criminal courts, we are proposing a process and a support program for these young veterans. We are closely

following the process of the Buffalo Veterans' Court/Treatment Program. Buffalo has created a model now used in many regions of the country.

A collaboration has been formed to implement an ATI program for Tompkins County, New York and the City Of Ithaca. The primary contributors are The Veterans Justice Outreach (VA) Coordinator, Kynna Murphy, Benjamin Evans at the Syracuse VA Medical Center, Outpatient Clinic of Tompkins/Cortland Counties, Deborah Dietrich of Opportunities, Alternatives, and Resources (OAR) of Tompkins County Inc. and James Murphy, old-time VVAW member and coordinator of the Veterans Fellowship Of Reconciliation (VFOR).

Our model for Tompkins County/City of Ithaca courts begins with the identification of the defendant as an OIF or OEF veteran. We would ask that this be one of the initial questions following arrest and the trigger for our program. Buffalo has a specific court and judge from this point on but we have a minimal number of possible veterans that would be eligible. We recommend that specific judges be selected for the first step following arrest. Ideally the judges would be war veterans or era veterans.

The element provided by the Veterans FOR/VVAW is that of mentoring ATI veterans when released from jail or as part of the alternative sentencing, be it community service, drug rehabilitation etc. As mentors we

will make sure the young veteran is fulfilling their agreement with the court system, making their VA counseling appointments, provide transportation, help research employment and/or training, college research etc. We will be in the role as older brother, not a counselor. The VA will provide the corresponding counselors that we will interface with.

If you wish to discuss or investigate replication of this program or discuss existing ATI programs, please contact me at ivetsfor@gmail.com



JIM MURPHY IS A LONGTIME MEMBER OF VVAW.

GREEN

For many years I wondered if I would ever like
The color green, or even olive drab.
For once upon a time
That's all I ever saw or wore.
I was issued a green uniform
With a nice green hat
And socks to match of course.
Later came the green helmet with camouflaged cover
That could be reversed, depending on what
Green things were around you.
Then came Vietnam and things only got worse.
The rice paddies were green
And so was the jungle.
The enemy wore green occasionally augmented with black.
At least they had a change of colors once in awhile.
The water was green.
And when the sweat poured through your uniform
The spots they made were green.
The tanks were green and even the packs.
Sometimes when I looked close at my skin
I noticed a slight pallor of, you guessed it, green.
Even the food started turning green after awhile.
With all of this green, my mind would wander.
After all, I was only a lean, green fighting machine
Called Gene, who once hated the color green.

—Eugene Lee Neese, Jr.
3d Marine, 2nd Bt. 12th Marines
Vietnam 1965-67



Michael Applegate at Memorial Day event May 26, 2014, Chicago.

Three Days in Ferguson: Observations from the Rust Belt

VINCENT EMANUELE

This article first appeared on Countercurrents.org

In late August, myself, along with several activists and community organizers, drove from northwest Indiana to Ferguson, Missouri. We, like so many others, felt an inherent urge to join the ongoing protests and lend our support to the local community. After internally processing over a week's worth of coverage, we could no longer bear viewing the events unfold from the comfort of our homes. After all, we live less than five hours from ground zero in what has become one of the most galvanizing events in recent memory.

Ferguson, like many deindustrialized midwestern cities, is littered with strip malls, big-box stores, Chinese buffets, sports bars, truck stops, fast-food restaurants and decaying infrastructure. Located just northwest of St. Louis, Ferguson is reminiscent of the many Rust-Belt towns adjacent to Chicago: Dolton, Calumet City, Whiting, East Chicago, Michigan City and Gary. The houses are falling apart; the lawns are unkempt and the bushes overgrown. Unlike suburban-white-America, most blacks living in the wasteland of Capitalism care less what type of lawnmower their neighbor owns, if they can afford one at all. After

all, who has time to bother with properly manicured lawns when teenagers are being executed in broad-daylight by racist police?

Of course, Ferguson doesn't have organic vitamin stores or "farm-to-fork" restaurants. Although, no less than four blocks from West Florissant Ave., I observed gentrification in the form of antique bicycle stores, micro-breweries and Euro-bistros. As whites stared through the brewery windows, occasionally glancing at the Cardinals baseball game on the tube, hundreds of protesters marched from West Florissant to North Florissant Ave., chanting "We Are, Mike Brown!" and "Hands Up, Don't Shoot!" I couldn't help but note that every-single-one of the brewery patrons were white, some smirked as we walked by, others angrily staring, and yet even more refused to acknowledge our very presence.

Upon arriving at the Ferguson Police Department late Wednesday evening, we were greeted by several dozen protesters who had set up an encampment across the street. With bullhorns blaring and protesters chanting, people began to share personal stories concerning militarization, police brutality, racism and poverty. One protester, an older black woman, took the bullhorn and gathered our group in a large circle. Hand-in-

hand, black and white, the local ministers led us in prayer.

Honestly, while many of us would rather get our teeth pulled, than pray, the sacred performance allowed an opportunity for total strangers to become immediately intimate. Holding hands is a powerful act, especially in a society as alienated and segregated as modern America. We expressed our love, fear, anger, resentment, solidarity and frustration. During the prayer, Mother Nature decided to cool us down with a nice shower. Some ran to their cars while many continued to pray. Others, including myself, joined a couple dozen protesters who continued to march back to West Florissant Ave. in what turned out to be a quick, yet wicked thunderstorm.

With rain pounding our heads, and lighting stretching from one end of the sky to the other, those marching maintained good morale and jovial spirits. When we arrived at West Florissant, we could see the crowd growing. Several of us stopped for a smoke break and drank some cold water. I have to admit, my initial reaction was that of astonishment, the police presence was unusually overwhelming, even for a militant protest. Cops, like the military, itch to use their weapons. And you could see it in their actions, tapping and twirling their batons,

cleaning their assault rifles and adjusting their body armor. Most of the police officers looked to be under 30 years old, the vast majority of whom were white, and scared, as expected.

Much of the local community participated in Wednesday night's events from the sidewalks and parking areas parallel to West Florissant. The marchers largely consisted of local ministers and those who traveled to the event from out of town. The local community reluctantly got involved in Wednesday night's actions, largely due to the state-sanctioned violence the police unleashed on protesters the week prior. Dozens of people were shot with rubber bullets, sprayed with tear gas, beaten and arrested. In short, the local community needed to regroup, recover and reflect.

For those who are wondering, local community members were absolutely happy that we came from out of state to show our support and solidarity. There is somewhat of a myth that, "Outside agitators are ruining the situation in Ferguson." Yes, there are minor problems, with various groups opportunistically seeking membership and/or to alter the path of the ongoing protests, but their influence is limited by the sheer resilience of the Ferguson community. The local protesters quickly challenged those who sought to co-opt events in Ferguson. And the oh-so-powerful unions were nowhere to be found. Politicians stayed away. Thank God.

I will say that the only real tension, outside of the obvious dynamic between the protesters and cops, concerned the ongoing debates between black nationalist groups, the New Black Panther Party, local ministers and community members. Conversations surrounding strategy, tactics and objectives raged through the night. It was quite exciting to witness Occupy-style debates taking place in Ferguson. The biggest difference between the movements, of course, is the fact that Ferguson is dominated by black citizens, whereas Occupy was largely dominated by middle/upper middle-class whites and those who



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Three Days in Ferguson

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already self-identify as "lefties."

After marching with a raucous crowd up and down West Florissant, I made my way to the media tents. Anderson Cooper, Van Jones and the usual suspects from CNN frantically paced the roped-off parking lot, tweeting and texting. Some protesters yelled profanities, others sought out selfies. From what I could tell, a good portion of the local community is quite distrustful of the mainstream media, and rightly so. The corporate media control a good portion of the negative messaging surrounding events in Ferguson. After over six hours of protesting and talking with local community activists, I gathered our group and headed back to a local Motel 6 for some rest.

The next morning, without knowing what to do, or where to go, largely because of a lack of organizational structure on the ground, my friend Jonathan and I grabbed some breakfast and decided to visit the neighborhood where Mike Brown was killed. When we arrived at the Canfield Green Apartments, people were scattered throughout the complex, having conversations, mourning at the site of Brown's murder and either interacting with or ignoring, the massive media presence.

Immediately, Jonathan and I encountered a rousing talk by a black nationalist elder from the local Ferguson community. He spoke of America's imperialist and capitalist foundations, its rancid political system and corrupt institutions. Afterward, people strolled about the area, smoked, debated the previous talk, and nervously enjoyed beers on their front porches while undercover police gazed from unmarked SUVs. Other community members took pictures at the scene of Brown's murder, which has been transformed into a community memorial, decorated with stuffed animals, posters, candles and various gifts.

Interestingly, Jonathan mentioned that during the height of lynching in the South, many victims were intentionally left hanging, sometimes for days, sending a clear message to fellow blacks, this could be you. The fact that Brown's body was left on the smoldering blacktop for over four hours, his brains gushing from his skull, then carted off like road kill, only reinforces the notion

that execution style murders serve the same purpose in 21st Century America. The horror inflicted on those who were forced to witness the murder, and its aftermath, will be seared into their collective memory forever.

Indeed, our time at the Canfield Green Apartments was fascinating, humbling and utterly educational, on many levels. To me, it was the most interesting experience of the entire trip. As expected, I learned that an inordinate amount of the local Ferguson population endure prior convictions, largely drug offenses. Clearly, this element plays a detrimental factor in the ability of black communities to openly challenge police officers in protest situations, or even take to the streets, for that matter. When the police-state enacts mass-punishment on blacks, the results devastate political spaces.

As the day went on, I listened to dozens of stories concerning police-brutality, corruption, disenfranchisement, poverty and lack of opportunities. Undoubtedly, the Ferguson community is hurting. Years of neoliberal economic policies, the war on drugs, segregation and white supremacy have devastated Ferguson. Numerous people openly asked the question, "How much more of this shit can we take?" That question, in my thinking, will be answered if, or more likely, when, officer Darren Wilson avoids conviction. I have to say, there's not much hope in the local community that justice will be served. Unless activists can organize a movement large enough to begin dismantling America's police-state, why should the residents of Ferguson believe otherwise?

A young man named Darin told me, "Shit will get real if this motherfucker doesn't serve time. The community is sick and tired, man. And now we're ready to fight. This whole city is going to pop-off if he gets away with this shit." According to Darin's friend, Russel, some of the looting could be attributed to "outsiders." But one aspect remained clear: the QuickTrip gas station engulfed by a massive fire, was set ablaze by two white kids. Provocateurs? Possibly. But that wasn't Russel's opinion. He thinks the owners are responsible for the inferno. To them, it's yet another example of

a completely corrupt media that paints blacks as the enemy, and whites as innocent bystanders.

Later Thursday afternoon, we headed back to West Florissant. That night, the crowds were significantly larger than our first night in town. Once again, protesters marched up and down the street, while dozens of local folks stood in parking lots, sat in cars and sold t-shirts to benefit the Brown family's legal fund. Some community groups set up voter registration and ministry booths. Many of the younger protesters hesitated to partake in such activities. It became quite clear that there is a significant generational divide in the black community.

The younger protesters in Ferguson were militant, they wanted confrontation and were fired up to challenge the cops. Older ministers attempted to pacify crowds and heeded the orders of local police officials. Older black leaders called the looting "unacceptable" and "disgraceful." Young blacks informed me that the objective of the looting was to hurt the city's revenue and to send a message to local business owners: hire young blacks. Elder black leaders called some of the protesters' actions "violent." Young blacks told me they were simply "defending themselves." The younger generations are starting to recognize that those working within the establishment have positions, salaries and careers to protect. Young blacks are lucky to have a job, let alone one that pays a living wage.

When the night ended, I felt like two semesters of African American studies courses had been crammed into three days. Every local community member I interacted with expressed their gratitude that we came out to support the protests in Ferguson. Interestingly, the first question I was confronted with throughout the week was, "Are you a reporter?" I'm assuming that's because I was one of the few white people participating in the Ferguson protests who wasn't associated with the media, police or street medic teams.

As usual, many questions will remain once the protests end. The immediate question being, what to do next? Immediately, the community needs training in basic political organizing techniques, strategies, and tactics, how to develop campaigns, etc. They need tools to fundraise, run media

operations, create operational infrastructures, organize the local community and the list goes on. In this sense, I think it's absolutely essential for people around the country to lend a hand on the ground in Ferguson. The struggle in Ferguson will continue for years, and some of those lessons, strategies and tactics could be used as a template for future actions around the country.

To me, it was somewhat discouraging to see such a lack of white solidarity at the Ferguson protests. In the view of many, white solidarity was quite impressive, but not enough. Where are my progressive friends? Are those who consider themselves socialists, anarchists, radical environmentalists and even liberals, too scared to work in black communities? Many times, I think it's true that white activists are reluctant to organize in communities of color. This dynamic has to change. The people of Ferguson, Gary, Flint, and elsewhere, need committed organizers, from diverse backgrounds, to support their ongoing struggles against police repression, militarization and neoliberal economic policies.

Constant talk of "changing the whole damn system" resonated with many folks, myself included. The people of Ferguson hope recent events serve as a spark for a new movement, a movement focused on systems of domination in our society, not singular events and issues. It was refreshing to hear activists connect struggles in Afghanistan and Palestine with those in Ferguson. I am routinely inspired to hear stories of resistance and struggle. As things continue to transpire in Ferguson, I encourage activists, journalists and academics to travel to Ferguson, if possible. People of color from marginalized communities need whites to operate with a sense of urgency and unwavering solidarity.

Events in Ferguson provide a grand opportunity to build genuine solidarity with marginalized communities. It's our job as activists to seize the opportunity, and cultivate new possibilities for social transformation.



VINCENT EMANUELE IS A COMBAT VETERAN, COMMUNITY ORGANIZER, RADIO HOST AND WRITER WHO WORKS AND LIVES IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION. HE CAN BE REACHED AT VINCE.EMANUELE@IVAW.ORG

Militarization of Police

TIM BUTZ

The killing of unarmed teenager Michael Brown by the Ferguson (Missouri) Police Department not only sparked demonstrations but also ignited controversy over the militarization of police. Looking like Marines in Fallujah, the Ferguson Police attempted to repress public anger over Brown's killing. It failed to do so, leading to a new approach by the State Police, a de-militarization of law enforcement.

If you watched the Sunday morning talking heads, you would get the impression that the militarization of police was a new development brought on by the Department of Defense giving surplus military equipment to the police over the last ten years. Nothing could be further from the truth; the militarization of police can be traced back to the Vietnam War.

The early dawn raid was one often repeated by US forces in Vietnam. The helicopters landed in a clearing and disgorged their cargo of young men clad in jungle fatigues and flak vests, armed with M-16 rifles. They quickly rounded up the natives and held them at gunpoint. Reinforcements arrived by land and the augmented force began a line sweep of the surrounding terrain. They literally went over hill and dale in search of their targets.

The search completed, the prisoners were taken back to

headquarters for interrogation. The young men breathed a collective sigh of relief; the operation was completed without any confrontation with an armed hostile force. They boarded their helicopters and vehicles and returned to their base.

But these prisoners were not Vietnamese peasants suspected of being members of the National Liberation Front. They were members of the Oglala Sioux Nation, residing at Crow Dog's Paradise on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

The troops who captured them were not members of the US Army, but rather members of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Special Apprehension Teams (SAT), and their September 5, 1975 raid on Crow Dog's Paradise was one of several that they had conducted on the reservation in search of Native Americans suspected of the murder of two FBI agents. Over 100 FBI agents took part in these raids, conducting them with military precision, military tactics and military equipment.

Throughout the country, similar raids had taken place in search of political activists as well as "common" criminals. Some of these raids were conducted by the FBI's SATs and others by their locals police counter-parts, usually called Special Weapons and Tactics teams (SWAT).

