



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

Volume 46, Number 1

Spring 2016

Vietnamese Visit New York and DC

SUSAN M. SCHNALL

For two weeks this past December, the leadership of the Vietnam Association for the Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA) visited New York City and Washington, DC. They had a very busy schedule that included colleagues and friends, Senators, legislative aides, and Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-CA) to thank them all for their continuing support for the victims of the US spraying of chemical herbicides during the American War in Vietnam. Mr. Rin, President of VAVA, expressed his appreciation to Congresswoman Lee for sponsoring HR 2114, the Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2015, that would provide services for those harmed in Vietnam from this poison, as well as clean up land and ecosystems that remain contaminated and continue to destroy the food and the people.

The VAVA delegation was joined by the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign (VAORRC) - supported by VVAW, IVAW, Veterans for Peace (VFP), and the Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance (COVVHA). Heather Bowser, co-founder of COVVHA, was born missing her right leg and with webbed fingers and toes. She is the daughter of an American serviceman who was in Vietnam during the use of Agent Orange. Heather explained that this legislation would bring parity of services to the children of both the women and men in the US military

who served in Vietnam. Currently, the VA recognizes only the children born with birth defects of American servicewomen, and, with the recently released Institute of Medicine Report, has downgraded recognition for even spina bifida for the children of American servicemen.

VAVA and VAORRC held a briefing on Capitol Hill sponsored by Representative Lee and attended by about thirty legislative aides of House representatives. We reviewed

of VAVA to identify those affected, and obtain and provide services to them, including the children born with severe birth defects. Tran Thi Hoan was born without legs and an atrophied hand as a result of her mother's exposure to Agent Orange. Tran, an active member of VAVA, is a college graduate working as a computer science professional. She spoke about those Vietnamese children less fortunate than her who are unable to live on their own, or die young and in terrible pain because of

A meeting was also held with Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), who stated his support for initiating a bill in the Senate that is similar to HR 2114.

Our delegation had an extensive meeting with Tim Reiser, foreign policy aide to Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), and one of the most influential behind-the-scenes forces in Washington, DC. He works as a Democratic clerk for the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign



Congresswoman Barbara Lee (D-California), sponsor of HR 2114, in center with Mr. Nguyen Van Rin (President of VAVA) to her left, and members of VVAW, VFP, IVAW, and COVHA. Tran Thi Hoan stands in the middle.

the current state of the legislation, our efforts to educate the American people about the destruction done by the chemical herbicides to our own troops and their families, and the Vietnamese that continues today. Mr. Rin informed the group of the efforts

their debilitating birth defects. Paul Cox, a Vietnam veteran and core member of VAORRC, spoke of the necessity for the US government to take responsibility for the damage done to the Vietnamese and provide necessary services to the people.

Operations, and for the past several years has managed to obtain several millions of dollars for the clean-up of Danang Airport (formerly a US base), and for provision of some services

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How A Swede Became a VVAW Member

PER ODMAN

In the spring of 1966, 50 long years ago, I finished my ten months of compulsory service in the Swedish Army. I was born 1943 in Sweden. My father was highly educated, and very successful in his field. I, however, was pretty much the opposite—I was an immature loser, and I failed to graduate from Swedish high school. After working in mines and doing odd jobs I was ordered to enter the Army in the fall of 1965. My feelings about serving were very mixed. It turned out that I really liked it. For the first time in my life I was the best at something. I was a machine gunner, and I was my platoon commander's favorite soldier. Towards the end of my service I decided, just for the hell of it, to fight as an infantryman in Vietnam; for the US or any of its allies. If they would not take me, my not-so-realistic plan was to approach North Vietnam.

My first step was to visit a US Army colonel who served as a military attache at the US embassy in Stockholm. He thought it was a great idea, "We need guys like you in Vietnam!" My parents thought it was a horrible idea. My father quickly got me a job as an assistant to Swedish geologists who prospected for iron ore in the wild and mountainous rain forests in Liberia

in West Africa. I spent an adventurous, colonial era-like year in tropical Africa. But, in April 1967, I had gone to the US Embassy in Monrovia, the capitol of Liberia, and applied for a green card. On May 25, with a green card, I flew one way to JFK. After checking into a hotel in midtown Manhattan, I went to the recruiting station in Times Square. I talked to the Army recruiter about airborne and rangers and the Marine about a two-year enlistment. After pondering it for about one week, I swore to serve two years for the USMC. At 3am the next morning I was "welcomed" to

Parris Island.

As a gung ho Marine 0311 (rifleman) I arrived in Danang on Christmas Eve 1967—what a x-mas present! A few days later I arrived to my unit, the 26th Marines, which held Khe Sanh Combat Base located near the DMZ in the northwestern corner of the I Corps, and was assigned to a rifle platoon; 2nd Platoon, Delta Company, 1st Battalion. They called me "Swede." On January 20, 1968, the siege began. It is true that I was a gung ho Marine, but I was not really fighting for the US; I was fighting for myself and my platoon. The killings on both sides during the siege made me quite aware of how ambivalent I was about the US trying to win the war. After a very tough 77 days, the siege was officially over. MACV declared an overwhelming victory, but the battle casualties are controversial. We lost maybe as many as 1,000 KIA, the NVA as many as 10,000.

The commander of one of the NVA's dozens of well dug in and camouflaged batteries that encircled and fired thousands of high explosive shells on us was 27-year-old Captain Nguyen Van Rin. However, our

enormous firepower, from 105s to B-52s, slowly but surely eliminated most of the howitzers and rocket launchers. Captain Rin survived this hellish bombardment. And he kept on fighting the Americans and then the ARVNs, and on April 30, 1975 he and his comrades celebrated their victory. And so did we, Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

After the siege my battalion did sweeps in depopulated areas in the central parts of I Corps. We were after the NVA, and they were after us. On June 7, NVA Major Cao Kai ordered his soldiers to set up ambushes. I know his name because I met him in 1994 where the ambushes had been set. They were successful. My platoon walked into one of them. I was hit by AK47 bullets, which somehow had lost some of their velocity (not due to my flak jacket—I had thrown it away), in my left lung and my neck. The bullets lodged in the lung and in the rear of my neck. The bullet that hit my neck entered from the front and tore partially apart my right jugular vein. A third bullet shattered as it hit

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Mr. Nguyen Van Rin (president of VAVA and former Senior Lieutenant General of the NVA) shakes hands with Per Odman (former Marine who served in Vietnam). Rin and Odman fought on opposite sides at siege of Khe Sanh in 1967.

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The Importance of Vietnam and VVAW: Then and Now

BILL BRANSON

Welcome to the Spring 2016 issue of *The Veteran*.

Since Vietnam Veterans Against the War's (VVAW) founding in 1967, we have fought against wars on all fronts. From the beginning, we have followed our organizing principles by joining in solidarity with the struggle against systemic racism, violence and oppression. In 1971 we went to Cairo, Illinois to support that struggle. In 1972 we protested at the Miami Republican National Convention and stood up against the American Nazi Party. VVAW has never supported a Nazi's right to speak and spew hate speech and we must all speak out against it now.

In the last year, we have witnessed a resurgence of such ignorant hate. Bundy's Citizens for Constitutional Freedom secessionist militia took over a wildlife refuge in Oregon. Leader Clive Bundy spewed racist speech about how African Americans would be better off as slaves. Donald Trump condones the beating of Black Lives Matter protesters, and encourages violence at his events. His green light for thuggery has created unsafe and hostile conditions for women and people of color. His calling for a ban on all Muslims coming into our country is nativist bigotry in its purest and an insult to our Constitution. Had Bundy's militia been composed of people of color, would they have been allowed to stay on federal property that they illegally seized for so long? Or would it have looked a little more like Ferguson?

VVAW calls on you to take action against the resurging racism and xenophobia, to speak out, to take action, and to stand up in solidarity. Get and out vote on November 8. We know it is difficult to turn out for what we know are rigged elections. Some of the candidates, on both sides, are enough to make one nauseous. Think of it this way; if you could save one person, with your vote, would it be worth walking down the street and spending a few minutes in a booth? The outcomes of these elections, from local offices all the way up to the presidential race, can either give power to this systemic oppression of hate, or stop it in its tracks. You decide.

VVAW also continues to stand with the Vietnamese, as we have done since we began organizing in 1967. Archivists at WYSO, a public radio in Yellow Springs, Ohio, recently uncovered a speech made by longtime Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) member Barry Romo at Antioch College in January 1973. WYSO aired a two-piece story in February on Barry's journey from enlistment to anti-war protester. In late 1972, Barry represented VVAW on a peace delegation with Joan Baez, Telford Taylor and Rev. Michael Allen, delivering letters and packages to American POWs right outside of Hanoi. They were invited over by the Vietnamese government. What no one knew at the time, was that Nixon was about to start the Christmas bombings. The US military planes dropped over 20,000 tons of explosives on and around Hanoi over that ten-day period.

When Barry came back, he immediately hit the road to spread the word of what had happened, to talk about VVAW, and to build the movement to end the war in Vietnam. At Antioch College Barry said, "All my brothers and sisters in Vietnam Vets Against the War went over to Vietnam, and they pulled the triggers and they dropped the bombs. They did the actual genocide. They did the actual ecocide. They removed people from their ancestral homes. They stole food. But, one thing that has to be remembered is that we were nothing more than a trigger finger for the American society." One of the reasons Barry went as a VVAW delegate to Vietnam, was because VVAW saw the importance of working with the Vietnamese people. We saw that they were fighting for their country and that the US was the aggressor. Barry saw firsthand the damage Nixon's bombings did to the Vietnamese people. VVAW worked to stop the war and for years has worked for the normalization of relations with Vietnam and the Vietnamese people.

We have continued to work with the Vietnamese people, whose country and people are still devastated by the US war fought on their homeland. VVAW has fought to raise awareness on the effects of Agent Orange since the 1970s. In recent years, we have worked with The Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA) to raise awareness of the continuing Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange. VAVA is a Vietnam-based organization

of victims and activists fighting for victim's treatment, remediation, and recognition persisting and ongoing poisoning from the US dropping dioxin-laced Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

In December 2015, six members of VAVA came to New York and to Washington DC to speak to members of the US Congress, Vietnam-era veterans, and peace and justice activists about the continuing affects of Agent Orange on the Vietnamese people. VVAW presented VAVA with a check for \$5,000. This money will help build 2 houses in the Quang Binh province for Vietnamese victims of Agent Orange. This area was heavily bombed by the US during the war. VVAW members were so moved that they also personally contributed to VAVA as well. Please check out VVAW Board member Susan Schnall's article on page 1 for more information about VAVA's visit.

You will also notice the new format of this issue of *The Veteran*. Due to changes in the print industry, we are being forced to change the look of the paper. These changes will not stop us from being a voice for peace, justice, and the rights of all veterans as we have been for the past four and a half decades. As we go forward with this new layout, feedback will be appreciated.



BILL BRANSON IS A VVAW BOARD MEMBER AND CHICAGO RESIDENT.



Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Bill Branson, Brian Mattarese, Susan Schnall, Per Odman, Aaron Davis, Joe Miller, Jim Wachtendonk, Frank da Cruz, John Retallack, and others for contributing photos.

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

VVAW National Coordinators:

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

VVAW National Staff:

Charlie Branson
Dave "Red" Kettenhofen
Jeff Machota

Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

Like other readers, I enormously enjoyed Daniel Lavery's review of Hamilton Gregory's "McNamara's Folly: The Use of Low-IQ Troops in the Vietnam War" in the Fall 2015 issue of *The Veteran*. As Daniel pointed out, "the pipeline to Vietnam needed to be filled with warm bodies regardless of the law." Thousands of otherwise draft-eligible, white, upper middle class males avoided the draft by joining the reserves (eg., George Bush), while others like Mitt Romney and Dick Cheney ran up a lengthy list of deferments for a variety of reasons. Actually, there is some good news here: would you want to have shared a foxhole with Dick Cheney? I don't think so!

Daniel notes draftees who were "too fat, too short, with medical problems, psychiatric disorders, low IQ's, Downs Syndrome, schizophrenics, and even convicted criminals," many of whose very serious disorders led to unnecessary deaths on the battlefield. Obviously, these young men should never have been drafted, let alone sent to Vietnam. But he failed to mention one group, possibly because Mr. Gregory was unaware of them.

I not too long ago retired after 35 years as a probation officer, and remember, a couple of decades ago, crawling around in the Courthouse basement looking through probation files from the late 60s and early 70s. (I had a lot of time on my hands, OK?) What stuck in my mind was a not infrequent recommendation presented by probation officers, to a sentencing court, that a male defendant "enlist in the military service of his choice." I especially like the last three words of that recommendation. The other options were the county jail or state

prison. Understanding to begin with that a community-based criminal justice system has absolutely zero to do with any branch of the armed services, I had to ask myself, "Why in the hell would any criminal court judge even entertain such a recommendation?" Had I ever made such a recommendation when I was working, I am confident that a closed door session in chambers would have followed. But I know that it used to happen, and have trouble believing that the process was unique to one small county in east central Illinois. Unfortunately, the attorneys and judges of record in those cases are either dead or lying around in nursing homes somewhere, so that I cannot question them (or at least the attending nurses aides would prefer that I not try). As much as I would like to throw that back into Bobby McNamara's lap, I will have to give him a pass on that one.