As movements for social change became more powerful and militant in the 1960s and 1970s, the government reacted by militarizing the police, changing them from Officer Friendly to Sergeant Rock. The police have historically been a para-military force in their structure. The command and control of police forces has relied on a scaled-back version of military structure. The ranks used in police departments mirrors the military, and even the organizational structure has sometimes been similar; most state police departments are organized into "Troops." However, the similarities ended there.

In 1879, Congress passed the Posse Comitatus Act which prohibited the Army from acting as law enforcement as had been done by Union troops during the Reconstruction. US Marshals had been responsible for enforcing law in the former Confederacy and they often drafted federal military troops as their posses for doing so. The law allowed the federal military to enforce law only when the state was unable to protect constitutionally protected rights, an exception that was first used in Little Rock when Governor Faubus refused to act to protect African American students seeking to enroll in Central High School following a 1957 federal court order that they be enrolled.

The road to militarizing

police began with the development of Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) teams during the height of the civil unrest in the late 1960s. Chief Darrell Gates of the Los Angeles Police Department determined that an elite unit within the department was needed to respond to riots, barricaded suspects and other emergency situations. His idea took root in law enforcement, and by the mid-1970s there were 500 SWAT teams; now it seems as though every town larger than Mayberry has a SWAT team. As reported in the *Wall Street Journal*, criminal justice professor Peter Kraska, of Eastern Kentucky University, established that in 1985, just 13% of police departments in towns of 25,000 to 50,000 people had a SWAT team; by 2005 that figure rose to 80%. SWAT is everywhere.

The FBI likewise began militarization by striking a deal with the Army to trade access to FBI computers for training 200 FBI agents on riot control tactics. Slowly and quietly, a transfer of military philosophy and materials began to be seen in civilian law enforcement. In 1971, the Marshals Service created its own Army, known as the Special Operations Group (SOG). By the time of the 1973 siege of Wounded Knee by the FBI and US Marshals, the Marshals and the Army were cooperating to the point that Col. Volney Warner of the 82nd Airborne was sent as a military liaison with the Justice Department at Wounded Knee. Warner not only coordinated the delivery of military supplies to the Justice Department, he used his power to deliver military supplies to influence the Justice Department negotiations with Native Americans inside of Wounded Knee.

When the "War on Drugs" began to take root, SWAT teams began to proliferate. In June 2014, the American Civil Liberties Union released a detailed report on the current state of militarized police. It focuses on these key points: militarizing the police has occurred "with almost no transparency, accountability or oversight;" the majority of SWAT raids were drug-related and had overtones of racial disparity in their use; and "the use of violent tactics and equipment often



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Congress Drowns Suicide Prevention Act While DoD Makes Moves to Help

GEOFF MILLARD

Veterans with bad paper (less-than-honorable discharges) are at an increased risk of suicide because of barriers that prevent access to care and supportive services. Congress recently introduced legislation to help curb the number of veterans who commit suicide, which currently stands at 22 per day. Swords To Plowshares (STP) was happy to see there was a provision to help veterans with bad paper discharges. This provision was important, but lacked true effectiveness under its current language to make a significant difference. STP sent its staff members to DC to work with members of Congress to improve the section, to the point where it really could have been a game changer for veterans with less-than-honorable discharges. We worked to make any minor misconduct violations for veterans diagnosed with PTSD to carry the

presumption that the behavior was caused by the PTSD in the upgrade process. This would change the present boards having to consider this to a presumption much the same as VBA does for PTSD claims in combat. We also worked to ensure that VA standards for character of service determination will have the same presumptive conditions applied to their process as well.

Despite having broad bipartisan support in Congress coupled with support from veteran service organizations across the nation, however, the legislation could already be dead in the water. Congressional gridlock has even started to overtake progress on continuation of VA reform. The Suicide Prevention Act was not on the list of bills to be worked on by the House, with no sign of being re-introduced this congressional session. In light of this fact,

veterans are taking their lives at a record number of 22 per day.

The Department of Defense, meanwhile, has issued new regulations for veterans attempting to upgrade their discharges. The new regulations would help Vietnam veterans with less-than-honorable discharges obtain upgrades by helping veterans with PTSD link their misconduct to their PTSD diagnosis. This is a small but important step that will help a sizable number of veterans with bad paper discharges. Note, however, this new regulation from the DoD is not a settlement to the lawsuit brought on by Yale Law and Vietnam Veterans of America, which will continue to progress with the plaintiffs having recently expressed some cautious optimism.

Swords to Plowshares hopes that all veterans and supporters will call, write, and demand that

their members of Congress move forward on this suicide legislation, particularly with the addition of the bad paper provision.

If you're a veteran in need of assistance and live in the San Francisco Bay Area, we encourage you to come to our drop-in center or call to make an appointment with our legal team. If you are not in the Bay Area but still need help, check out our self-help guides on our website or look for a VSO in your area.



GEOFF MILLARD IS AN IRAQ COMBAT VETERAN AND A POLICY ASSOCIATE AT SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES. SWORDS TO PLOWSHARES IS A SAN FRANCISCO BASED VETERAN SERVICE ORGANIZATION THAT CAN BE REACHED BY GOING TO SWORDS-TO-PLOWSHARES.ORG OR CALLING (415) 252-4788.

Militarization of Police

continued from previous page

resulted in property damage and/or bodily harm." Ferguson brought all this into focus for the American public, which awoke to a realization that the police were behaving as an occupying army rather than as public servants.

Modern policing seems to rely on terrorizing the citizenry as opposed to protecting it. As the ACLU argues, there are some circumstances where specialized training and equipment may be appropriate, such as hostage rescue. However, the exception seems to have become the routine. The public saw in Ferguson police in Battle Dress Uniforms, armed with surplus M-16s and body armor and driving Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) assault vehicles, and acting like an Israeli occupation force in Palestine. And then there was the realization that Ferguson was no different from any other city in the US.

According to an article on the US Department of Justice Community Policing website, SWAT teams proliferated in the 1980s and 1990s, as did their deployments: an estimated 30,000 SWAT uses in 1995 alone. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that in 2005 (the last year for which data was available) there were

over 50,000 SWAT raids.

An investigation into the depth of militarization was done by *New York Times* reporter Mark Apuzzo and published on June 8, 2014. Apuzzo reported evidence that civilian police departments (including school district police departments) had received 432 MRAPS, 435 other armored vehicles, 93,763 assault rifles (both M-16s and M-14s), 180,718 magazines, including 100 round capacity magazines.

Police were never intended to be soldiers; the American model of law enforcement was based on the concept of keeping the police and military functions separate from each other. In the rush to fight the civil unrest of the 1960s, through the War on Drugs and now the War on Terrorism, we have created what author Radley Balko calls the "Warrior Cop." There have been enough public outcries over the issue of warrior cops that the US Senate is now investigating the Department of Defense program that allows the transfer of materials to civilian law enforcement. Given the failure of Congress to provide significant oversight of anything done by the Pentagon, don't expect to see anything change.



TIM BUTZ WAS A PARTICIPANT IN VVAW'S OPERATION RAW, A VVAW ORGANIZER AT KENT STATE AND A COORDINATOR FOR THE WINTER SOLDIER INVESTIGATION. HE ALSO WORKED ON OTHER VVAW ACTIONS. TIM WAS ONE OF THE FOUNDING EDITORS OF COUNTERSPY MAGAZINE AND WAS AN INVESTIGATOR FOR THE WOUNDED KNEE LEGAL

DEFENSE/OFFENSE COMMITTEE. A FORMER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ACLU NEBRASKA AND THE NEBRASKA JUSTICE CENTER, HE IS CURRENTLY THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF THE FAIR HOUSING CENTER OF NEBRASKA AND IOWA, SUPERVISING HOUSING DISCRIMINATION INVESTIGATIONS.

Jacob David George, 1982-2014

ROBERT CLACK

On September 18th the nation's veteran suicide epidemic hit the IVAW and VVAW families when beloved IVAW member Jacob David George took his own life. From Arkansas, George was an Army veteran who had served 3 tours in Afghanistan. George became disillusioned by his war experience, saying "most of us are poor farmers killing poor farmers while most of our nation is starving."

Suffering from PTSD and what George would describe as moral injury incurred from his war experience, George found healing and relief from participating in the anti-war movement and speaking out against the occupation of Afghanistan. After leaving the Army George joined IVAW and in May 2010 founded the group, A Ride to the End, with his brother Jordan George.

A musician and cyclist, George combined both loves in A Ride Till the End by traveling with fellow veterans and supporters performing music and speaking out against the war as well as speaking about his struggles as a returning veteran suffering from PTSD. George would end up traveling over 8,000 miles

performing and spreading his message of peace. George would also travel back to Afghanistan as part of a peace delegation that volunteered with Afghan youth.

Part of George's reconciliation efforts with the Afghan community would also occur in the lead up to the NATO summit in Chicago in 2012. George was a key member in developing IVAW's collaboration with Afghans for Peace and would later talk about the catharsis of returning his medals at the summit as "transformative" and as "healing his soul."

After news of his death, there was an enormous response from US veteran and peace communities, with remembrance gatherings organized in Chicago and Boston, as well as other parts of the country. On September 21st, at the world's largest climate change march in New York members of IVAW carried a banner quoting his lyrics, "We support the troops and we're gonna bring war to an end."

At the Chicago gathering, IVAW member Derek Giffin remembered his fallen friend, "He would crash at my apartment whenever he was biking through town, which was fairly often. He loved raw fruits and vegetables. I

remember his omnipresent smile, his beautiful energy."

Speaker after speaker shared a story of their fallen friend, commenting on his kindness, his sincerity and about his very serious commitment to peace. Although an emotional gathering, IVAW Chicago member Vince Emanuele reminded participants to celebrate his life and that George, "would have wanted us to have a good time as well."

In remembering George,



Giffin concluded, "People should strive to attain the level of love and empathy Jacob exhibited on a daily basis, his dedication to peace."

Services for George were held in Fayetteville Arkansas on October 5th.



ROBERT CLACK IS A LABOR, COMMUNITY AND ANTI-WAR ORGANIZER IN CHICAGO.



"I Know You Don't Mean It"

BROCK McINTOSH

One time I approached the mountains to wash off in a snowy spring. It reminded me of Arkansas, mountains without the green. I know you speak from ignorance. Your words you can't understand. The beauty of life is everywhere. Even in Afghanistan.

Jacob George and I accepted an invitation to meet with the Afghan Youth Peace Volunteers in Kabul shortly after the Arab Spring. In some sense, whatever we did for Afghanistan, we wanted permission from the Afghan people and to honor their voices. I was lucky that Jacob beat me back to Afghanistan. Whereas I am quiet, reserved, and carry a serious demeanor, Jacob overflowed with an energetic happiness. He greeted people by hugging them, beaming from ear to ear. He wanted to know your story and listened like you were the only person who mattered. When a person speaks, he is expressing what is in the mind

how one can live off of that land. He could imagine his own family losing their land because of war and drought, having to leave the mountains to be "a refugee in my homeland." One of his favorite memories was meeting Abdulai. He couldn't believe it, Abdulai a mountain boy, Jacob a hillbilly. They had both just finished tending the fields and discussed the insanity of farmers killing farmers while the world starves.

Many people didn't know how much pain Jacob carried home from the war. I think what tears many people up about Jacob's suicide is that he was such a caring, wise person who could love people so effortlessly. He understood moral injury and healing so well. How could this happen to him of all people? I think about where Jacob was before he began his journey with peace, when his enlistment ended after three deployments. How alone he felt. How he dreamt about death and images



the bottle. He was proud that he stopped his brother from going to war. And I know that he cherished each and every one of us who knew him. But there are many sources of pain in a person's life, and only he knows the story that led up to his last decision.

Jacob did all he could as a warrior to speak and to warn about the dangers of war. Jacob spoke to me often of moral injury, and he once told me about meeting a Vietnam veteran who felt that every war was his war, who blamed himself for not stopping each war that happened, one after the next. Jacob felt that burden. I don't know why Jacob did what he did. But I know that he was disappointed in his country because of its treatment of veterans. I know he was worried about impending war. I cannot help but wonder if he blamed himself for the current warmongering in Iraq and Syria. I am angry at the world. Whatever Jacob was dealing with, I know that the world made it harder for him.

I'll never be able to ask Jacob about those final days. All that I have left is my memories and his music. I remember the endless conversations we had about truth and justice and healing. Do not for

a second wonder how fiercely he believed in those things. They may not have made him immortal, but without a doubt they lifted him up in those final years. My fondest memories are of Jacob playing his banjo and belting out a song in that unforgettable voice. I listen to his music on repeat, teaching me how to be a better person and warrior. I will never stop learning from him and striving to live up to his example of humanism and conscientious labor. We cannot know the hurt he felt or the course it took. I know that he would not want us to dwell on his pain. He would want all of us to keep fighting for a more loving world that values peace, justice, and dignity above all else, to listen with open hearts and open minds, to be open to change and to grow. And most importantly, to love and to smile.



BROCK McINTOSH IS A VETERAN OF THE ARMY NATIONAL GUARD. HE COMPLETED A TOUR OF DUTY IN AFGHANISTAN DURING HIS 8 YEARS OF SERVICE. HE HAS A BACHELORS IN HISTORY AND SOCIOLOGY FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND AND WAS A 2012 TRUMAN SCHOLAR. HE IS A MEMBER OF IVAW.



and the heart, and that's where Jacob wanted to be. He wanted to feel what you felt, and understand the legitimacy of your thoughts. More than with anyone, Jacob wanted to feel that connection with Afghans. This is why he had to go back to this place so far from Arkansas that reminded him of home — this place that haunted him, yet aroused his spirit. He wore Afghan clothes and donned a pakol when he stayed in Kabul because he wanted to physically put himself in the experience of Afghans. Empathy was integral to Jacob's concept of warriorhood.

When Jacob and I visited Kabul's internally-displaced person's camp, many of the people we met were farmers from Helmand and other provinces where much of the heavy fighting was. They were uprooted from their homes and their land because of drought and war. Being a farmer, Jacob understood what land meant to a person on a spiritual level and

of terror in Afghan eyes. How he kept his story and his feelings to himself. How he couldn't hold down a relationship. How he self-medicated with alcohol to deal with the pain, and how angry that made him. I don't think he was ever able to shed that pain. But I know that he was proud of some of the changes that he was able to make toward the end. When Jacob and I walked through Shar-e Naw Park, he showed me a tattoo that read, "I don't drink the bottle. It drinks me." It was a reminder of a time when his life was full of sorrow and when he couldn't find any relief but through drinking. And he was grateful that in his later years, this sorrow was punctuated by frequent moments of overwhelming joy, companionship, awesome wonder, and enlightenment—moments he may have never had if he never started riding his bicycle around the country. He was very proud that later in life, he achieved sobriety and could find relief without



Veterans Call to Commemorate the Christmas Truce of 1914

BEN CHITTY

On behalf of the Veterans Peace Council of Metro New York, I write to invite you to sign our Veterans Call to Commemorate the Christmas Truce of 1914.

Many plans are being made to observe the centennial of World War I, the "Great War," the "war to end all wars." We hope the Christmas Truce of 1914 - this extraordinary event when soldiers themselves decided to stop fighting at least for a moment - will not be overlooked and disregarded, any more than the lesson so many Great War veterans brought home, that their cause had not been worth the slaughter.