Let's start with the proverbial good news and bad news. I remember meeting a couple of guys when I was in the Army who confirmed that, yeah, that is exactly how they wound up there. It was "take your choice - join up or get locked up." I have no idea what were the specifics of their circumstances (anything from shoplifting to child molesting), nor of what happened to them later in their military careers. Ideally, they would have neither gotten killed nor gotten anyone else killed, walked away with an honorable discharge, used their GI Bill benefits to complete postgraduate work, and as we speak are busy writing columns for *The Veteran*. Like I said, that would be the ideal end of the story. They would have avoided a felony conviction, gotten their acts together, and taken advantage of some veterans'

benefits. And please keep one thing in mind: sometimes young people just do stupid (criminal) stuff. I know this. That does not automatically make them bad people. McNamara's self serving intentions notwithstanding, it is possible that such an otherwise indefensible way of handling those cases might have worked out for the better.

Of course, as Gregory suggests, there is no reason to assume that, and a lot of good reasons to consider the alternative: it almost certainly got people killed. A whole lot of the probation clients with whom I dealt had serious substance abuse and/or mental health problems, as may go without saying. Assuming that these issues went unaddressed by the service (the strong probability), then at the least we can picture a whole lot of less-than-honorable discharges. As Daniel correctly suggests, these "created a stigma making it hard to become employed, and many were denied benefits like health care, housing assistance, (and) becoming homeless." I guess that they must have failed to take advantage of what LBJ and Mac were trying to do for them. Daniel notes that the President and Secretary of Defense actually bragged "that this would enable ghetto minorities ... to learn some skill that would help the war on poverty and (allow them to) come back to a job when the war was over." And I am certain that they said that with a straight face.

I realize that what I am adding here is about 10% of the picture; Hamilton Gregory's account is a good 90% of it. But there's a difference. All of the "guilty parties" which he mentions were components of the system - draft boards, medical

personnel doing pre-induction physicals, down to commanding officers in the field. It would not be inaccurate to suggest that they were issued very unofficial, undocumented orders to stamp 1-A on the draft cards and go on to the next case, and that their failure to do so would bring consequences. Witness the "doctor who was fired at the Phoenix induction center because he disqualified men with medical problems like gout, diabetes, kidney abnormalities, and heart defects." That is not the case with county-based criminal judges. They are the 800-pound gorillas in the room. A circuit judge can take a direct phone call from LBJ, tell him to stick it in his ass, and return to the bar at the country club without missing a step. Independent prosecution and defense attorneys, like the judge, knew a great deal about every defendant who appeared before them, because they had the benefit of an exhaustive background report submitted by the probation department. If a defendant had serious physical, substance abuse or mental health problems—suggesting that a "sentence" to basic training might not be a cure-all—it was right there in front of them.

Wait a minute; are we talking about the same level headed, call-'em-as-they-see-'em probation department which recommended "that the defendant enlist in the military service of his choice?" Oops. I guess there was a lot of blame to go around in that scenario. Of course, you could say that about a lot of things in the 60s.



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

Vietnam: My Story

STANLEY CAMPBELL

In 1966 I had just joined the local John Birch Society, as its youngest member - 16 years old, and fresh behind the ears, but eager to fight against the Communist menace. Mom had to drive me to meetings (she later said I always seemed to be on the more extreme side).

Just out of high school I enlisted in the Army, after working in a factory for a few months. The plan was to save up money for college and see the world. I also supported the war in Vietnam.

The Army trained me to follow orders almost without thinking, how to march and exercise and how to keep things clean and neat. I learned to shoot a rifle and throw a hand grenade, and how to use a gas mask and to "protect" myself against nuclear weapons.

When I got out of basic training, I felt the healthiest and the strongest that I'd ever been.

The Army trained me for another two months as a "personnel management specialist" (a clerk who

handled soldiers' paperwork).

Then the Army sent me to Germany. This was during the height of the Cold War, and the Army was there to keep the Russians out.

Of course, there was no war there, and after a year with nothing happening, I got bored and felt I wanted to do something patriotic, so I volunteered to fight the war in Vietnam, and the Army was more than happy to send me.

The first thing I remember is the plane landing and the door opening, and all the air-conditioning was sucked out, and onto the plane came this hot, stinking breath. Smelled like death.

I was assigned to the 67th Medical Group, and I handled the paperwork for all the doctors and nurses north of Cam Rahn Bay.

I visited hospitals where I saw the results of war—many young men with wounds and missing parts of their bodies; also Vietnamese women and children who suffered the same type

of damage.

The South Vietnamese (our "ally") treated their own people badly. And our own US soldiers began to treat the Vietnamese people poorly. Our mission was to fight the communists, which is difficult, especially from 20,000 feet up in a B-52. But closer to the ground how to tell the communists from the non-communists?

I saw healthy American young men and women trying to help a poor country, and they soon became angry and hateful and began to call all Vietnamese names. That turned me against the war. It'd taken four months in country. I would still do my job, but when I got home I protested the war.

When I arrived home I found other veterans (thanks, comrades, in VVAW and Vets for Peace) who felt the same way. The best thing I ever did was march in protest demonstrations, both local and national.

There were people who disagreed with us, but there were a lot of people who didn't care. And that's when I

started to work for peace. I learned that the majority of the people in this world are poor, and they want good things for their children.

I learned that when people can't vote and change their government, they often pick up a gun and begin to fight.

I learned that as an American I can travel almost anywhere in the world and I can meet lots of people and make friends with rich and poor. By working for peace, with other veterans, I try to make up for supporting an unjust war.



STANLEY CAMPBELL IS PRESENTLY THE DIRECTOR OF THE ROCKFORD URBAN MINISTRIES IN ROCKFORD, ILLINOIS. HE RECENTLY SHUT DOWN A PORNOGRAPHIC BOOKSTORE, TURNED IT INTO A FAIR TRADE GIFT SHOP, AND PUT A WIND GENERATOR ON THE ROOF.

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Again we are in the silly season aka presidential politics. Donald Trump is touting "Make America Great Again." This is not unlike politicians who came before him. It goes along with waving the flag, hugging babies and hanging out in coffee shops in primary states. Depending how it's used it could be just another campaign slogan to grab your attention and vote. Then again it could be all part of an effort to get people to forget reality and follow this megalomaniac. To the extreme it could remind us of a former corporal who wanted to make Germany great again back in the 1930s.

Some cynics will say that making America great again is code for advocating the return to the good old days when white people had good jobs and a comfortable home, staffed by a housewife, aka, the little woman. Or maybe some people are sincere about making America great, either for the first time or again. Two words are operative here. What does "great" mean, and what does "again" mean?

My first thought is environmental. Fifty years ago we didn't have global warming. The sea wasn't about to rise and inundate New York City. That would be of great concern to New Yorkers. Maybe we should care. If it happens, the flooding could bring a repeat of the Syrian refugee crisis. Governors would be in front of news conferences railing against their state taking in New York refugees. It's a shame that Texas is mostly inland. Anyway, fifty years ago the environment was looking good - great, maybe with the exception of a little air and water pollution and a little jungle

defoliation here or there.

Most people might think that great refers to military prowess. Seventy years ago we came out of World War II as the bad ass on the block. That was greatness, wasn't it? In just about every war since then we lacked the moral high ground and mostly lost. At least we have the best equipment. We've got F-16s and smart bombs and huge nuclear aircraft and the ability to see at night. We just can't beat that damn tribe of Pashtuns. If we did we could be as great as we were during and after World War II.

I have an idea of how we can be great again. The again would be the year of 1908. And what happened in 1908? That was the year the Chicago Cubs won the World Series. They've put together a pretty good team this year, giving us a chance to be great again. Alas, I suppose this is a local thing. St. Louis Cardinal fans wouldn't think this is so great. And then there are the grumpy people who don't even like baseball.

We've certainly seen better days in the job market. I suppose that then wasn't great for a lot of people, but probably more than nowadays. Real wages just ain't what they used to be. That's the again part. We want wages back the way they used to be, and both candidates will be telling us how they'll make this happen. They'll tell us just like the previous candidates every four years in the rear view mirror. You can look at the situation today and you can see that none of it worked for the 99%. We are still chasing that elusive greatness being promised.

Our country is called a melt-

ing pot, and many of those who melted have had a little taste of that elusive greatness. But if your way back ancestors were slaves and your recent ancestors faced discrimination, you don't have any great to go back to again. Or, if you got your land stolen two or three centuries ago "great again" is not forthcoming.

In reality, the grass usually is greener somewhere else. Still, I can think of some things for which we are already the greatest.

(1) One thing that has been great and still is great is our National Park system as well as our system of National Wildlife Refuges. We've just got to keep them out of the hands of the Bundy family and their ilk.

(2) We have the best smart bombs. It's too bad the people who decide when and where to use them ain't as smart as the bombs.

(3) I think our sports fans are the greatest. In other countries they kill each other. We just have bar fights.

(4) Elections. Our elections, if not the best, are certainly the longest. For president it's two years now. Do I hear three? Nobody in the rest of the world can top that. Shove that democracy in their face.

(5) We have great corporate profits again. We've even given our corporations status as a person when it comes to rigging elections. And they don't need a latrine.

This country has been prosperous largely because of the accident of geography. To the East we have an ocean. To the West we have an ocean. To the North we have one sparsely

populated country. The only historical military danger could have come from the country on our southern border. We fought and defeated them about 170 years ago. This means that for all those years the economy got to grow in peace and develop our natural wealth. That includes good croplands, river systems, oil and minerals. People had to work at it, but this country was born with a silver spoon in its mouth. We still need a lesson on how to share what we have.

I like this country. I'm not proud of many things done by the government or that so many people are in want or lacking health care. I suppose what I like is its culture and its people (most of them). I like baseball, listening to traditional jazz and sharing an adult beverage with friends. Your cultural choices might be different, but you have some, and it's all related to the land we live in and the people around you. Maybe this feeling of comfort is what the politicians are trying to tap into. They call it "great," and we voters associate that with the good feelings we have toward the place in which we live. There are two separate dynamics here. One is the politicians trying to turn these hopes and feelings into a reason for following that particular politician. "Great" and "again" are meaningless. This country has good and bad. I wish a lot was different, but I suppose it's okay. Could be better.



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

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Hanoi, January 27th, 2016

Dear friends,

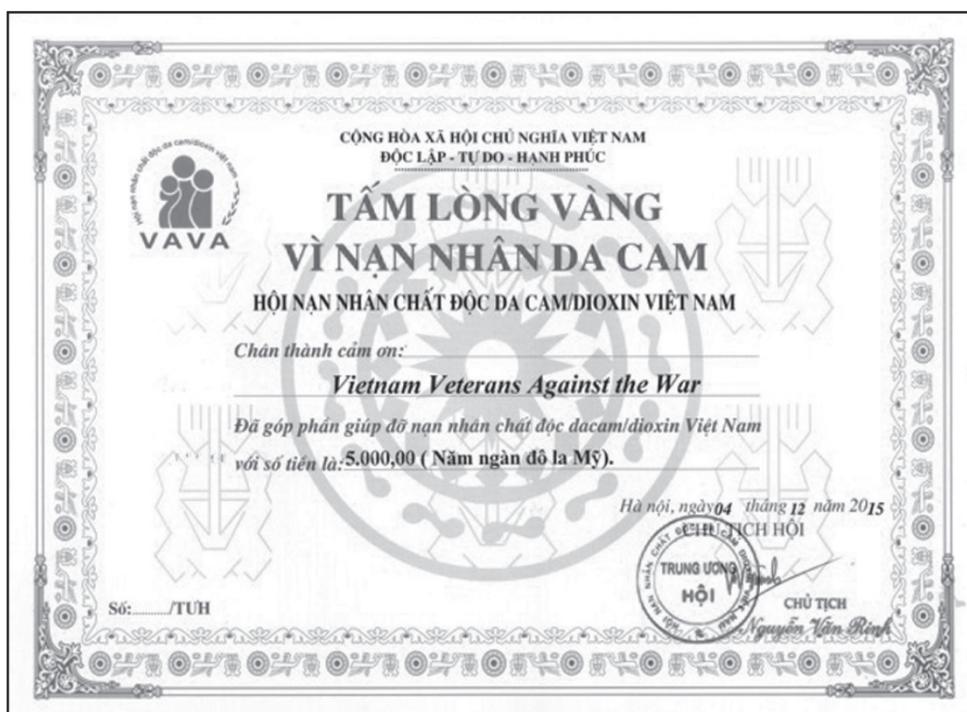
How important and meaningful it is to VAVA to have received the donation of **\$5,000 (Five thousand USD)** from Vietnam Veterans Against the War, an organization that has a long and impressive history of veterans' work for peace and justice.

It is with deep gratitude that we accept this donation on behalf of the AO victims who have suffered so much and it is our intent to build two houses for the victims of Agent Orange in Quang Binh province with the money you have donated.