The spirit of the Christmas Truce permeates our work in many ways. The troops themselves ceased fire, sometimes in direct defiance of their officers. Realizing their common humanity, soldiers stepped into no-man's land and fraternized with their enemies. Many things we do today look a lot like this: disobeying unjust orders, reconciling with former foes, stepping in between adversaries to keep the peace, cleaning up from war's devastation. Our campaigns make demands on military and political establishments, from recognition of Post-Traumatic Stress and "Vets4Vets" counseling, to treatment and compensation for Agent Orange and radiation exposure, to upgrades for discharges motivated by racism, to ending the live fire exercises at Vieques in Puerto Rico. Many

veterans have walked point in struggles for peace and social justice: Confederate veteran Albert Parsons; Nicaragua, Mexico, and Haiti veteran Smedley Butler; WWI veteran Walter Waters; WWII veterans Hector Garcia, Medgar Evers and Moe Fishman; Vietnam veterans Jack McCloskey, Pedro Pietri and David Cline. The "Right to Heal" initiative recognizes that the Iraq War is not over for civilians and soldiers who still struggle with trauma and injury, and who still suffer the effects of environmental poisoning by munitions and burn pits. Meanwhile generals and admirals, diplomats and politicians, all retire with full pensions to join corporate boards and Washington lobbying firms.

That truce of Christmas 1914 was never intended to be permanent. Hostilities resumed, and there were few repetitions until almost the end of the war when thousands of soldiers refused to continue fighting. By the end of the war, more than 10 million soldiers had died, and another 6 million went missing, presumed dead. Military and civilian casualties totaled over 37 million. The "war to end war" turned out to be only the first world war, ushering in a century of new wars, hot and cold, local and global, colonial and imperial, all conducted with the latest modern (and profitable) machinery of death. Revolts swept Russia into

civil war and Germany into savage repression and the groundwork for fascism. The British and French divvied up the Ottoman Empire, making colonial boundaries which still fester in the Middle East.

The United States came late to the war, "to make the world safe for democracy." Victory was followed by mass deportations, the finale of the government's repression of the anti-war movement. African American veterans came home expecting respect for their service, and were greeted with race riots and the rise of the second Ku Klux Klan. At least ten black veterans were lynched, some still in uniform. On the first anniversary of Armistice Day, American Legionnaires marched on the union hall of the Industrial Workers of the World in Centralia, Washington. Three Legionnaires were killed, and in the aftermath timberworker Wesley Everett, an American Expeditionary Force veteran and IWW member, was castrated and strung up, then riddled with bullets. In 1932, 17,000 American veterans, along with thousands of family members and supporters, marched on Washington to petition Congress for early payment of a promised bonus, only to be dispersed by fixed bayonets and tear gas.

The Great War's true history belongs to the soldiers who fought it and the families who waited for their return. In their name, we can reclaim some of that



history by commemorating the Christmas Truce of 1914 with a new determination to lay down arms, reconcile with enemies, reconstruct and rebuild after war's devastation. We can press politicians to convert the war economy, clean up military toxins, and take care of veterans. We can educate young people about war and militarism. We can celebrate with festivals and ceremonies. We can seize this moment to spark our imaginations to develop projects and activities that engage hundreds, thousands, millions of people in the hard work of peace.

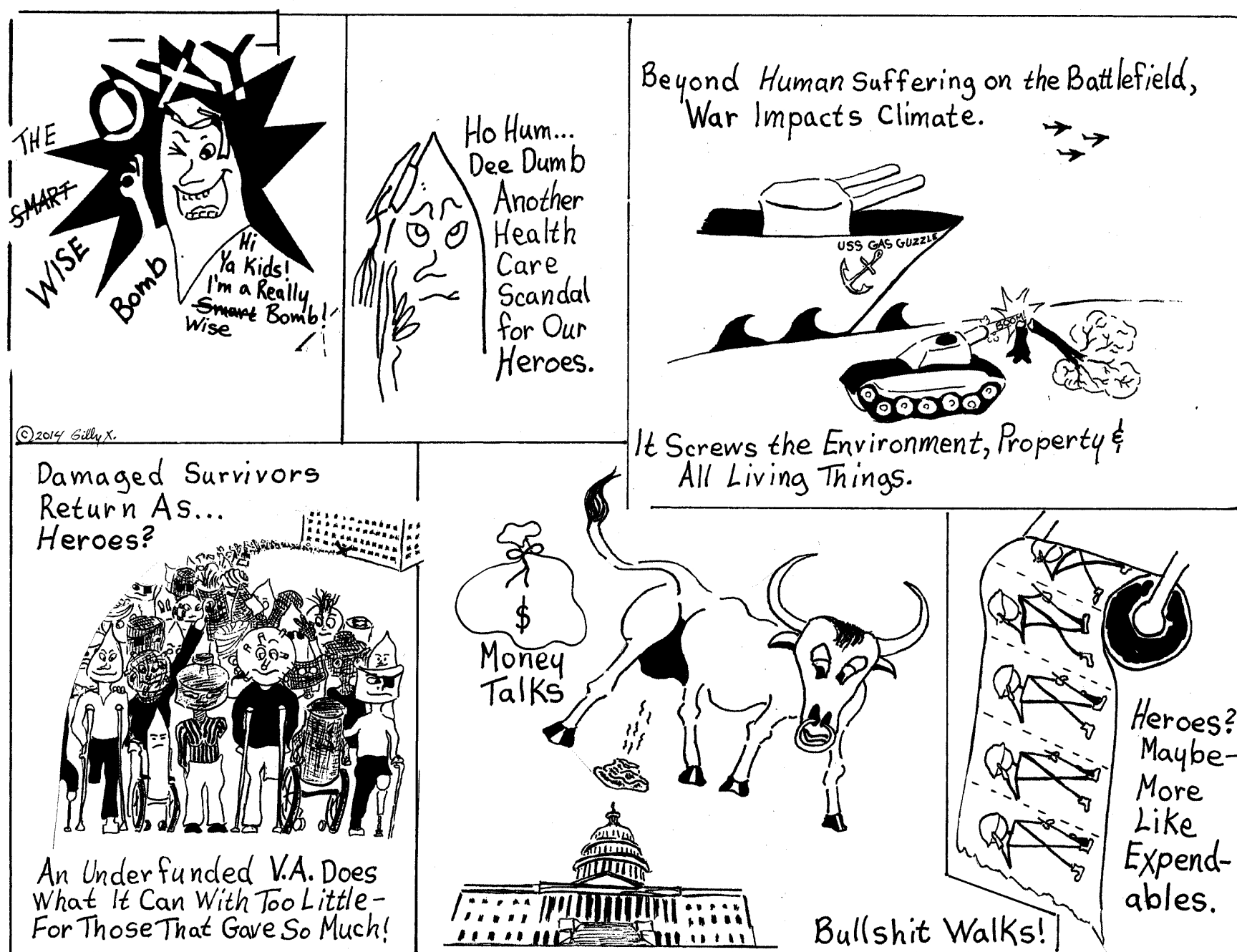
Sign the Call at www.veteranspeacecouncil.org.



BEN CHITTY IS A SHELLBACK NAVY VETERAN OF TWO DEPLOYMENTS TO VIETNAM, AND A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW.



Armed Forces Day in Los Angeles, 1977.



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

Telling Our Stories

RYAN CONNOLLY

Warrior Writers is an organization started by Lovella Calica in 2007. It primarily facilitates writing workshops for veterans. The organization operates by empowering veterans to facilitate the workshops, which are largely closed to only veterans. Exceptions are sometimes made based on group dynamics for gold-star families and care-givers.

Workshops are run in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, and San Francisco. They provide a place for veterans to write in a non-discriminate setting. Workshops do not focus on

grammar or writing-style, but focus on the telling of stories. Veterans are encouraged to write poetry, prose, draw, and other forms of artistic expression. We have recently begun incorporating other forms of art such as visual art, playwriting and music.

Every few years we publish a new anthology of works created by veterans. Although workshops do not focus on critiquing works, when a veteran wishes to be published in the anthology, editors and the organization's leaders will work with the veteran to make his or her piece ready for publishing.

June of 2014 brought our fourth anthology, self-titled *Warrior Writers*, to the presses. It features poems, artwork, and photographs by veterans from Vietnam all the way to modern-day. In conjunction with the book release we also held a week-long writing retreat that ran concurrently with the two-week seminar run by the Joiner Institute for the Study of War and Social Consequences. Retreats have also been run in the Washington D.C. area and Chicago over the last month.

Warrior Writers provides a safe place for veterans to deal with some of the issues of returning home. Whether we have been home for decades or are just returning, at every workshop we are met with understanding and compassion. They have allowed me to deal with issues through writing that I have not been able to speak of.

Warrior Writers provides a community of veterans who are able to understand each other. Through the use of facilitators who are also veterans we have ensured that the community remains intact. The feeling of going to a place that

is therapeutic for my mind, and not having to deal with anybody in a lab coat has truly opened up my heart to the healing I have encountered with Warrior Writers.

Through partnerships with IVAW, Combat Paper, The Joiner Institute for the Study of War and Social Consequences, The National Veterans Art Museum, and others, we have been able to bring our art to the forefront of the conversation regarding war and veterans.

To get more information please visit us at WarriorWriters.org



Jacob Crawford and Michael Applegate
at Memorial Day event May 26, 2014, Chicago.

RYAN CONNOLLY IS A US COAST GUARD VETERAN, WHO SINCE HIS DISCHARGE HAS BECOME A PHILOSOPHY STUDENT AT BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY. HE IS A FREELANCE WRITER, CURRENTLY EMPLOYED BY GI JOBS MAGAZINE, WRITING ABOUT TRANSITION FROM THE MILITARY TO COLLEGE. HE IS ALSO A FACILITATOR FOR THE BOSTON CHAPTER OF WARRIOR WRITERS, AND HAS RECENTLY BECOME A MEMBER OF IVAW.

Jim Proffitt - RIP

YESENIA FLORES

Jim Proffitt. I have to admit that I heard that name in full when I learned of his passing but I immediately knew the face. I knew his drive, his commitment, his sacrifices, his laugh. I knew him.

For years I worked side by side with him throughout the Standdown for Homeless Vets events and in those moments I am surrounded by incredible human beings who sacrificed their life for our country and then went on to fight for the rights of Vets that are not as fortunate as they were when they got out of the military. Jimmy was one of these amazing human beings, and for this and many more reasons he will be truly and deeply missed.

I know that the family atmosphere I get when I come in at six in the morning ready to sweat and work the day away will never be the same without Jimmy there. He was a man who treated everyone as equals regardless of which side of the line you stood on. For him it was important to show that the Vets that come in for the services provided are no less than those who are providing them. He was quick to put anyone in their place that stepped out of line, volunteer or Vet. And yet, that same man who showed authority was quick to whip up a lunch for anyone that might have missed it.

I remember one time in a rare moment, he showed his softer side. It was his birthday during one of the Standdowns and he was surprised with a cake and singing. I saw it in his face how surprised he truly was. He got choked up a little and his eyes watered some and he was truly grateful. This man who gave so much of himself to the cause was in awe when we gave back to him. This proves that he didn't do it for the glory or a pat on the back, he did it because he cared. He did it because he knew



Virginia and Jim Proffitt receiving VVAW's Winter Soldier Award from VVAW board member Bill Branson at the Summer 2013 Veterans Homeless Standdown in Chicago.

that no man or woman should put their lives on the line the way these men and women did just to feel alone when they need a helping hand the most. I know that the upcoming Winter event will not be the same without him there but his spirit and his drive will be there to push all of us volunteers to do our very best.

VietNow will never be the same either. Jimmy was their National Homeless Chairman, and this meant that for decades he was part of a team that handed out bagged lunches and snacks to countless homeless Veterans. So rain or shine, sleet or snow he was out there providing men and women who served their country a little love and hope. His mission was to show them that they are not forgotten, and if those of us

continuing his work could do one fifth of what he did then I know that the future will look brighter for the cause.

Having attended his wake recently, I realized just how much of an impact he had on so many people. The number of visitors that kept coming in was just overwhelming, but reassuring. I am reassured because I know so many of those people will continue his work. He made it his mission to get to know those that he served on his Sunday runs that I am certain no one wants to let them down. As hard of a job as it is, I know Jimmy would want them to continue to feel the love and support they get from his food truck. It is now our mission to continue his work and make sure his legacy lives on for decades to come.

Having heard all the memories people have of Jimmy there is one thing I regret about my encounters with him, and that is that I would have liked to have sat down with him one day and just listen. Listen to his stories, his wisdom, his charisma. But knowing who he was, he was just too busy and too preoccupied to do that at a Standdown event. Even so, I will always have my memories of him. Little snippets here and there, cherished moments that will live on in my heart and mind for the rest of my life. So Jimmy, thank you for all that you

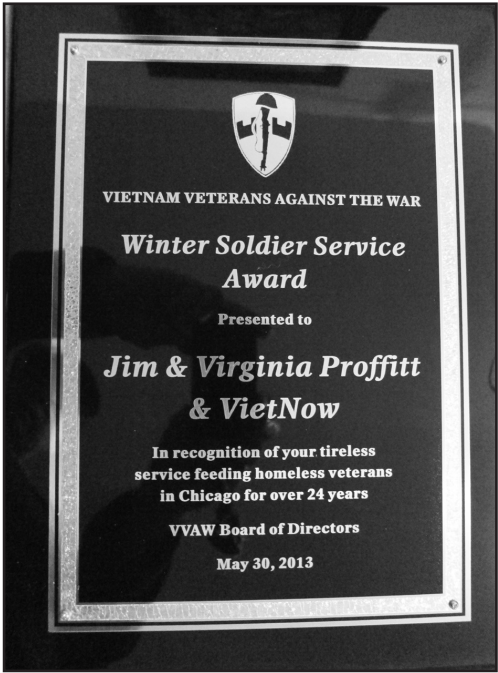
did. Thank you for your service in the Marine Corps, but most importantly thank you for the service you provided after. Many people have been touched by your life, your work, your dedication. I am one of hundreds. So may you rest in peace. And do me a favor will you? Don't give the Army guys up there such a hard time!

And finally, a message to his tough as nails wife Virginia. Know that you are not alone in your pain and loss. I know for a fact that you have countless memories that will fill your heart with love and happiness. I am here for you as a shoulder to cry on or as a working bee ready to take orders. I know that you will continue his legacy not only in the Standdown events but also in VietNow. And I can assure you that there are many people behind you willing to lend a helping hand.

Rest in peace Jim Proffitt.



YESENIA FLORES HAS BEEN VOLUNTEERING ALONGSIDE VVAW AT THE STANDDOWN EVENTS FOR THE PAST FOUR YEARS. AS A SISTER TO A MARINE, SHE KNOWS HOW IMPORTANT IT IS TO SHOW OUR GRATITUDE AND SUPPORT TO THOSE THAT HAVE PUT THEIR LIFE ON THE LINE FOR OUR SAFETY AND FREEDOM. SHE IS EXTREMELY PROUD TO BE A PART OF THE STANDDOWN AND VVAW FAMILY.



Hurt Souls

The nerves run from Johnny's eyes
like electricity through his lower brain
down his spine and down his chest
through his arms & through his legs
until he feels insane.
Shards of crystal glass inside of him
force their way to his skin
like a lightbulb that's been on too long
he feels it pop inside of him.
So he calls the VA Crisis line,
they try to talk him down.
But Johnny gets in his car
driving a hundred miles an hour,
through red lights, stop signs and skids
into the Emergency
at the VA hospital.
Runs up the stairs into the waiting room
with the strength of a madman.
It takes 3 VA men to knock him down
hold him on the floor while a nurse
finally runs up with a needle to
give Johnny a heavy shot to calm him
down but it doesn't work so well
so the 3 VA men
carry him struggling to a bed in the back,
tie his arms and legs with leather straps
and stand over him while the nurse
comes with a needle with the most
powerful shot she has.
Johnny stops squirming and thrashing
lays his head on the pillow staring
up at the lights on the ceiling.
Lightning ricochets off of the inside
of his skull and puts bullet holes
through the lower and inner brain.
It feels like anxiety, overwhelmingness,
not knowing what to do, confusion,
waking up in a locked room like his life
is gone and his arms and legs
leather wrapped to a special bed.
His eyes look like gray and black
storm clouds.
After days he thought were years,
a VA man and a Nurse walk in,
take the IV out and catheter too.