On behalf of the Vietnam Association for Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA), I would like to express all the best wishes and thanks for your understanding and support that will be significantly contributed to the relief of the Agent Orange victims in Vietnam.

In solidarity!

Nguyen Van Rinh
President of VAVA



Vietnamese Visit New York and DC

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for disabled children in Vietnam. Tim noted that in his 25 years of working in the Senate, this was the first time that a group of Americans and Vietnamese had come together to talk with him about the needs of both groups.

VAVA returned to New York on Friday, December 18 for a dinner meeting with members of VVAW. It was an extraordinary event as folks told their stories of that conflict and their memories from that time. Frank Toner served as a medic in-country and refused to carry a gun. Per Oldman was a Swedish national who volunteered for the Marines and fought at Khe Sanh, at the same time Mr. Rinh was fighting as a soldier in the North Vietnamese Army. Joe Hirsch is a long standing member of VVAW who was in military intelligence during the conflict and speaks fluent Vietnamese. Ed D'Amato was with the US Army in Vietnam in 1966. Ken Dalton was in the Navy, based on a ship off the coast of Vietnam. Brian Matarrese, who was in the US Army during the

Vietnam conflict as well as a member of VVAW and social activist for many years, helped bring the group together.

VVAW donated \$5,000 to VAVA for the building of homes in Quang Binh Province, an area that was subjected to repeated bombings throughout the American War. The whole town of Dong Hoi was completely destroyed by the bombing, and the people continue to suffer from the repeated spraying of Agent Orange. At the dinner, individual VVAW members also donated money to the victims of Agent Orange.

It has been over forty years since the last US troops left Vietnam and yet, the damage we caused remains – in the contaminated land and in the people who pass on cells changed by dioxin contamination from generation to generation. Bomb craters remain from Operation Rolling Thunder and unexploded ordnances makes the land dangerous to farm and puts innocent children at risk when they play in the fields. It is up to us to clean up those



Mr. Nguyen Minh Y speaks emotionally when he thanks the veterans who have been to war and are now fighting for peace and social justice for the Vietnamese. He states his (and VAVA's) support for the Americans and their children who suffer from the impact of the American War in southeast Asia.

terrible remnants of the American War in Vietnam, to continue to assist the Vietnamese people to heal, and in doing so, heal ourselves.



SUSAN SCHNALL IS ON THE VVAW BOARD, CO COORDINATOR OF VAORRC, AND A VIETNAM ERA VETERAN WHO WAS COURT MARTIALED BY THE US NAVY FOR ANTI-WAR ACTIONS IN 1969.



Ed Damato (long time VVAW member who served in the US Army in Vietnam) and Nguyen Minh Y at VVAW dinner with VAVA.



VVAW members at VAVA dinner where VVAW donated \$5,000 for the building of two homes in Quang Binh Province.



Tran Thi Hoan dancing with members of the band Filthy Rotten System at the Holiday Party.



How A Swede Became a VVAW Member

continued from page 1

something hard, like the muzzle of my M16. Ten pieces (you can count them on a cat-scan) of this bullet hit my left temple with the force of a heaved sledge hammer. The force of the hit tore a hole in my skull bone the size of a silver dollar. The pieces of bone were lodged in the outer part of my brain. The ten pieces of the bullet lodged one to two inches deep in my brain, and one in the center of my brain. I was conscious long enough to instinctively know that I was dying.

Who saved my life? Our corpsman? A Marine? I met my platoon commander 25 years later, for the first time since the incident: "Are you fucking alive?!" The medevac helicopters were on their way to pick up the wounded, but when he saw me laying next to the KIAs with an ashen face and covered in blood he knew I was dead. Due to attrition he became our company commander the following day, and lost track of his men. What really saved me was somebody's decision to haul me on board that chopper.

Initially my right side was completely paralyzed, but to make a long story short, two and a half months later I was back in Sweden running cross-country—slowly. The Marines rated me 90% disabled and retired me in May 1969. The VA rated

me 100% disabled. I decided to study architecture in Washington, DC, but after a couple of years I moved to New York to study photography. On the surface my life in Washington had seemed normal—I made friends and had girlfriends, but my move to New York in 1971 immediately exposed me to a totally new world—a radical anti-war world that I embraced. It made me wake up from my emotional and political torpor. I joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War, partook in their rap groups, and at VVAW's demonstrations I vented my hatred of the war. I was a "reborn" Marxist.

During the nineties I revisited Vietnam four times—to see the country and the people. On each trip I went to Hanoi to meet my former enemies. We drank a lot of beer, ate a lot of weird food and with the help of an interpreter told each other war stories. In April 1994, partly for adventure and partly for reconciliation, I did a four-day-long climb of Fan Si Pan, at 10,312 feet Vietnam's tallest mountain, together with Nguyen Thien Hung, my guide. After the two first hours of steadily climbing on day one, Hung and I took a break. By using pencil and paper, gestures and facial expressions, and uttering sounds I found out that Hung had been fighting the Americans since 1967. He had been fighting us all



This 1968 photo was taken by the only Swedish reporter/photographer who went to Khe Sanh during the siege. After having been there a day or so he heard rumors about a Swede. His name is Bernt Nilsson and he worked for a major daily, Aftonbladet.

through the war. As a 2nd Lieutenant, and a tank commander Hung had taken part in the final route of the ARVN and on April 30, 1975 had victoriously driven his tank into Saigon. In 1983 Hung had left the People's Army and moved back home to the mountainous north western corner of Vietnam. My climb turned out to be more of a reconciliation than I had thought. Two of the nights we lay huddled against each other for body heat, belly against rump. Our damp wool blanket barely cut the freeze.

Last December, I had the great pleasure of meeting one more of my former enemies, here in New York City. Captain Nguyen Van Rin, the battery commander who survived Khe

Sanh, made his career in the People's Army. He retired as a Colonel General, the second highest rank in the People's Army, and continued his service for Vietnam as Deputy Minister of Defense. He is nowadays President of VAVA (see Susan Schnall's article on page 1). We heartily shared a meal in a Chinese restaurant in Midtown. With the help of his interpreter we warmly shared some of our experiences of trying to kill each other.



PER-OLOF ODMAN HAS WORKED AS A PHOTOGRAPHER, BUT MOST OF HIS LIFE HE HAS, WITH HIS OWN HANDS, RENOVATED OLD HOUSES. AT PRESENT, ONE IN FRANCE.



1973 photo of Per with Puerto Rican kids. He is wearing two VVAW buttons on his collar. The photo was taken by a professional Swedish photographer—Hasse Persson for a major Swedish magazine.