They help him into a wheel chair
to see the VA psychiatrist
for a 2 hour cry or die session
as the old man is trying to find out
what had happened to him,
ending up broken but Johnny
sees an enemy, his eyes bulge
and grow so big that they blow up,
splashing the ceiling that falls
like red acid rain.
Johnny tells the shrink
that he was sodomized when he
was a poor teenager by Uncle Sam.
Then they wheel him to a normal
patients room and Johnny looks
outside the window and it is raining
just like the VA.
Then the depression hits and
flattens him like a penny
on a railroad track.
Days go by like tours and
finds Johnny sitting in a chair
in the Lobby of a
VA Mental health building
with other hurt souls.
There is a WWII hat
slumping in the chair with his chin
on his chest.
An Iraq tours sitting in
a corner chair talking to himself.
Korean Silver Star at the window
of one of the secretaries there.
A Desert Storm T-Shirt who went to
his war healthy but now he is sick
in mind and body.
An Afghan Vet staring at a computer
with his war in it.
A Vietnam Purple Heart pounding
on the Coke machine
trying to get his money back.

—Dennis Serdel
Light Infantry
Vietnam 1968



October 25, 1971, Chicago.

Nixon and Pepsi

JOHN KETWIG

The sordid history of Richard Nixon knows no bounds, and it is essential to be aware of it as we try to determine the changes that have occurred to the basic philosophy of the government of the United States since the 1950s. Nixon's career was aided, funded, and abetted by Pepsi Cola from the beginning.

Nixon was a close friend and political ally of Pepsi president Don Kendall. In 1959, the US and the Soviet Union agreed to set up cultural exhibitions in each other's countries to illustrate how their people lived their everyday lives. The US, with the eager assistance of Pepsi Cola, built a model of a typical American house, with all the modern comforts and conveniences. On the opening day of the exhibit, Vice President Nixon was hosting Russian Chairman Nikita Khrushchev. Khrushchev became irritated at the number of color televisions throughout the house, and boasted that Russian homes would have superior technology in a year or two. What followed was the famous "kitchen debate" in which Nixon boldly asserted the values of capitalism, insisting that the Russian leader should "not be afraid of ideas." In front of a contingent of international reporters and photographers, the argument became heated with raised voices and finger pointing,

conveniently in the kitchen of the model home and in front of a large Pepsi logo on the wall. After all, doesn't every middle-class family home have a Pepsi logo on the kitchen wall? Nixon was aggressive, suggesting that Khrushchev's constant threats of using nuclear missiles could lead to war, and he belittled the Chairman for repeatedly interrupting him while he was speaking. His anger growing, Khrushchev warned of "very bad consequences." Then, with all the cameras capturing the scene, Khrushchev coolly reminded everyone that he simply wanted "peace with all other nations, especially America," and Nixon admitted that he had not "been a very good host." Well, it turns out that the entire event had been planned and scripted as a Pepsi Cola publicity stunt, conceived by Pepsi publicist William Safire who would go on to become a White House speechwriter and later, a *New York Times* publicist.

Nixon's close alliance with Pepsi was evident throughout his career. When he lost the 1960 presidential election to John F. Kennedy, Kendall and Nixon's "honorary father," Elmer Bobst, the Chairman of Warner-Lambert pharmaceuticals, went to the prestigious New York City law firm of Mudge Stern Baldwin and Todd and convinced the firm to

take on the ex-Vice President, in return for which both companies brought their entire corporate business, along with a prosperous municipal bond firm owned by John Mitchell, to the renamed Nixon Mudge Rose Guthrie and Alexander. In the hard-fought 1968 presidential campaign, Nixon charged that McGovern forces had wiretapped his phone, and he directed his old friend Kendall to pressure Pepsi Vice President Cartha (Deke) DeLoach, a long-time FBI executive and close personal friend of J. Edgar Hoover, to corroborate the story. To his credit, DeLoach never confirmed the story, despite Nixon saying publicly that if the investigation of the wiretapping turned up anything DeLoach had not revealed, Kendall would, "of course, have to fire him."

This type of shenanigans went on throughout Nixon's career. His famous diplomatic journey to the People's Republic of China in 1972 was the first-ever visit by an American President, and resulted in reopening dialogue between the two countries for the first time in 25 years. It also resulted in Pepsi and its affiliated company, Pizza Hut, being allowed to do business throughout China at a time when no American companies were doing business there.

I learned about these events, and many more Nixon antics,

from the 1973 book "Perfectly Clear" by Robert Kennedy's Press Secretary, and George McGovern's national political director, Frank Mankiewicz. Nixon finally resigned from the Presidency in August of 1974, but even before that I had taken certain steps in my life to express my dislike and disgust for the man. For all these many years, I have avoided Pepsi Cola. Growing up, my children thought I was weird, but they knew better than to bring a Pepsi onto our property. I have actually gone out to get the morning paper and found Pepsi bottles leaning up against the curb, testimony to my kids' efforts to keep their old man docile. Business colleagues thought I was eccentric as I would not drink Pepsi, even at the most informal lunch gathering.

However, I am not a zealot. When I was in Vietnam in 1967-68, one of the guys in our unit was Dennis Lay. Pepsi did not own Frito-Lay back in 1968. Dennis' father sent us cartons of Frito-Lay products, very welcomed treats in Vietnam. I won't drink a Pepsi, but I do eat Fritos in thanks for that kindness.



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."



Nixon supporters and VVAW and anti-war demonstrators in Chicago March 15, 1974 during President Nixon's visit.

Nixon's Atrocious Lies and Cover-ups in His Air War on Neutral Cambodia

DANIEL C. LAVERY

President Richard Nixon was unsuccessful in having the CIA bribe Cambodian leaders to refuse aid from North Vietnam, therefore, he and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger decided to secretly bomb Cambodia in May 1969. They thought this would prevent the intense peace movement from exposing their gross violation of a neutral country. They wanted also show the North Vietnamese that Nixon would not tolerate any expansion of their goals.

Paranoid Nixon had delusions of grandeur that only he could secure South East Asia. Worse yet, he did not inform Congress, or key military personnel, as required for the enormous air arsenal he used to exterminate human beings like so many insects. Nor did they inform pilots, or keep a record of their missions. Their secret actions bypassed Strategic Air Command's impregnable control system. For more than a year covert B-52s carpet bombed Cambodians and Vietnamese who tilled the soil with water buffalo. Nearly 4,000 sorties left more than half a million dead. Motivated peasants joined the Khmer Rouge, a fringe communist group that would eventually kill more than another million.

Planners of the American war in Vietnam knew North Vietnam could supply its forces down the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos and Cambodia and at the same time provide sanctuaries for those forces. They concluded the war was unwinnable. Having identified an area for destruction that contained 1,640 Cambodians, including 1,000 civilian peasants, Nixon's massive bombing of them was one of his many despicable actions. Officers provided workers on South Vietnam ground radar sites with top-secret target instructions before each mission by courier

flights from Saigon. Those radar operators maintained secrecy until the Watergate hearings in 1973. B-52 crews received normal briefing for targets in South Vietnam, but afterwards their commanding officer pulled aside the pilots and navigators of the planes heading for Cambodia and told them special instructions would come from a ground radar station inside South Vietnam. Computers at the radar station took control of the navigation systems in the B-52s, guiding them to their real targets in Cambodia and computing the precise moment for the monstrous release of thousands of bombs. After the devastation, the bomber's radio operator would call his base and report the mission had been accomplished while the intelligence division at the base entered the South Vietnamese coordinates in the official report. The commander of the radar crews burned all paperwork related to the real targets.

Another target selected contained 198 Cambodian civilians and another housed 383 more. Nixon committed the Joint Chiefs of Staff to destroy all 15 sanctuaries at suspected locations. To escape these bombings the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong penetrated further into the interior snubbing Curtis LeMay's "... We're going to bomb them back into the Stone Age" and forcing the bombing missions to enlarge. Nixon approved 3,530 flights over Cambodia between February 1969 and April 1970 according to Seymour M. Hersh.

Many key personnel normally involved in the planning, approving, and executing of such bombings were not informed, including the Secretary of the Air Force, Dr. Robert Seamans, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, General John Ryan, the Office of

Strategic Research and Analysis, all the Congressional Committees responsible for approving the funds and authorizing the mission, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and most of the Pentagon. Moreover, William Shawcross, asserts Kissinger and Nixon lied to them and assured Congress, the press, and public, they had painstakingly declined to attack Communist positions in Cambodia before the spring of 1970. On April 30, 1970, Nixon announced to the nation the use of ground forces in Cambodia in a "protective reaction," but not an invasion. He denied any previous American involvement in Cambodia after 3,530 bombing raids. Nixon lied that the United States had "scrupulously respected" Cambodia's neutrality for the last five years and had not "moved against" the sanctuaries.

When Congress allowed Nixon's invasion into Cambodia to ferret out suspected Viet Cong headquarters, American and South Vietnamese troops marched through Cambodia and committed more war crimes destroying towns and villages. "Without the lies there would be no empire. With lies, there are massive war crimes," wrote Seymour M. Hersh in "The Price of Power." The two areas selected contained many civilians despite the 29,000 bombs that had pulverized the territory. Nixon said the scope limited American ground forces to within 21.7 miles of the Cambodian border and the plan would terminate at the end of June.

Meanwhile, our Air Force struck Cambodian targets up to 18 miles inside Cambodia but reported their targets were in Laos. American and South Vietnamese forces destroyed everyone because communist forces might hide there. Two thousand civilians

who tapped trees for rubber lived in Snuol. William Shawcross reported that, "Lieutenant Colonel Brookshire's tank crews fired 90-mm guns into that town and called in air strikes to discourage further resistance. After twenty-four hours of bombardment, Brookshire judged Snuol safe for his men, and the tanks moved into the center. Only seven bodies could be seen, four of them Cambodian civilians... As they drove past shattered shops soldiers leaped off their tanks to kick down the doors that still stood, and they looted the town." They destroyed dozens of towns, villages, and hamlets to ensure they could no longer serve as sanctuary. No attempt to discriminate between innocent Cambodians and the enemy occurred during these assaults. American and South Vietnamese forces committed rape, looted, and burned everything to retaliate for the murder of South Vietnamese. In a just world had these atrocities surfaced along with Nixon's sabotage of the Peace talks, he would have merited impeachment and execution for treason. Humphrey would have been elected. Twenty thousand Americans and two million Vietnamese might not have died.

(This article draws many facts found in Dave Model's Lying for Empire, How to Commit War Crimes With A Straight Face, Common Courage Press, 2005)



VVAW MEMBER DANIEL C. LAVERY GRADUATED ANNAPOLIS, NAVIGATED A NAVY JET AND SHIP, TURNED PEACE ACTIVIST, AND CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER FOR CESAR CHAVEZ'S UFW. HIS MEMOIR, ALL THE DIFFERENCE, DESCRIBES HIS EXPERIENCES. WWW.DANIELCLAVERY.COM



Anti-Nixon demo, Chicago 1974.

Nixon's Dream-Stomping Ego

ALLEN MEECE

After a debate on black and white TV that made him look like a sweating chump, Nixon was beaten by John Kennedy in the 1960 presidential election.

Eight years later, Nixon and his vanity were back in the Big Race and he beat Hubert Humphrey and George Wallace, who ran as an independent, and got into the White House where he canceled his former rival's marvelous Apollo moon exploration program. NASA had planned to build a manned lunar

base and later fly by the planet Mars. Humanity had its foot on the bridge to space when "Tricky Dick" Nixon stuck out his foot and tripped us.

Nixon didn't only wind-down the moon program, he crashed it in its tracks. He abandoned two fully-made Saturn V moon rockets on the assembly line. The most powerful rockets in the world were given to space museums to rust in the weather instead of flying mankind's destiny into space. His defective pride could not let him

accept the wonders of a program that reflected the brilliance of a real president, John F. Kennedy.

But voters loved Nixon and his dubious Vice President so much that they re-elected them by a landslide of votes, 61% to McGovern's 38% in 1972. Both Republicans disgraced themselves and had to resign within two years.

Forty years after Apollo 17 and Gene Ciernan said goodbye to the moon, we have six astronauts in a doghouse of an orbiting satellite 205 miles high, instead

of living on the moon, a quarter-of-a-million miles away. That's a serious failure for the entire population of seven billion homo sapiens.

Political public relations campaigns will fool us unless we work hard on researching the candidates underneath the ad agency hype, which is actually disinformation, to get elected.

ALLEN MEECE WAS IN THE US NAVY IN 1962-1966.

A Short Remembrance of Nixon's Resignation

STEVE KRUG

The day we heard Nixon was going to make a speech we knew it was finally going to be over for him. The apartment building I lived in at the time had a mix of Vets and Objectors in it; we all got along just fine, thank you. As

the building was situated a few doors down from a major traffic light, the evening rush hour always had cars backed up in front of our building. We put up a 30' banner that said "Good bye Tricky Dick," purchased a great deal of wine and

paper cups, and started the party. As rush hour grew, most, if not all, of the drivers saw our sign, many, if not most, honked their horns and gave us the thumbs up. We ran out to them with a cup of wine and toasted each other. It

was an all too brief, happy couple of hours. If only all the death and pain and sadness he caused had left with him.

STEVE KRUG IS A MEMBER OF VVAW.

4th of July Requiem

I sit relaxed in my campsite, camouflaged by sun-infused forest green. Overhead squirrels chatter away. In the distance a woodpecker drums a hollow beat. Birdcalls surround me, mostly sweet and melodic, except for one strident caw of crow. Also, a large blue heron high in nearby tree squawks like I imagine a baby alligator would if threatened.

I watch the green/blue-watered lake, trying not to be too distracted by the school of speedboats pulling humans about like large water bugs. Wave runners loudly create waves to run over or jump. Campfires overcook hotdogs, hamburgers and marshmallows. Watermelons are cut and sloppily slurped. It's an idyllic summer holiday weekend afternoon. Dusk slowly descends, making deep shadows within fading daylight.

I start and stare at roaring fire. Damn I'm good — lit it with but one match! All around evening serenely morphs into gathering darkness until . . .

poppoppopBoomBOOM BOOMBoompoppoppop

Citizens begin blowing shit up all around me. The sounds emulate what our nation does best all over the fucking planet, especially in the lands of black, brown or yellow-skinned inhabitants. The stillborn birth of Amurican "democracy" 232 years ago in this mythical land of the free, home of the brave filled with a profusion of rhetorical redwhite&blue crappola, much of it on sale, is too loudly celebrated yet once again.

I grip my camp chair harder. Grind my teeth tighter. Squeeze shut my eyes against bloody scenes in head again from Tet '68 and today in Haditha. Harden my heart deeper . . .

poppoppopBoomBOOM BOOMBoompoppoppop

AmeriK-K-K-K-a: I really may have to leave you again, certainly in mind and spirit, if not in body . . .

—Thomas Brinson
July 4, 2008
Lake Thompson, NY

1971 Peace Demonstration

OTMAR FISCHBACH

It is April, 1971. There is a peace rally gathering at the great mall in Washington DC. I was there (somewhere in the crowd on the left side of the photo below). The rally was sponsored by Vietnam Veterans Against the War. Navy veteran John Kerry was there and would address Congress, calling for an end to the Vietnam War. Later that day, small white milk truck type vans came around, and with a bullhorn announced that Richard Nixon had made a speech to the nation saying he did not believe even a third of the people gathered at the mall were actually

military veterans. So these guys on the truck wanted the names and military serial numbers of any veterans there. Write your name on a piece of paper and they would present those names to Richard Nixon. People were running up to the vans to give them a piece of paper. I was one of the many that handed over my name to the people in those vans. Much later I realized, I never heard another word about Nixon having read the names, or accepting the fact that there were veterans calling for an end to the war, nothing was ever said, and I

never heard anything more about it until .. until years later when the Watergate investigation revealed that Nixon had an enemies list. It was explained that Nixon had two such lists, one was of celebrities and well known personages that expressed opposition to the war, like Jane Fonda, Abbie Hoffman, Joan Baez, etc. The other list was of regular citizens that were not so well known. Nixon had more than 50 thousand names on that second list. When I heard that I asked myself, "where the hell did Nixon get 50 thousand names from" .. and then I thought back to that

day in DC, when those vans with bullhorns pulled up and wanted and I realized that Tricky Dick had struck again.