Per near Khe Sanh in 1992.

Agent Orange Barrels

JIM WACHTENDONK

I think everyone knows of someone touched by Agent Orange, the chemical defoliant used in Vietnam. To emphasize the cost in lives of our brothers and sisters I began a Booneytunes Art Project in 2011 with one 20-gallon drum painted like an AO barrel with a side that reads, "Do you know someone touched by AO? Please put their names on this AO barrel so they might be remembered. Perhaps others will remember as well." I started displaying the AO barrel locally and it's found a home at The Wisconsin Veterans Museum in Madison, Wisconsin, The High Ground Veterans Memorial Park in Nielsville, Wisconsin, art shows, and even the farmers market. The names began to multiply quickly with testimonials folks had written that show the significant and poignant cost AO has bequeathed to Vietnam veterans and our families. Now, in 2016, the number of AO barrels has risen to four and I can see a fifth and sixth down the road. As an artist my goal was to show the cost these defoliants caused with stark realism. Like the names on The Wall in

Washington, DC, you can't help but feel the same loss after experiencing the AO Barrels. They have become memorials all on their own.

Reaction to the effort has been enthusiastic with only a couple bumps in the road. Two local conservative veterans organizations labeled the AO barrels "too political" and they don't want it at their events. In one case, I was kicked off a talent show to honor vets by the Honor Roll Memorial Committee. They told me if I said one word other than the song I was to perform, they would close the curtain and shut off my mic. When I said I would say a word about the AO barrel I was out. I was the only vet on the bill. The same group voted unanimously not to let my family lay a wreath at our local memorial honoring AO veterans and their families. In the other case, Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Chapter 7 sponsored an AO Symposium at the Legion and it was presented by Vietnam Veterans of America. I called and asked if they were interested in having the AO barrel at their event and the call back blew me away. I was told I was a trouble maker, they'd already



called the cops and if I brought the AO barrel I would be arrested. To be honest it's my VVAW affiliation that eats at their craw. Some people can see the connection between art and the struggle while others only see fear. As an artist I felt I'd arrived.

If you have someone in your life who is touched by AO and want their name on the AO barrel

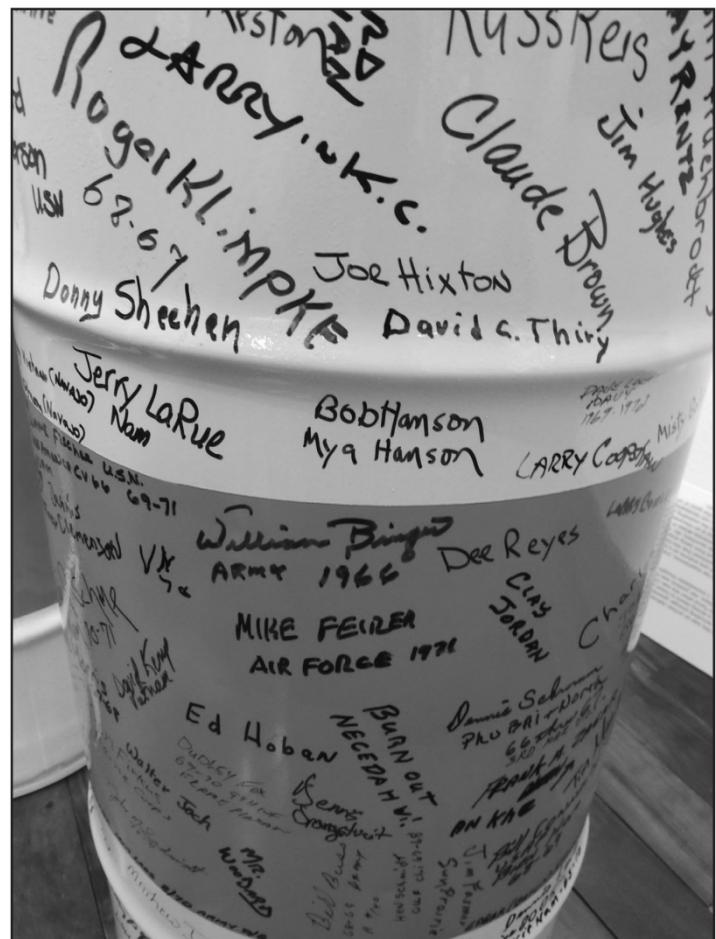
you can email that information to Booneytunes@yahoo.com and I'll add the name. Anyone interested in my music and art can assess it all free at Reverbmusic.com.



MAKING ART NOT WAR, JIM WACHTENDONK IS A VVAW MEMBER OF THE ZAK WACHTENDONK MEMORIAL CHAPTER, GILLINGHAM, WISCONSIN.



Jim with the Agent Orange Barrels.



Take Action To Get Co-Sponsors for HR 2114: Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2015

SUSAN SCHNALL

Representative Barbara Lee introduced the Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2015 on April 29th last year to help heal the wounds of war to:

- Provide health care and social services for affected Vietnamese,
- Provide medical assistance and disability benefits to affected children of American Vietnam veterans,
- Provide health care for affected Vietnamese Americans and their offspring,
- Clean up the lands and restore eco-systems contaminated by Agent Orange/dioxin in Vietnam, and
- Conduct research into the health effects of Agent Orange in the US and Vietnam.

Please contact your representative and request that he/she become a co-sponsor. It's easy. The most effective way is to:

1) Call either the local office or Washington office of your

congressperson and ask for the name and email address of the legislative aide working on veteran issues;

2) Email the legislative aide the following letter:

Dear _____, I am contacting you with a request regarding asking Representative _____ to become a co-sponsor of HR 2114 that would heal the terrible wounds from the war in Vietnam. I am a veteran of the Vietnam War and member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. You were represented to me as the person in _____ office who handles veterans' health. We are writing to ask Representative _____ to become a co-sponsor of HR 2114. This bill would help heal the legacy of the American War in Vietnam by: providing medical assistance and disability benefits to the affected children of American Vietnam veterans, providing health

care and social services for the affected Vietnamese and Vietnamese offspring, and clean up the lands and restore ecosystems contaminated by Agent Orange/dioxin in Vietnam.

This legislation was introduced by Congresswoman Barbara Lee on April 29, 2015. Would you consult with Representative _____ about adding her/his name and voice to this critical and long overdue bill? Supporting factors: Representative _____ recently received a Dear Colleague letter from Congresswoman Lee requesting support from members of the Progressive Caucus and Congressman Raul Grijalva has again signed on as first Co-Sponsor. Also, a Vietnamese delegation visited the United States this past December. They represent VAVA (Vietnamese Association of the Victims of Agent Orange), the organization responsible to the nation and its people for

overseeing Agent Orange/dioxin clean-up (at bases like Danang), and for supporting the families and groups which care for its victims. Thank you for your consideration of this request. Sincerely,

Then, if you have not heard from the legislative aide for more than 4-5 days, call them and mention that you have emailed a request for support of this legislation and also email them again. I understand that this is time consuming and appreciate your help in obtaining additional support for this very critical legislation.