OTMAR FISCHBACH WAS AT UDORN AFV, THAILAND; AND SERVED WITH THE JOLLY GREEN GIANTS, WHO WERE AIR RESCUE AND RECOVERY, PICKING UP DOWNED PILOTS, MOST OFTEN IN COUNTRY, AND IN NORTH VIETNAM. HE WAS ALSO TDY IN NAKKON PHANOM, THAILAND FOR TWO MONTHS.



Washington DC, April 24, 1971, the day after VVAW's Operation Dewey Canyon III.



Representative Bella Abzug speaking to VVAW at Operation Dewey Canyon III, April 19, 1971.

JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

JFK and the Unspeakable: Why He Died and Why It Matters By James W. Douglass (Orbis Books, 2008)

Let me begin by stating that this is probably the most important book I've ever read!

When John F. Kennedy was assassinated in November of 1963, I was a junior in high school. Everyone was shocked by the death of our youngest and most personable President ever, and over the years we have heard snippets of information that convinced the majority of Americans that the assassination had been the work of a conspiracy. The Warren Commission offered an official explanation of what had transpired, but it was immediately obvious that there were glaring factual problems throughout both the investigation and the document. We were, of course, about to hear another series of lies and misrepresentations that would increase America's role in Vietnam. In our lifetimes we have seen other official US Government travesties like the Watergate fiasco, Iran-Contra, and the Iraq War to rid Iraq of WMDs, or weapons of mass deception.

I have been fascinated with the assassination of JFK over the years, and I have a number of books and films on the subject. I have never seen any work to compare to "JFK and the Unspeakable" in detailed research and documentation. The murder of our President was shocking at the time, and it seemed to tilt our country and its policies away from the traditional role as the most beneficent and compassionate nation on the globe. Almost immediately, we found ourselves involved in the war in Vietnam, a senseless, cruel, and unnecessary conflict that tore apart our social fabric at home and tarnished our country's standing around the world. Suddenly, America seemed to have become a warmonger, a nation swaggering before the international community with bandoliers full of nuclear warheads slung over its shoulders, and a vast arsenal of state-of-the-art weapons stuffed in its waistband.

James W. Douglass and his wife have been peace activists for many years. A theologian, Douglass is an admirer of Thomas

Merton, a religious and spiritual writer who began to write about issues of war, peace, and militarism in the early 1960s. Merton shared his writings with a wide circle of friends, and after the assassination of JFK, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, and Bobby Kennedy he began to comment on the profound changes he saw in America's leadership and direction, and an incipient evil whose depth and deceit seemed beyond the capacity of words to describe. There was a very active push toward using

Staff urged Kennedy to send in troops to eliminate the communist threat, and to consider bombing Hanoi and even China to stop the communists once and for all. Air Force General Curtis LeMay was openly adversarial to JFK, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Lyman Lemnitzer argued for a policy of unlimited escalation in Southeast Asia, stating, "If we are given the right to use nuclear weapons, we can guarantee victory." Kennedy resisted, and in June of 1961, succeeded in

telling the UN that America was a country seeking peace, and soon after Khrushchev and Kennedy began a secretive exchange of communications that was based upon their common concern that a nuclear war could destroy the planet.

At the same time, Kennedy defied the CIA and the Joint Chiefs regarding the terrible threat posed by a communist regime in Cuba, just 90 miles off Florida's coast. In March of 1961, barely settled into the Oval Office, Kennedy rejected the CIA's well-established plan for "an amphibious/airborne assault" on Cuba. The CIA had been training a force of Cuban exiles for an invasion. Kennedy was skeptical of the plan, but he finally approved it, but emphasized that he would not introduce US forces, even if the invasion faced defeat on the beachhead. On April 15, 1961, eight B-26 bombers of the Cuban Expeditionary Force attacked the Cuban Air Force. Douglass does not explain how the exile army got access to B-26 bombers. The American air support never happened, and Castro's forces overcame the Bay of Pigs invasion on April 19th.

The CIA had not been sure of Kennedy's approval right up to the last minute, and they had prepared a covert alternative if he had denied their activities relative to the invasion. The CIA advisers would appear to be captured by the invaders, although they would continue the planning and execution of the raid from their "prison" cells. What this meant, in effect, was that the CIA considered itself above the rule of the President. When Robert Kennedy learned of this plan, he called it "virtually treason." JFK told a colleague that he wanted "to splinter the CIA in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds." He immediately issued National Security Action Memoranda (NSAMs) to remove all military-style operations from the reaches of the CIA. He very pointedly announced that General Lemnitzer and the Joint Chiefs would be his primary military advisers, and then he asked the three CIA officials, including Director Allen Dulles, who had steered the Bay of Pigs operation

Suddenly, America seemed to have become a warmonger, a nation swaggering before the international community with bandoliers full of nuclear warheads slung over its shoulders . . .

our nuclear weapons to obliterate Communists in Cuba, Laos, and anywhere our sacred concepts of democracy and capitalism were not embraced with unquestioning enthusiasm. Merton called this frightening presence and its influence "The Unspeakable."

"JFK and the Unspeakable" is a history book, compelling in its research and documentation, as I've said above. Its revelations are both enlightening and troubling, and it seems there is a new disclosure almost every page.

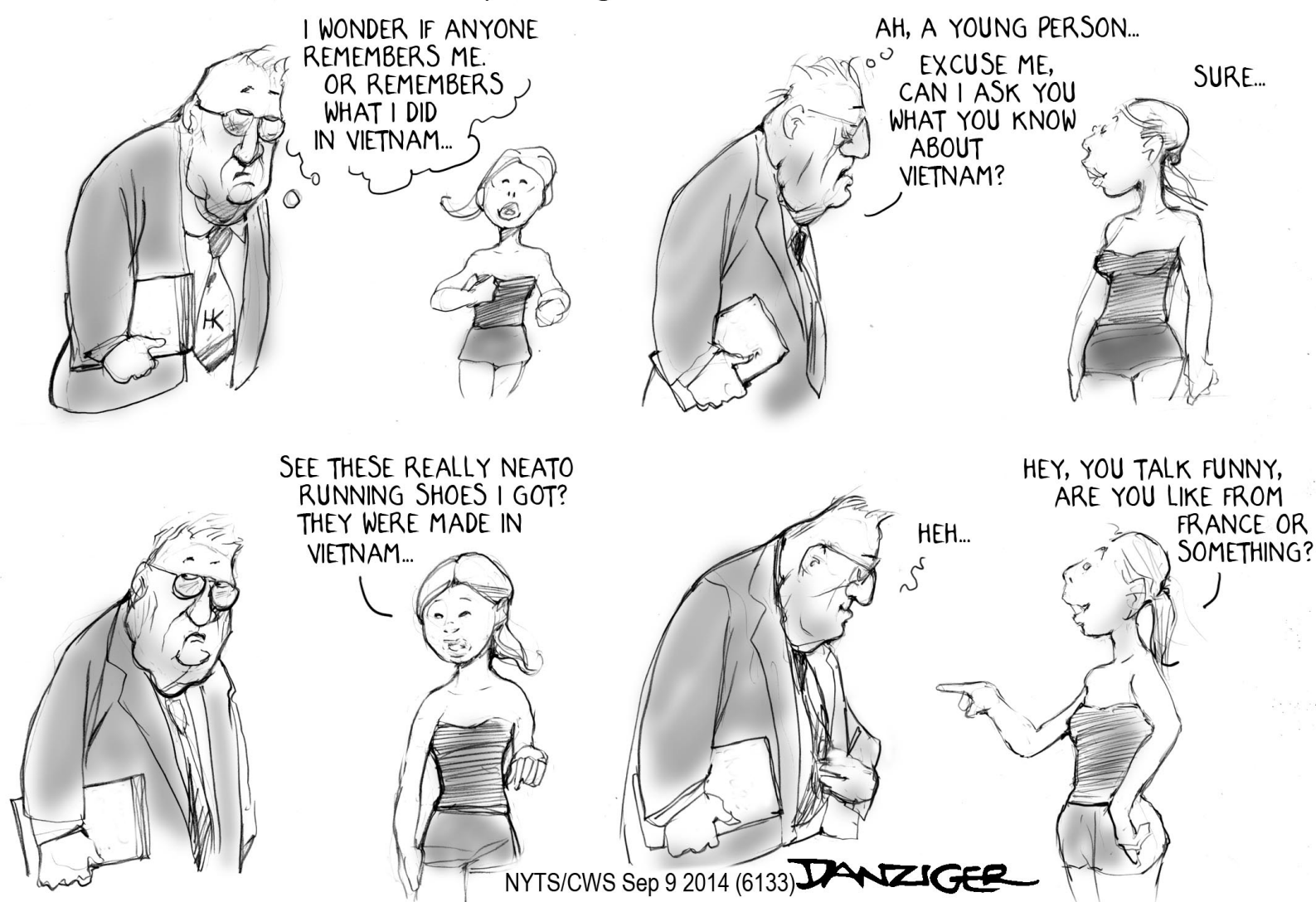
The story begins when Kennedy first arrives in the Oval Office. At that point JFK was a committed cold warrior, and not fully aware of all the preparations for war that were already in place. Laos was the major focus then, far more than Vietnam, and Kennedy immediately began to question the Eisenhower administration's policies there. Laos was experiencing intense civil strife bordering upon civil war. The CIA and our military had deposed Souvanna Phouma, who wanted Laos to remain a neutral nation, in favor of the tyrannical anti-communist General Phoumi Nosavan. The Joint Chiefs of

negotiating with Soviet President Nikita Khrushchev to mutually support a neutral and independent Laos to be governed by a government elected by the Laotian people. The CIA and military saw this as losing Laos, and they immediately began to request sending American troops to save Vietnam. As the pressure mounted, in October Kennedy very boldly told a public lie, that Pentagon leaders were "reluctant to send organized US combat units into Southeast Asia." He increased the number of advisors working with the South Vietnamese army, but steadfastly resisted the pressure to send combat troops.

Things had become tense, almost desperate. Lemnitzer and LeMay insisted they be given authorization to use nuclear weapons in Berlin and Southeast Asia. In August, Khrushchev had begun building the Berlin Wall. The military wanted to smash it with our tanks, but the President resisted. Tensions increased, but shortly before JFK was scheduled to speak to the United Nations, Khrushchev sent a note expressing his concerns about the specter of a nuclear war. Kennedy responded,

continued on next page

Henry Kissinger Out With New Book



JFK and the Unspeakable

continued from previous page

to resign. Kennedy also moved to cut the CIA's budget dramatically in the upcoming years. This was completely contrary to the precedents set by the Eisenhower administration, and the powers in Washington were shocked. Meanwhile, JFK had come to appreciate the enormous power and influence of the CIA and military in Washington, and he began to wonder if he, as President, could ever be strong enough to actually steer the policies of the United States.

Then came the Cuban Missile Crisis of October, 1962. By this time, Kennedy and Khrushchev had been exchanging secret correspondences for some time, and they agreed that it was imperative to the survival of the planet that they find ways to avoid nuclear war. This is the message of this book, and the great revelation about JFK's worth to humanity, and the scope of the loss when his work was abruptly interrupted. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a test, and the two leaders found common ground and quietly, covertly defused the situation without resorting to death or destruction. And, on both sides, the military powers saw

this as an unconscionable affront to their authorities, perhaps even as treason.

There were twenty one confidential letters between Kennedy and Khrushchev. Released by the State Department in 1993, the letters reveal that the Soviet Premier was also concerned that his country's military and foreign service people would disapprove. The letters were often contentious, but sometimes friendly and informal, with descriptions of children and the joys of life interspersed with political topics. They liken their responsibilities to Noah's Ark, where the "clean" and the "unclean" were brought together and forced to coexist in order for any to survive. "We have no other alternative," Khrushchev wrote, "either we should live in peace and cooperation so that the Ark maintains its buoyancy, or else it sinks."

"JFK and the Unspeakable" is an enormous book, with page after page of carefully documented information that gives the reader a fresh new understanding of the times and events that so impacted our lives. The book gives great insight into the militarism that has

engulfed America since Kennedy was assassinated. It details many aspects of the murder, leaving little doubt what forces were behind it, but it never specifically names the actual murderers. It is a collection of anecdotes and incidents, the pieces of a puzzle crafted with a jigsaw's careful, twisted precision. It is not a conspiracy theory, but of course the reader has to come away thoroughly and completely convinced that if there was no conspiracy, there was a coincidence of circumstances and an avoidance of facts that defy all imagination.

The point of this book is not to pass judgment. "JFK and the Unspeakable" is essentially a portrait of John Kennedy, and a story of his coming to terms with the realities of international politics in the age of the mushroom cloud. Kennedy dared to believe in the basic worth of every human being on the planet, including the communist Nikita Khrushchev. Stripping away the protocols and pretensions of politics and military might, Kennedy discovered that universal nuclear annihilation was not a foregone conclusion. He chose to pursue peaceful solutions to the world's problems, and the

Soviet Premier met him halfway. The warmongers were put in their places, and the final chapter that took place in Dallas that terrible day in 1963 was almost certainly their response. The author of this book describes many fascinating events relevant to the assassination, and his research sheds a bright light upon the political environment that led to the silencing of John F. Kennedy. It is the huge preponderance of information that leads the reader to draw a conclusion, not the minute technical details. The result is an astounding, revealing, convincing and very troubling book. What a shame that John Kennedy didn't have more time to do his work. Again, as a Vietnam veteran, an opponent to militarism and war, and a concerned political spectator over the past fifty years of American history, I think "JFK and the Unspeakable" is probably the most important book I've ever read. I urge you to judge it for yourself. ☺

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."

The ARVN A-28 Pilots Wept

JIM WILLINGHAM

After the horrible massacre of the North Vietnamese people, including some women combatants, at Katum Artillery Base on 4/3/71, I sat with the ARVN A-28 pilots over dinner at the Bien Hoa officers club. They grinned like the Cheshire cat in Alice in Wonderland. Then they got somber. I went with them to their barracks. We sat on two bunks facing each other, with the older man, an F-5 pilot, sitting in a chair facing them. We wept, cried, bawled with grief and horror to the edge of despair for 5 minutes. Then the older man, Captain Trung, brought us out of it.

One man took out a framed picture of Ho Chi Minh, placed it on a shelf above a dresser at the head of the beds, then placed a copy of Lenin's Third Internationale in English below it. Then they all took out their individual copies and started to laugh. One man said, "Oh that Ho Chi Minh! I cannot believe he was the same man who liked the Third Internationale!" Another, "Oh I can not believe Lenin was

the same man who wrote the Third Internationale!" Another, "Oh that Bac Giap! He does not know anything! We will have to teach him about community relations after the war!"

Another, "After the war, I want to be in sanitation and with community relations!" Another, "After the war, I want to be in water and with community relations!" Still another, "After the war, I want to have my own business and be with community relations!"

Can I do that?" "Yes! Ha!Ha! You can do that!" "They will not put me in jail?" No! Ha!Ha!" "They will not put you in jail!"

Then Captain Trung said, "After the war, I want to be on the Central Committee for Community Relations." I told him, "Then I will put in a good word for you." "With who?" "With the Lady in the long purple dress." Someone said, "We do not ever say her name."

"I understand. For her protection and that of her family." Then they started talking about the

Third Internationale.

"What do you think this means? How can we apply this in a practical way?"

"From the bottom up." They told me they had to go through the same process every time.

Four days later our C-7 was gunned at on takeoff from Dalat Army Airstrip by many people in black, small northerners in tall green grass. They shot out our left engine. I called Air Cavalry from Bear Cat and Captain Trung from Bien Hoa AFB, 2 F-5's. I instructed him on 4 air strikes north and north-west of Dalat City, called 2 artillery marker shots for them, then said, "Now I will let you do your job."

He said, "Let me do my job!" "Yes, sir!" I could tell he despised it.

The F-5s finished and left just as the 40 choppers flew in over the mass of them down in the grass, 5,500 unfortunate lost souls.

The people of Dalat had to burn the grass again. That was the last time.

I told the Lady about Captain Trung and the others, also the soldiers and some others from the other side I'd talked with (wearing ARVN uniforms from Loc Ninh). He retired.

They all joined over, the pilots I had met and 3/4 of the Army. Mr. Trung became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party living in Ho Chi Minh City.

You think we were anti-war? Try Vietnam. The Lady told me, "There will be radical forgiveness. They will give flowers."

The scars of those horrible scenes haunt me, always. I am upheld by the ability of the Vietnamese, with deep clarity 4,000 years old, to transform themselves. Vietnam has become incredibly beautiful, a golden star of hope for the entire Third World.



JIM WILLINGHAM IS A VVAW MEMBER WHO LIVES IN FLORIDA.



1972 Action outside of C.R.E.E.P. offices in New York City.

1968

War. American as apple pie. GI - government issue. Your soul might belong to God, but your ass belongs to the US Army.

Hood, sweet young sad eyed GI

Pissed off
empty

Stretched too thin for fuck you
just wants left alone

Rotated outta Nam cool your heels do your time worlds collide
would collide no matter where no matter what - Germany

Wraith kid scared everybody death smudged looking for that far
away

Could have dissolved like salt no energy to him occupied so little
space hardly there

UCMJ got him

Count Cadence! Count:

Spec 4
busted
PFC
busted
Private
busted
court martial
stockade
gone

Bring it on down:

airborne
ranger
combat
dark eyed

death
from
above

gone

Hood
sweet young
Hood

You old men satisfied?

Made him a ghost

Sweet young sad eyed GI

gone.

—Richard Wells

Can You Hear Me?

Just now I remembered long ago
When I sat on the side of a mountain
And far up above me in the clear blue sky
An airplane circled towards the south faintly.
One could here the props, but I could not
Talk to it.

My radio was shattered beyond repair.
The back-up radio had disappeared in a
Violent burst of grays and dirt.

There were six of us when once
We numbered 24.
The green of the valley poked
Its tendrils up towards us and
Rocks and holes were all around us.

I couldn't talk to the airplane
Flying so high up above.
Silence except for an
Occasional buzzing sound that
Announced the presence of an AK-47.

And above me in the clear blue sky
An airplane winging its way to the
Horizon and I couldn't talk to it.

—Eugene Lee Neese, Jr.
3d Marine, 2nd Bt. 12th Marines
Vietnam 1966-67

The Passing of Fred Branfman

Breaking my silence

Voices....., Fred I heard them

In Vearsailles with you standing close by

I spoke them

If only the coalition of the deaf

could hear them

You did well

good gentle man

Thanks, Fred

—Al Hubbard

Rest and Relaxation

GREGORY ROSS

We were Squids* and because of our deployment on the USS Newport News[CA-148], a Cruiser in the 7th Fleet on the Gun Line a mile or so off the coast of Vietnam, we were REMF's.** They were combat Marines: larger than life, heavily armed, camouflaged in uniform, in war paint, in the mud and blood of War. They were survivors of a recent, a few hours ago recent, fire fight.

They were no older than us, no bigger, no stronger but, feral; wired to survive, to defend their kin. They moved like animals: cautious, vigilant, easily startled but, quickly settling to survive, to save themselves and their brothers.

Battle had brought to dominance a primordial DNA we all have. Everyone has the potential to kill, even those who are sure they can't or won't. Even in the jungle, there are those who can't or won't but they and you will not know for sure until the survival gene attacks.

In the spring of 1969 we watched them come aboard, jump down from the helicopter suspicious of the relative safety of the ship. Even under direct

orders they were loath to turn in their weapons but, when they did surrender the instruments of their survival, the machines that had come to be a part of them, an extension of their psyche, they seemed to diminish, their legend to lessen, to become like us, teenagers and young men yet forever different.

This was to be a small R and R event. Two nights, three days. A chance to shower and shave, to sleep, to eat hot food, to be safe. A few days out of the worst of harms way. A chance for a Marine officer to help his men. A chance to rehumanize.

Appalled, we watched as the ship's moronic Executive Officer had the Marines searched on deck after disembarking the helicopter, moments after letting go of their weapons, shortly after engagement. Any found holding drugs were put into the Brig. The XO was considered a cretin by most, enlisted and officer alike. The Admiral, the Commander of the 7th Fleet, the highest ranking Naval Officer in the Pacific Theater on whose Flag Ship this was taking place, very quickly

found out about the Brig and at once released the Grunts, the men prosecuting the War, the reason we REMFs were here, all of us, including the XO.

I know this is not scuttlebutt (gossip). The officer in charge of our small Communications Technician (CT) compliment witnessed it. At an official function held in the officers mess, a Korean General, Commander of the in country ROK (Republic of Korea) Marines was addressed by the XO in all earnestness with this statement, "Do your guns make as much noise as our guns?" while clasping his hands and smiling. The Korean General took a moment to stare at the XO, then turned and talked to the officer next to him.

This is scuttlebutt, though I am not only willing to accept it's veracity but, hoping for it. Our CT officer heard rumors filtering down from senior officers, of the Admiral angrily dressing down the XO about the idiocy of the Brig event and in his final statement, calmly telling him that in the "Old Navy," he could have and would have, had him keelhauled.***

**A slang term for US Naval personnel used derogatorily by Marines.*

***"Rear Echelon Mother F*!#er", a disparaging term for non-combatants of any branch of the Service.*

****The "keel" is the beam running along the entire bottom of the ship and supporting the frame. To drag a person through the water from one side of the ship to the other, as punishment is "keelhauled." Often, a death sentence if not by drowning then by infection from barnacle wounds and filth along the bottom of a ship.*



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



On the Beach

MARC LEVY

Pinned by pebbles, row upon row of five thousand dollars in blue engraved travelers checks sit like butterflies fanning their wings on the hot dry sand. If curious children draw near I will shoo them away. Here is how it happened:

After a week in Ha Long Bay sharing a small wood boat with a garrulous German couple who constantly fought and drank and bacchanaled, when the boat finally pulled to port, Seth and I found a cheap guest house, set our packs down in the large cubicle room, and slept for three hours. Then it was time to wash our clothes.

There is an art to skillfully soaping the cloth, plunging the moist clothing into colorful plastic buckets, wringing them by twisting the fabric tight, methodically working the twist forward, until squeezing out the last drops of water.

As the sun set we hung our wash on green nylon cord bought in a thriving market in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, twenty cents a foot. After a hearty meal of fish, soup and rice, and a short walk up the main street and back, we turned in for the night. Early the next morning, we paid for our five dollar room, grabbed our gear, and headed for the tunnel that lead to the beach.

For fifty cents, a young

boy wearing a white shirt, thin gray trousers and flip flops lead us through the war time shelter. We stooped low and followed his every step, the smooth walls fragrant with time and cool to the touch. A hundred meters later we stepped onto the gleaming white sand. There were no other travelers. The beach was eerily quiet.

I spread my towel and lay down. Seth waded into the tranquil sea. "Come on out," he shouted from fifty yards out.

I did not hesitate, and walked straight into the ocean. The cold invigorating water quickly rose above my ankles, my knees, my hips, and finally ringed my neck. "It's great," I shouted, and waved to Seth. "It's great!" Then an all consuming dread overwhelmed me.

A money belt is a portable safe, a nylon vault for credit cards, visas, hard cash, travelers checks, a passport. The seasoned traveler wears it securely hidden inside his pant waist, and only removes it before going to sleep. I had mine beneath my swim trunks. The salty ocean nipped my chin.

Frantically, I swam to shore, leaving Seth to wonder what was wrong. Kneeling behind a sand dune, fearing the worst, I unzipped the black nylon sleeve and gin-



gerly removed its contents. A few ink stamps in the passport were smudged. The paper currency was slightly moist; the travelers checks were sopping wet. But to panic "What is the purpose of your visit? How long do you intend to stay?" would have only made things worse.

I concentrated on fanning the passport pages to unstick them, and next set the booklet upright on the blistering hot sand. Six inches apart, placing pebbles at their center, I lay out five rows of currency and checks. A soft sea breeze made them flit like dragon flies. In less than five minutes the sun and sand had worked their magic. Row by row I gathered up several thousand dollars of

checks and bills, returned them to the pouch, slide the dry passport behind them, cinched the belt around my waist, zippered it shut, tucked it beneath my bathing suit, and at last breathed easy. Then I stood and waved to Seth.

"C'mon back out," he yelled, both his hands gaily splashing water.

But for the moment I'd had enough excitement and preferred the safety of solid dry land.



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.

Obama Foreign Policy Boiled Down to Four Words: "Don't Do Stupid Stuff." Meanwhile, Over at Pentagon Planning

"STUPID STUFF"? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?
SOME SORT OF CODE?

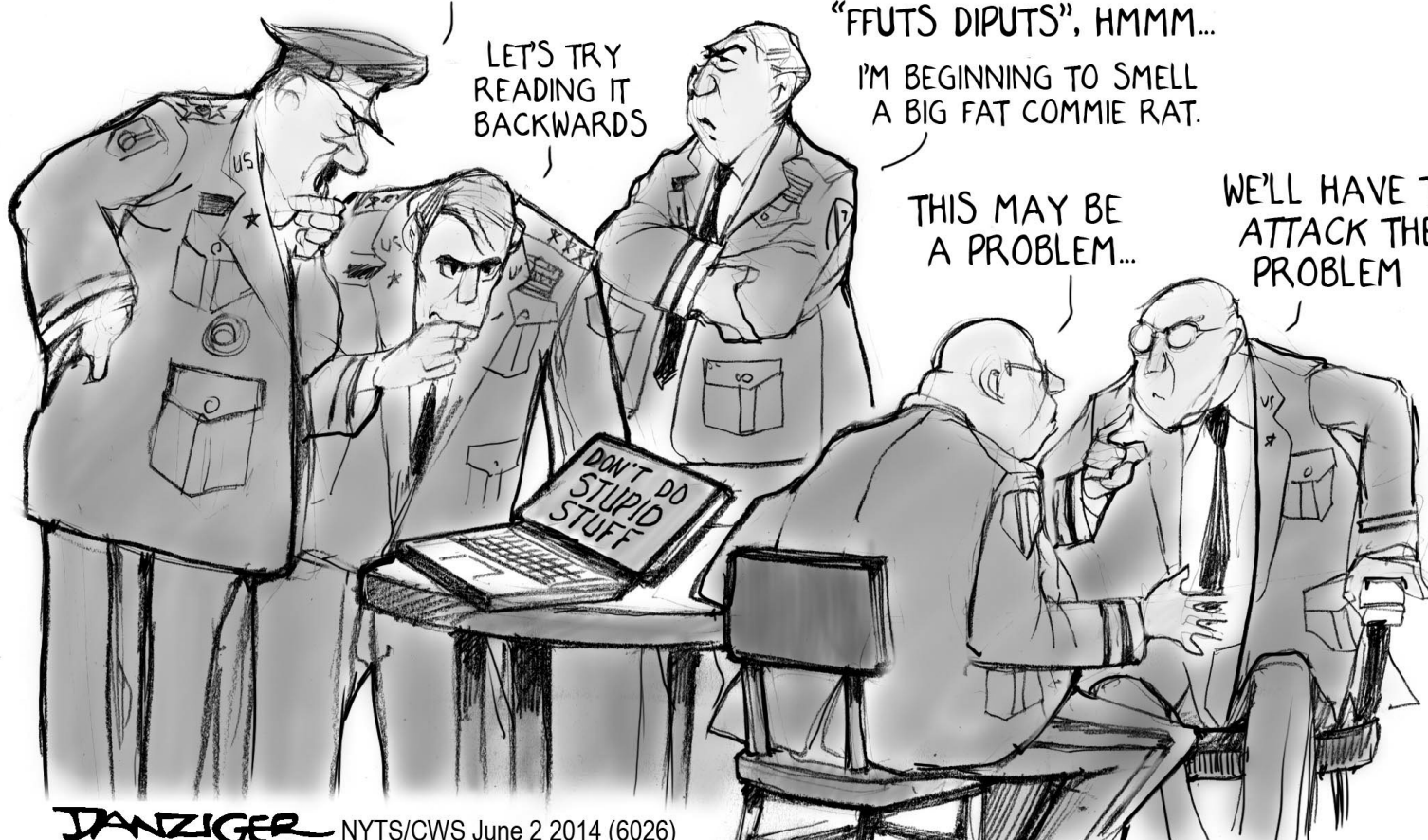
LET'S TRY
READING IT
BACKWARDS

"FFUTS DIPUTS", HMMM...

I'M BEGINNING TO SMELL
A BIG FAT COMMIE RAT.

THIS MAY BE
A PROBLEM...

WE'LL HAVE TO
ATTACK THE
PROBLEM



NYTS/CWS June 2 2014 (6026)

Deserts of Civilization

I have seen armies marching in the deserts of our civilization

I have seen the ruins of great and forgotten nations that lie
beneath the indifferent Sand They Walk on

I have seen the swirling dust of countless warriors fallen before
them rise up to sting their eyes

Throats parched by the bloody unrelenting thirst for power that
blazes over them

but they are soldiers What do they care for all this

Soldiers know only this That they are marching Marching into
the cold grey fog of war

That is where you have sent them Mr President that is where in
our name you have sent them into the damp clinging embrace
of death

They are soldiers They know this That is all they know That
is all they care to know

it is enough

But it is not enough for me

The authority you have is not yours alone it rests on as little
as a single vote

mine

And in my name you have sent them

So Think on this Mr. President if all that stood between you
and this adventure you have set upon was me

There would be no negotiating no compromises no backdoor
channels no options no deals

Just this ultimatum if you choose to go to war whether the cause
is folly or glory I do not care I only care that you pay a price

The price of moral leadership

These are my terms

for every soldier trained for combat a thousand jobless trained
for jobs.

for every soldier thrown into battle a thousand homeless
sheltered with dignity

for every wounded soldier a thousand hungry deprived and
abused children must be cared for till they can care for themselves

for every dead soldier that falls in your cause a thousand Viet
Nam veterans must be honored and helped to live out their lives
with pride and respect

And if more die than that Or more are wounded than that Then
thousands of elderly must be cared for and assured a graceful end

for every soldier That survives There must be services for them
to find their lives again

Whether victorious or defeated We owe them Their lives back
with privilege and distinction

And finally Mr. President for every dollar you spend ten dollars
must be spent on education health care alternative energy
pollution urban renewal farm aid and research

Yes research Mr President Not in the tools of war but in the tools
of progress tools that improve the human condition New medicines
for old diseases New cures for crippled lives

Yes the peaceful research and development of our future And all
that we do must be shared freely With all the world

So that no nation needs what another nation has

So that no people are deprived by greed or prejudice The chance
to share in our bounty and goodwill

Those are my terms Mr President The price is high

"Too high" you say? Then I say the price of this war is too high

"Too impractical" you say? Then what practical value does this
war have? If it does not assure us a better future

These are my ideals unrealistic perhaps But what better ideals
do you offer us to die for?