SUSAN SCHNALL IS ON THE VVAW BOARD, CO COORDINATOR OF VAORRC, AND A VIETNAM ERA VETERAN WHO WAS COURT MARTIALED BY THE US NAVY FOR ANTI-WAR ACTIONS IN 1969.

Chemical Time Bomb in Vietnam Veterans: Defoliant Agent Orange Exposed

VVAW

Reprinted from the the Summer 1978 (Volume 8, Number 2) issue of The Veteran.

Ten million gallons of Agent Orange, a chemical defoliant, were sprayed over Vietnam during the years 1962-1970; its purpose, according to the government, was to kill forests and vegetation that provided cover for Vietnamese forces.

The herbicide Agent Orange was created for use in Vietnam by combining two other herbicides—2, 4D and 2, 45T that have been around for years. Both contain a deadly poison called dioxin, which, for use in Vietnam, was concentrated 100 times more than in its regular form.

By 1970 the results of Agent Orange began to return. Not only did the defoliant have a devastating effect upon plants and wildlife in Vietnam but the effects on the Vietnamese people themselves shocked and outraged millions of people around the world. There were thousands of cases of birth defects or aborted births by mothers sprayed by Agent Orange. Added to this were the uncounted cases of sickness and disease of Vietnamese people who came in contact with the poison.

Many of us, while in Vietnam, rejected the common rumors that defoliants used by the US government contained an ingredient that was the same as thalidomide (a drug that caused a rash of birth defects all over the world) because it made good military "sense" to deform children—the children would then require extra care and extra people to provide the care, thus denying valuable personnel and resources from the battlefield.

Once the large variety of anti-personnel weapons and their uses became public knowledge, the idea no longer was far-fetched—the idea that the rich in this country who pushed the war and piled up their wealth from it would employ a horrible arsenal of

weapons, including Agent Orange, to wipe out an entire race and culture in the name of the almighty dollar.

The effects and use of Agent Orange became more than another ugly memory for Vietnam veterans when, at the end of March, the Chicago CBS affiliate aired a TV program called "Agent Orange: Vietnam's Deadly Fog." It pointed out that the Chicago Veterans Administration was confronted with up to 27 cases of veterans with diseases directly related to exposure to Agent Orange, a fact they "conveniently" failed to inform the rest of us Vietnam vets about. In fact, a VA spokesman stated, "There is absolutely no evidence that Agent Orange can cause deaths and that this is borne out in a study by the Air Force." There it is folks! This chump says it's cool—forget it! But what about the flood of inquiries to the VA from Chicago area vets with some or all of the obvious symptoms of Agent Orange exposure: numbness of the fingers, reduced sex drive, skin rashes, excessive fatigue and nervousness, children with birth defects? The VA has continually stalled on treatment or even informing veterans around the country. But that's no new policy for the VA.

This Agent Orange exposure is just one more of a string of exposures in the past few months. We learned that dapson, a malaria pill commonly used in Vietnam, was an experimental drug being tested on US troops without their knowledge and now found to cause cancer in rats. We learned that in the 1950's, US troops were used to test the effects of radiation during nuclear tests at the Nevada Atomic Test Grounds. Earlier than that, we found out that GIs were given powerful mindbenders like LSD or other hallucinogens without their knowledge and then filmed like rats. Many of the GIs were later confined to mental institutions or committed suicide as a result.

For years, VVAW has pointed to

the way that veterans are used once and then thrown away with an inadequate GI Bill, high unemployment, bad VA healthcare. This latest report about Agent Orange underlines the "concern" of the US government for its military, for the men it send off to do its dirty work.

We are outraged that not only did the government send us off to fight and die for the profits of the rich, not only did they kill and maim hundreds of thousands of us in the process, but now we face the residual effects of Agent Orange including the possibility that our children may be born deformed. As one report put it, we may be carrying a "chemical time bomb" because the effects of Agent Orange can appear years after the individual was exposed.

VVAW and vets across the country aren't going to stand by and let them dump on us again. Within hours of the broadcast, vets in Chicago called a press conference to put out the feeling among vets about this new abuse and to demand VA action. On March 25th, at a Midwest Conference sponsored by VVAW on the problems and program for veterans, those attending came up with a plan of action to take the fight of Agent Orange back to the VA and to point at the class which was in fact responsible. Veterans demanded:

1) The VA publicize the potential effects of Agent Orange to let all veterans know about the potential danger.

2) The VA provide tests for all veterans who may have been exposed, and that vets' families be included in this testing.

3) The VA or Pentagon (or what ever appropriate agency) contact the Vietnamese to see about getting all relevant information about the effects and treatment—the Vietnamese have been dealing with the problem for over 10 years.

4) The VA provide treatment for the effects of the defoliant, that the symptoms be declared "service-

connected," and that disability and/or compensation be paid to vets and their families.

Veterans in Chicago and Milwaukee, as well as other places, have mounted a campaign against the VA's non-treatment of Agent Orange including picket lines at the VA and organizing vets to demand treatment. The VA went into shock. Their reaction has ranged from "What you are saying is right and we're doing all we can," to "What are you talking about? We have no evidence of anything." Covering their image, they had the media film a VA worker filling out a form for a vet over the telephone. When vets called the announced number, however, there was no offer to take down the information, only a growled suggestion to come to the VA. Later, the VA began to put out a toll-free information number for vets to call—but a week and a half after the number was announced, it was still not in operation. The VA is in fact demonstrating that their "concern" for vets is exactly the same as that of the government which sent us off in the first place!

Along with the actions of veterans to force the VA to do its job, we are using other avenues to get out the word about Agent Orange and its effects. Veterans have filed suits under the Freedom of Information Act to force the VA to let out whatever information is available. In some cities veterans have gone to local TV stations to demand that they show the "Deadly Fog" film and thus publicize the effects of the defoliant.

One of the tasks before vets is to get the word out nationwide—about what Agent Orange did in the war and what it's doing to us. Veterans across the country—united—can stick a big fist in the face of the VA and their bosses demanding treatment for this poison, and decent healthcare for all veterans!



Vet Dies of Agent Orange Poisoning: Vietnam Vet Wins Disability Before Death

VVAW

Reprinted from the the Winter 1978/1979 (Volume 9, Number 1) issue of The Veteran.