What ideals could you offer to justify the suffering you will cause

I put it to you No cause could be greater If you do not agree you
lose my vote you lose the authority of your leadership your office
becomes bankrupt you become Saddam Hussein

And I shall deny you the power of my one small stone placed on
the scales of power

And you shall find my opposition at every turn

And I will stand before you and bring you down

You cannot command the human spirit to be still

—*Dimitri Rimsky*

My Lai, Vietnam, 1968



UN School, Gaza, 2014



NYTS/CWS July 27 2014 (6075)
DANZIGER



Veterans Day, New York City.

Kingdom of Cambodia

MARC LEVY

Each morning outside the Capital Hotel, a cement block building located in Phnom Penh, a sizable group of young eager Cambodians wait to ferry backpackers on their Honda Cubs. I always pick Elephant Man. Burliest of the lot, he speaks English, charges fifty cents a ride. I hop on his feisty scooter and put my arms around his waist.

"Where to?" he asked.
"Ministry of Information."
"Why you need?" he asks as we dart through traffic.
Years ago the Khmer Rouge had killed his family.
"Hey, why you need?"
I tell him a small bribe obtains a Media Pass.
"To stay longer at Angkor

Wat."
"Oh...OK..." says Elephant Man, pulling up to an office once used by the French. I hopped off the Cub. "See you tomorrow." Elephant Man disappeared in a roar of blue smoke.
The MOI clerk, a gaunt man whose angular skull inhabits his broad Khmer face, whose threadbare white shirt hangs from his body like a wind blown leaf, whose thinning hair reveals traces of something near fatal, said, in purposeful voice, "You passport, please." I offered him the document, a 2×2 ID photo, and a counterfeit resume composed the day before on computer at the Foreign Correspondents Club. He inspected each item with

deliberate care. "One hour," he said, pocketing the money. We shook hands. "One hour, s'il vous plaît."
To pass the time and to avoid the oppressive sweltering sun, I walked the beautiful narrow side streets. The faded stucco walls of the low buildings, once bright red or solid blue, recalled sections of Paris. I entered a half dozen dry good stores, peeked into classrooms where students chalked graceful Khmer script on ancient slate blackboards. Inside a former French post office, the lone chandelier long past its glory, I bought exquisite stamps, tissue thin aerograms, a laminate phone card made in Australia. When I returned to the office even the

clerk was sweating.
"It is here," he said, extending the coveted pass.
I took it, and give him another few dollars.
"Merci, monsieur. Merci beaucoup."
He closed his eyes, then opened them, and bowed slightly. His raised palms pressed together, his lips gathered to shape a smile. A survivor's smile. Then he was gone.



MARC LEVY WAS 3RD PLATOON MEDIC IN DELTA 1/7 FIRST CAVALRY IN 1970. HIS WEBSITE IS MEDIC IN THE GREEN TIME.

ព្រះរាជាណាចក្រកម្ពុជា
ជាតិ សាសនា ព្រះមហាក្សត្រ
KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING

ព័ត៌មាន
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION
№ 931 ម.ព



ឈ្មោះ : MARC LEVY
NAME :

តំណាង : THE NATION
Representative of :

សញ្ជាតិ : U.S.A
Nationality :

ប្រធាននាយកដ្ឋានមណ្ឌលព័ត៌មាន
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Victor N. Navasky
President and Publisher

To Whom It May Concern:

Mr. Marc Levy is a free lance journalist. He has contributed several pieces to us in the past, his most recent being an article describing the village of Todos Santos in Guatemala, Central America. He has also written for The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times and The Guardian. We recommend him highly for feature and full length articles related to travel.

Yours sincerely,

Orita Cerveza-Fria
Orita Cerveza-Fria
Managing Editor

in transit

on the train between Prague and Vienna
I wanted to compose a poem
something in a holy moment

less than the Elevation at the Mass of course
but still filled with incense and breasts
and no less than the wetness between a woman's legs

instead I remember Basic Training
1969 and how I'd aim my M-14
at a target that looked like a man

only in outline so I'd imagine
a Communist except I'd never met a Communist
much less a Czech

but I'd learn how to kill a Red and would
today I imagine the guy
seated catty-corner from me is the grandson

of my enemy and the countryside
rushing by is trying and the train is trying
and trying

to compel the two of us in some direction
any direction that's true and dark and
improbable as a tunnel through a foreign mountain

—John Samuel Tieman

Holding My Breath...

GREGORY ROSS

Unexpectedly, I smiled. The bus pulled out of the Greyhound station. I was 19. I smiled. Surprised myself. I turned my head to the window. I did not want the others to see me smile. But, the unknown and its possibilities loomed. Good or bad, I was getting out of Lancaster, out of Western New York, out of a dead end full time job days and a liberal arts night school full load. I was 19. Life had already hurt me, how much worse could it get. I was 19, provincial, ignorant, in denial of what could happen in the next four years. Naive, 19 and on my way to Great Lakes, Illinois to start Naval Boot Camp. I was 19, confident that I had beat the system. "Join the Navy and see the world..." I was mistakenly sure that would not include Vietnam.

The snow and cold and ice of Illinois in October, November and December was no surprise to a Western New York, Buffalo suburban kid. Boot camp proved to be like a combination of Catholic School, the Boy Scouts and working for my Father, but on steroids and much less sleep. I kept in line, did what I was told and sort of disappeared or so I tried. Our

Company Commander, a Combat Veteran, was a small but, scary man. Hard eyes. Nicotine and whiskey gravelly voice. Tight, compact, wiry muscles. He commanded without raising his voice. He gave us the rules and told us to follow them and we would make it through, we would learn what we needed: do what you are told. He was hard, demanding but, fair.

We were bunked alphabetically. We pulled duty alphabetically. Directly after Ross came Sabe. He pulled watch right after me. Waking him up at three in the morning to relieve me and begin his watch, he lashed out in his sleep and I sustained a black eye. The truth would have probably worked but, we came up with a lie we thought would work better, even though it made me look like somewhat of an idiot. The next morning at muster, the Company Commander asked what happened. I told him I was so tired after watch that I walked into a door. He looked at me and right next to me was Sabe, looking guilty. You could see he could see. He grinned and told me to be more careful next time. No one got in trouble.

Half way through boot camp we had a base-wide inspection. We were to make everything and ourselves perfect. No slack beds, no lockers out of line, no dust, spit polished shoes, perfect dress uniforms, clean shaven and an exact knot on our World War II era spats. We stood at attention in front of our bunks as the inspector, inspected. When he got to me I kept my eyes forward, breathed as normally as I could manage, tried not to show any fear. It seemed the inspector spent an inordinate time going over my bed, locker and me. When he moved on I internally let out a sigh of relief.

When he was done he turned and said we had done well, but one of us had let the Company down. He walked up to me and said I needed to learn how to tie a correct knot on my left spat. I was the only ding. The inspector turned and crisply, militarily walked out. No one moved. We had not been dismissed. The Company Commander slowly walked over to me. His eyes were hard. His demeanor quiet, white hot, angry. I could only imagine what would happen to the only ding, to the only deficient

recruit, in his company.

The Company Commander came up to me, looked me in the eyes and said, "Let's see what you did wrong, Ross" He bent down and inspected the knot. When he stood up, he looked me in the eyes again with those hard eyes and said, "There is nothing wrong with that knot. It is tradition, no company gets a four oh." His eyes still hard but the corners of his mouth slightly turned up he turned to walk away and said, firmly, "Dismissed." I did not expect to encounter compassion in the Military. I am always surprised by sympathy.

...Breathing.



GREGORY ROSS SERVED IN THE NAVY, THE GUN LINE OFF COAST OF VIETNAM 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*

Rock 'n Rollin' to Vietnam

MIC TERRY

On my way to Vietnam on a shallow draft cargo ship (LKA) to provide close support for III MAF, a few mates and I petitioned the Captain to allow us when not on duty to play music to those on board through the ships entertainment system. Until that time the only music heard was shit kickin' C&W and many who weren't fuckin' lifers wanted to hear something a bit more contemporary. The Captain gave his ok and our first night on the air we played Brown Shoes Don't Make It by Zappa and

the Mothers of Invention which fell with disfavor on the ears of those in officer country. It was something about Zappa's lyrics, "nastyng on the white house lawn," they felt was inappropriate and we were told that from then on we had to provide a play list in advance to the old man if we wished to continue.

Our small group realized that our venture would be shut down pretty quick and thought it better to get some payback in early. We put together a play list which only

contained titles and stuck SSB in amongst the rather bland 50's rock and roll of the rest of the program. The program was given the ok by the old man and about an hour into the program my mate was at the mic while I was engineering and Jimi started playing.

It took a few minutes for the Captain, XO and assorted other lifers to recognize the tune and a couple of minutes after that the compartment door burst open and there was the Captain looking rather peeved. After my

perfunctory "attention on deck" and the two of us snapping to in seaman like fashion, the Captain screamed at us for quite a long time about being communists and how he was going to fix all of us when we got to Vietnam and how we knew what he meant by fix us.

He finally told us to close up and take our filthy music with us. We shut things down quickly as we were kind of freaked and went below to to our berthing compartment. When we got to the bottom of the ladder we saw the rest of our mates sitting rather dumbfounded around the long table in the middle of the space. Then they told us that that in our haste to jump to attention the mic was keyed on and everyone on the ship heard the Captains tirade.

The rest of my military career was happily shorter than I had anticipated and, although most of that time thoroughly sucked, there was a sense among us that things might change for the better.



MIC TERRY IS A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW.



Anti-Nixon demo, Chicago 1974.

The Light Where Shadows End

R.G. CANTALUPO

Excerpt from The Light Where Shadows End, an unpublished memoir.

Days and then weeks, the light through the bamboo blinds casting bars of shadow as I lay.

West. My window faced west, the western sky, the place where the horizon ended and darkness dragged a train of stars and a moon when it passed.

I asked Peaches to keep my blinds open so that I could see the sparks and streams of firefights punctuated by the far-off rat-tat-tat of AKs and M-16s.

Peaches said the firefights were too far away to hear, that all we could hear from the hospital were the rumble of B-52s dropping bombs, an artillery battery from the edge of the city, that I was seeing firefights in my mind.

"No, I can hear them. Small patrols ambushed in the jungle, a platoon in deep shit, I hear everything."

"That's your imagination talking. You still wish you were there."

"With my platoon? No. I was done with the war before the war was done with me. No, what I hear is real. Ghosts. Live ghosts."

"You're a live ghost," she mocked.

"Yeah, I guess I am."

Maybe she was right. As I lay in my bed, reality was as fragmentary as my terror dreams. Past and present, inside and outside, the war I remembered and the war that droned on and on, coalesced into images I could not decipher as real or unreal.

Demerol, Peaches said, was the drug I was taking for brain pain. Demerol created hallucinations,

sleeping and waking dreams where one scene shifted into another like jump-cuts without continuity or contextual connections.

In a Demerol world, there was no interior and exterior reality. There was merely the emotional context of the hallucination, of the scene played out in my brain.

But after awhile my world and the Demerol world seemed the same. Days slid into nights and nights drifted into bad dreams. Images drenched with fear, grief, love, hate, jump-cut from one to another. All was real, all, a dream.

The only certainty I knew was the bed where I lay, the sounds of nurses and doctors and wounded soldiers passing by, the hushed voices, moans, and wheels rolling past.

And Peaches, waking me in the morning with my breakfast and my meds. Peaches smiling, asking me how I felt that morning, if I was ready to have my bandages changed, her soft, warm fingers against my lips as she placed an imaginary bullet in my mouth, as she slid the scissors under the tape and cut—then ripped the thirteen dried gauze bandages off my multiple shrapnel wounds to prevent infection while I gritted through sharp, excruciating, torturous pain.

I was fucked up, but I would survive. I would get better. I would return home.

But I didn't know what getting better meant.

Would I be able to move my left arm or would it just remain limp at my side?

What did my face look like? What did my body look like under the gauze?

I didn't ask for a mirror. I

didn't want the revelation. Not then. Not any time soon. I looked at the deep, angry gouges of my open wounds when Peaches peeled the gauze off, and I hated what I saw.

This wasn't me. This wasn't who I remembered.

I was an athlete. I loved to play football, baseball, to box, to swim. I was a wrestler in college before I got drafted.

And now...

I would get better, but no, I wouldn't wrestle again, not with a limp left arm, not with a broken skull filled in with bone cartilage.

I'd awakened from brain surgery new, with a new un-lived life, but I didn't know who I was. My wife, my mother, friends were waiting for my return, but something more than shrapnel had been removed from my brain.

The I that made me I had been extracted along with the shrapnel in my brain. I woke from the surgery blank, the only emotional connection to the past began shortly before and after the mortar explosion. There were no faces in my dreams, not faces from home anyway, not faces I recognized as my own.

As I lay in the unlit room staring up at the blank ceiling sky, I could not imagine a single face, not Janice's, not my mother's, not one's.

If a face emerged from the darkness, it was dead: Lonnie's face, Devil's, Baby San's. Vietnamese faces. Faces from the village of Trang Bang. Faces with gone eyes and dead stares. Faces without mouths. Faces on heads without bodies. Faces floating down a black river without a name.

Beyond my hospital window in Saigon, the war went on. In the

dark, the flickering shadows cast by flares parachuting down, the whompf, whompf, whompf of mortars and artillery, the staccato arguments between AKs and M16s, the droning rumble of the B-52s carpet-bombing the Earth went on and on.

But I could not see my face, my body's silhouette patrolling among the images I saw in my night terrors. There were only shadows in the flat, grey plaster ceiling, only the phantasmagoria of war.

And I wasn't there.

I was a shadow among shadows, a silhouette flat as a pop-up target on the rifle range at Fort Ord.

I was the shadow where light ended, the shadow beyond the light.

Years later, I would realize I would always remain that shadow, and the light of "The World" would never quite reach me the way I once believed and imagined.



R. G. CANTALUPO'S (ROSS CANTON) WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED IN OVER A HUNDRED LITERARY JOURNALS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES, CANADA, AND ENGLAND. HIS AWARD-WINNING VIETNAM WAR MEMOIR "THE LIGHT WHERE SHADOWS END" WAS SERIALIZED IN THE LITERARY JOURNAL "WAR, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS". HIS INTERVIEW ABOUT HIS VVAW EXPERIENCE WAS RECENTLY PUBLISHED IN TIME LIFE'S THE VIETNAM WARS. HE WAS AWARDED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V DURING HIS TOUR IN 1968-69 WITH THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION.



Pete Zastrow and Barry Romo from VVAW delegation to Vietnam meeting with Vietnamese, 1987.

Chelsea Manning – The Price of Conscience

WILLIAM POTVIN

Military whistleblowers deserve our commitment. They are heroes and we need more of them. Without exception, they are routinely ground up by the very system that they have sincerely attempted to steer back onto its moral and constitutional course.

Chelsea Manning, currently serving a 35-year sentence in Leavenworth is the whistleblower that first got my attention over three years ago. As long as she is doing time, she must not be forgotten. I would like to tell her story, particularly because our current administration shows no signs of relenting on its record-breaking war on whistleblowers.

When Chelsea (then Bradley) released the "Collateral Murder Video" to WikiLeaks, it was done out of a sense of consciousness that such actions by our troops are ugly, immoral, illegal and deserve to be viewed by the American public. (If not viewed yet, Google it now.) Although not on a par with the My Lai Massacre, it depicts the slaughter of innocent civilians (including two Reuters employees), and even the shooting of rescue workers using a stretcher. The incident was hidden from *Reuter's* inquiries about their lost people. We all pay for this shit and are told our defense dollars are used to make us more safe.

Bradley was so troubled by this and other acts that were being perpetrated on innocent peoples that he made the decision to break his oath to the Army. He saw that we are making enemies displaying our military might and covering up most every act. In communicating this information, Bradley was, in my mind, an American hero.

I recall that my original hope was that Manning's family was the type that nurtured moral values,

and Bradley, having a strong sense of "right and wrong" could not live with the observations he made as an analyst. Turns out that Manning's home life in Oklahoma was far from nurturing. It was dysfunctional. His father was a federal employee and his mother a Welch citizen. My theory is that Bradley was especially sensitive towards bullying. Think of a male in our culture at 5' 1 1/2" and 110 lbs.

One story that sticks out was that on a summer visit to Britain, the youngsters there, with an opportunity to pick on a little American, orchestrated an event on a camping trip in which they pulled camp in the middle of the night, leaving young Manning to wake up in his pup tent in the woods all alone. More cruel than fun.

When Pfc Manning began to view Army activities that were cruel, illegal and immoral, he became distraught, especially after attempting to use the chain of command to correct the situations. Road blocked... what else is new?

Manning planned to contact both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* to air these disturbing activities. Unable to establish credibility with our less-than-inquisitive great newspapers, Bradley released the information to Wikileaks, the international journalistic organization. None of the information was top secret. It has been described as embarrassing to the Army with no major downside. At no time did Manning ever attempt to sell information to an enemy, yet he was charged under the Espionage Act of WWI for "aiding the enemy." In his conversation with another young hacker-type, Adrian Lamo (the one that turned him in), Manning made it clear that his reasons were

idealistic and sound when he said, "I want the public to have a debate about these activities."

When describing Manning's actions, the great Daniel Ellsberg (releaser of the Pentagon Papers in 1972 that helped end the Vietnam War), stated that he had been waiting for 40 years to hear a person say, "I'm willing to go to prison or even be executed" to uncover war crimes. This is how Ellsberg felt back then.

When Manning was pulled in, the abuse escalated. Bradley was treated worse than a traitor. There were Congressmen and pundits that called for Manning's execution, including Mike Huckabee, an ex-presidential candidate and Governor of Arkansas. After being caged like an animal, Manning was sent to the brig at Quantico, VA and spent about nine months in solitary confinement undergoing what used to be called torture before Bush/Cheney took charge. The Constitution was shredded as a "speedy trial" was ignored and "innocent until proven guilty" was buried and forgotten.

Currently, there is a top notch civilian defense team that has been put together to take a broader look at the many gaffes that the Army trial brought to bear.

In light of the fact that all government employees swear an oath to uphold the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic, it is pretty evident that "the system" is chock full of persons more allegiant to their paychecks than to their oath. Manning should not have to suffer for this criminal abandonment of the Military Code of Justice. He was used as an example to anyone else in the military.

Because of the catastrophe at My Lai, and its release to the

public, while I was at Fort Riley in 1972, we were shown a series of films produced by the Army that suggested that your moral convictions were to be respected and following illegal orders was not acceptable. At the time, it felt like we were actually attempting to get it right. Now we see people doing the right thing paying truly unreasonable penalties. Edward Snowden was highly aware of the Manning situation, (as well as other whistleblowers), and he was smart enough to find another way.

When Manning's trial finally occurred in June/July 2013, the Army made a farce of our system of Justice. Manning's military lawyer David Coombs did the best job he could do with hands tied behind his back. The Kangaroo Court came down with a 35-year sentence for a young person that had more moral development and conviction than any of her superiors all the way to the top. Eventually, Chelsea issued a moving Request for Pardon to President Obama, saying:

"When I chose to disclose classified information, I did so out of a love for my country and a sense of duty to others. If you deny my request for a pardon, I will serve my time knowing that sometimes you have to pay a heavy price to live in a free society. I will gladly pay that price if it means we could have a country that is truly conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all women and men are created equal."

This is beautiful stuff that President Obama, with a significant Constitutional background, should honor.

Final comment: Fat chance.

For anyone interested in how a bus full of New Englanders made the trip to support Pvt. Manning, and check out a 29 minute video capturing the event from June 1st, 2013. Search for "Bradley Manning Bus Trip and Rally."



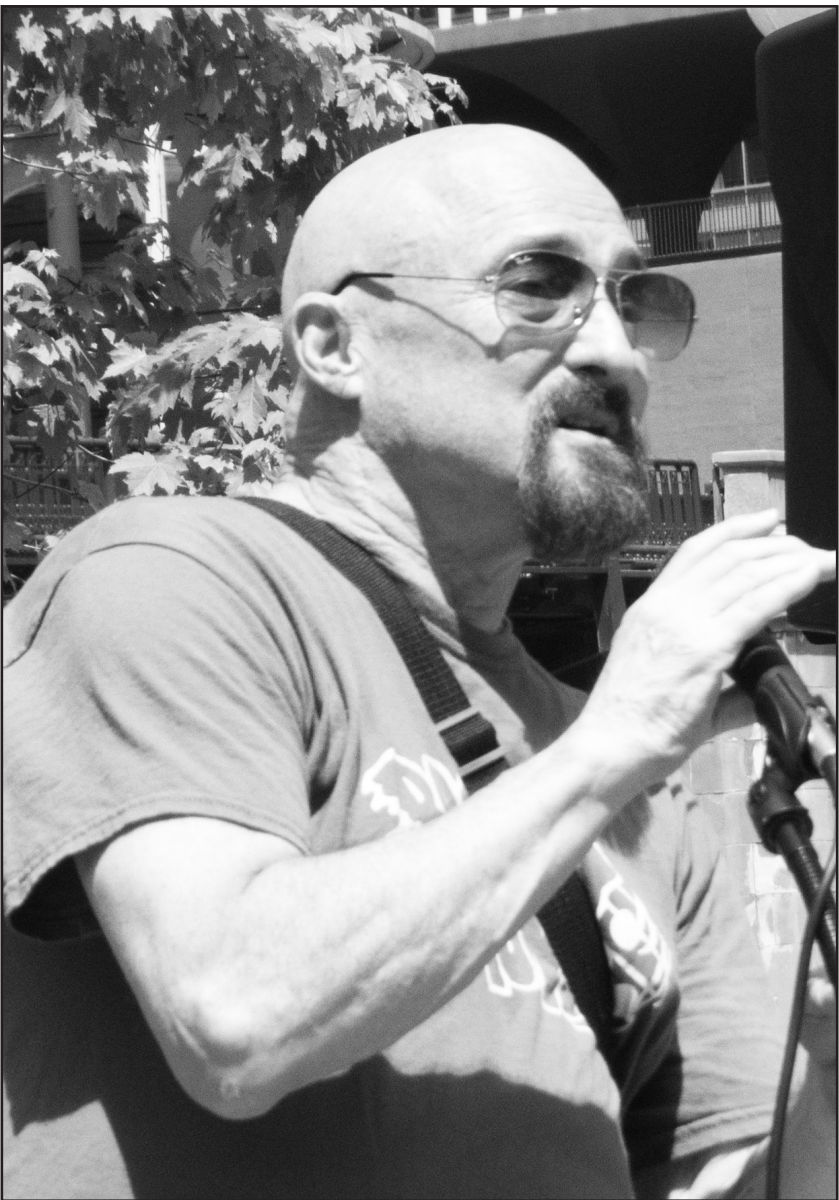
Sukie Wathendonk speaking at VVAW Memorial Day in Chicago, May 31, 1999. John Lindquist holding flag.

WILLIAM POTVIN SERVED ONE TOUR IN 'NAM (MAY 1970 TO MARCH '71), WITH THE 65TH ENGINEER BATTALION 25TH INF. DIV., AS A SP 5 DEMOLITION SPECIALIST FOR THE 2ND HALF OF MY TOUR. HE FINISHED ARMY DUTY AT FORT RILEY, KS IN THE 1ST INF. DIV. AND E.T.S.'D IN MARCH 1972.

Memorial Day, Chicago, 2014



Veterans from Iraq Veterans Against the War, Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Veterans For Peace at Memorial Day event May 26, 2014, Chicago.



Barry Romo at Memorial Day event May 26, 2014, Chicago.



Vince Emanuele at Memorial Day event May 26, 2014, Chicago.

People's Climate March, September 21, 2014



Ann Hirschman, Jan Barry and others at the Climate March in New York City, September 21, 2014.



*Jan Barry, Frank Toner, and Ken Dalton
at the Climate March in New York City, September 21, 2014.*



*Frank Toner, Brian Matarrese and Ken Dalton
at the Climate March in New York City, September 21, 2014.*

Meditations

AL DONOHUE

Meditations before writing or reading :

The 60,000 plus Americans killed, the 150,000 plus wounded.

The 3 to 5 million (approx.) Indochinese killed 1965-1973.

The 400 to 500 thousand Vietnam-era veterans who received less-than-honorable discharges, which denied them health care at the VA as well as educational or job benefits.

The tens of thousands that were imprisoned or were suicides.

The VA denial of a causal connection between Agent Orange/dioxin poisoning and illnesses until 1985.

The DOD's and the VA's

refusal to be honest about the connection between the use of depleted uranium (DU) munitions and Gulf war Syndrome.

The 100,000 plus Iraq & Afghanistan war veterans who have received less-than-honorable discharges.

End of Meditations.

When President Obama was signing the bill for increased VA funding, he said, "If you engage in an unethical practice, if you cover up a serious problem, you should be fired. Period. If you blow the whistle on an unethical practice, or bring a problem to the attention of higher ups, you should

be thanked." The wars against the Peoples of Indochina and Iraq were more than unethical. Vets that resisted those wars or the military should have their discharges upgraded. Period. The health claims process must be reviewed and the 100s of thousands of appeals of the denial of claim, must be quickly and justly answered.

The VA health care system, with improvement and expansion, could and should serve as a stepping stone to a national medicare for all provider, paid for out of our tax dollars. The inadequacies and failures in the news recently are not the fault of the doctors, nurses or the blue collar staff, but

originate in the policies and bad politics at the highest levels of the government in Washington. There is a fundamental contradiction at the VA between the priorities, objectives and culture of the military whose job is to kill and the touch-stone of medicine, which is the Hippocratic Oath, "do no harm." For the VA to get better, the objectives of war and empire must be removed from the health care environment.



AL DONOHUE MEMBER VVAW 1971
TIL FOREVER.

Letter to Editor

My name is Tim Teater. I have been a member and supporter of VVAW since my return from Vietnam. I am writing to express my strenuous objection to the piece by Dennis Serdel. [Poem on page 37 of Spring 2014 issue of *The Veteran* - ed.] First, we all know that atrocities were committed by all sides and it is important that these be addressed

openly and forthrightly. However, I am not sure that I believe what this person has written. If this is a factual account then I would say the acts were those of a psychopath and not representative of Vietnam Veterans. If this was fiction, to what end was it written? Haven't we Vietnam Veterans endured enough shit without being de-

famed by a fellow vet? Secondly however, the greater problem with this piece was the bandying about of the term Nazi. This trivializes the atrocity that was Nazism which was responsible, along with Imperial Japan, for the deaths of over 60 million human beings. From the title, *Teenage Nazis*, are we supposed to believe

Vietnam Veterans are analogous to Nazis? I find both the piece and the intimation repugnant. I found this piece disgraceful and utterly inappropriate for a publication named *The Veteran*.



Anti-Nixon demo, Chicago 1974.

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

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

VVAW also took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we began the first rap groups to deal with traumatic aftereffects of war, setting the example for readjustment counseling at vet centers today. We exposed the shameful neglect of many disabled vets in VA hospitals and helped draft legislation to improve educational benefits and create job programs. VVAW fought for amnesty for war resisters, including vets with bad discharges. We helped make known the negative health effects of exposure to chemical defoliants and the VA's attempts to cover up these conditions as well as their continued refusal to provide treatment and compensation for many

Agent Orange victims.

Today our government still finances and arms undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world in the name of "democracy." American troops have again been sent into open battle in the Middle East and covert actions in Latin America, for many of the same misguided reasons that were used to send us to Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, many veterans from all eras are still denied justice—facing unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder and other health problems, while already inadequate services are cut back or eliminated.

We believe that service to our country and communities

did not end when we were discharged. We remain committed to the struggle for peace and for social and economic justice for all people. We will continue to oppose senseless military adventures and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent future generations from being put through a similar tragedy, and we will continue to demand dignity and respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. Anyone who supports this overall effort, whether Vietnam veteran or not, veteran or not, may join us in this long-term struggle. JOIN US!

Insignia of Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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

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

Our insignia is over 40 years old. The insignia, VVAW® and Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.® are registered trademarks belonging to VVAW and no other organization or group may use it for any reason without written permission from the VVAW Board of Directors.



Beware of VVAW AI

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



SUPPORT VVAW! DONATE OR JOIN TODAY!

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

Membership Application

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

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

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

Signature _____
Date _____
Total Amount Enclosed _____

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

RECOLLECTIONS

Danny Nutly

DAN NEW

The sun blazed into my eyes as a column of soldiers approached. I looked into the face of each man as he passed. It was the dry season and the red clay dust covered our features, leaving only a vague outline of whom they might be. After one of them passed, he turned and called back to me, "Is that you, New?" As I turned to his voice, McQueen's smile revealed his identity. We moved towards an embrace. Our weapons and flak jackets made our attempt all the more awkward. "How the hell are you?" we both asked. We clasped our hands together and looked into each other's eyes. Our loyalty to the soldiers we were with soon pulled us apart. We were duty bound to move on and so we did. "Did'ja hear about Nutly?" He asked as he backpedaled away. Struck silent with the fear of knowing Danny's fate, I dared not reply for I knew the answer in my heart. McQueen and his unanswered question faded into the green terrain. Memories of Nutly invaded my mind as I

continued on.

Each morning for eight weeks during basic training, Danny Nutly slung his feet over the edge of the upper bunk. My view was of his feet and legs to his upper calf where dark Irish hair in neat patches and patterns interrupted his powder white skin. After a great yawn, he vaulted down to the wooden polished floor of the barracks. The shift of his weight from the bed to the deck sent awakening energy down to me in the lower rack. Then his morning joke, "Why did the Army put the short guy in the top bunk?"

Together by chance, we became friends, bunkmates. Our lives had been thrown together by the escalating military draft. Now we slept, ate, and soldiered together. He was from upstate, shy with only a few words to offer. I bore the city guise, caustic and smart in the streets. Danny was vulnerable and open. He had a stocky build with a thick neck and sharp features. His eyebrows

almost met just above his nose. I was a gangly wisenheimer with an answer for everything. He was short to my tall, squat to my length, round to my lean. We were nineteen.

The Army whipped us into shape to fight the war. We were not sure where or why it was, but it hung as an elusive threat far off in the future. Our chances of going there seemed faint. We shot expert on the firing range and maxed our physical training exams. We bonded as we grew into trained soldiers.

The Army let us go home for a week at Christmas. Danny and I rode from Fort Jackson, SC on a bus. It snowed all the way. It took 24 hours. Between catnaps, Danny and I talked. He asked, "Do you have a girlfriend?" "Yup" "What's she like?" "She's alright." "You gonna marry her?" "Maybe, someday." During the long trip, he dozed. His head struggled against surrender and came to rest on my shoulder. I squirmed at first. Then

found comfort in his trust. When he awoke, I let him know that he had drooled. We parted at New York's Port Authority bus station on Christmas Eve and reunited five days later for the return trip. Our time together passed so quickly.

Basic ended in January. We received orders for advanced training. He went to Georgia. I went to Virginia. I imagined meeting him when it was all over. We arrived in Vietnam about the same time, the end of April. By the time I met McQueen, Danny had been interred back home and, on that day, I began burying his memory in the midst of the war.



DAN NEW IS A VIETNAM VETERAN (1967-1968). HE IS AN ARTIST AND WRITER LIVING IN UPSTATE NEW YORK. HE CAN BE REACHED AT DNEW1@NYCAP.RR.COM. HE IS ONE OF 2.6 MILLION MILITARY VETERANS WHO SERVED IN VIETNAM.

You Want Boots on the Ground?



DANZIGER

NYTS/CWS Sep 16 2014 (6140)