Paul Reutersham, Vietnam veteran from Stamford, Connecticut, died on December 14th from abdominal cancer at the age of 28. Though seriously weakened by disease, he continued through his final days to

fight the government for recognition that he was a victim of Agent Orange poisoning. Reutersham's quote, "I was killed in Vietnam and didn't even know it," has been used many times by veterans who, like him, are fighting to get testing, treatment and disability compensation for the effects of exposure to the deadly chemical spray.

On Reutersham's behalf, a New York attorney, in early January, filed a class action suit directed at several chemical companies to force these manufacturers of the defoliant to create a fund which would pay the costs of those who are sick as a result of their exposure to Agent Orange.

As a result of his tireless struggle Reutersham finally won his 100%

disability rating from the VA a few days before his death. Through his victory came too late to help him, it is a tribute to his struggle which will be long remembered by veterans everywhere.



Boots on the Ground



NYTS/CWS Dec 28 2015 (6549)

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THE VETERAN

SECTION B

Volume 46, Number 1

Spring 2016

From Southeast Asia to Southeast USA: The War as a Constant

JOE MILLER

February 18, 1966, Subic Bay, Philippines: USS Ticonderoga (CVA-14) in port for one day before heading off to Japan for some time off-line. That is the day I was finally transferred from overseas duty after twelve months in Taiwan and twenty months on board the carrier. Even when the carrier was stateside, it counted as "overseas duty."

By this time, the US now had nearly 400,000 troops in-country. Offshore naval forces had increased significantly. Where in late 1965 we had three carrier groups on station off Vietnam, we now had at least five. The 37-day bombing halt, LBJ's so-called "peace initiative," ended on January 31, 1966. The Vietnamese were being pounded day and night. It would only get worse.

I was now leaving the war zone, heading for my final duty station, shore duty with Helicopter Training Squadron Eight, based at Ellyson Field, Pensacola, Florida. It was exciting to realize that I would be able to live with my wife and daughter during these final two years with the Navy.

From Subic I had to take a military bus to Clark Air Force Base, about forty miles away. Once at Clark, I had to wait for a military transport flight. As I recall, I waited for a day or two, staying in a quonset hut. Finally, we flew out of Clark, stopping at either Wake or Guam for refueling, then on to Hawaii. In Hawaii, I transferred to a civilian flight that would take me to O'Hare Airport in Chicago. I still recall that welcome-home feeling as our flight passed over the West Coast.

Of course, home had changed significantly as well by the time I was coming back.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee just completed three weeks of hearings on Vietnam. It was there that former diplomat George Kennan warned about the US "illusion of invincibility" in regards to Vietnam. While Secretary of State Dean Rusk continued his hawkish stance on the war. Dissent, even mild dissent, was presented by General James Gavin and others at these televised hearings. The American public was being challenged

to THINK about the war, even though the majority polled denied it was a mistake at this time.

The civil rights struggle was also heating up and many were beginning to connect the war with the policies at home. The slogan of Black Power was gaining more saliency among younger activists for good reason. This movement was connected with and mirrored by the New Left as it challenged the old ways of doing politics. And, by 1966, something called the counterculture was thrown into the mix. Music and politics were now becoming inseparable. Mind-alteration with older and newer drugs (LSD was legal until 1966) was the way to escape.

This was all backdrop to my arrival at O'Hare Airport on a cold February morning. All I was thinking about right then was getting to my parents' home and seeing my wife and meeting my three-month-old daughter Lisa for the first time. They did not know when to expect me; it would be a surprise. And, it was.

Tears and laughter were part of the reunion. I held my wife tightly; we had not seen each other since I left her the summer before, when she was four months pregnant. My daughter was beautiful, though she did not care to see me—I was the stranger. She was happier in her grandfather's arms at that moment. It took a little time for her to accept me in those first days back together.

I had nearly thirty days of leave before the three of us, Linda, Lisa and myself would need to get to Pensacola. It was great to be with family and friends again, to be away from the constant noise and the smell of carrier duty, to be away from the conflict in Southeast Asia. That was the physical part. Then, there was the mental thing.

My mother made the mistake of telling me that she would no longer have to think about me being in "that war." We were all sitting around the living room, and I reacted, perhaps too quickly. My being home did not mean the war was over. In fact, I said, it was getting worse. People were still fighting and dying. The war needed to end before Vietnam was totally



Official photo of front gate to NAS Ellyson Field.

destroyed. This was the strongest statement I had made to my family up to that point. We did not talk much about it for the remainder of my time at home. I had become a different person.

Around the third week in March, it was time for me and my new family to fly down to Pensacola. We found a comfortable and affordable apartment down near the shoreline and began to settle in.

When I finally reported for duty at Ellyson Field, I was assigned to work in the Personnel Office. One thing I did immediately was to turn my desk into a symbol of my feelings about the war. Under the glass top one would find quotations from anti-war Senators and photos of Vietnamese people trying to escape the war. One day the Senior Chief Petty Officer in charge of the office challenged me on this. I just told him I was a liberal on the war. He pointed out that I should not be too liberal. I was beyond the point of being too fearful to express my views.

The war had followed me home. I was now serving on a base that trained helicopter pilots for service in Vietnam. Many of the instructors were

veterans of that conflict and would challenge my views on the war. Those views were becoming more and more solidified, the more I read and studied and paid attention to what was going on in the war and in our society. The war never left me.

At one point I decided to join the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and became active in the local chapter. As anti-war voices inside the military became more visible, it seemed the smart thing to do. With a family to think of, I stayed within the bounds. I was now passing time until 1968, when I could get out of the service and join the anti-war movement in earnest.



JOE SERVED IN THE US NAVY FROM 1961 TO 1968. TRAINED IN CHINESE AT ARMY LANGUAGE SCHOOL IN MONTEREY, SERVED WITH NAVAL SECURITY GROUP 1961 TO 1964, CREW MEMBER ON BOARD THE USS TICONDEROGA (CVA-14) 1964-1966. DISCHARGED AT NAS ELLYSON FIELD, FEBRUARY 3, 1968. CURRENTLY A BOARD MEMBER OF VVAW, INC.



Navy journalist photo of Joe at work as Forms Control Yeoman in the base administration office.



Joe, Linda and Lisa outside their rental house in Pensacola.

Fifty Years Ago

FRANK DA CRUZ

Fifty years ago, February 2, 1966, the troop transport USS Geiger pulled into New York harbor and disgorged I don't know how many GIs for release at Fort Hamilton in Brooklyn, including me. I had enlisted 3 years earlier, had Basic Training at Fort Gordon, Georgia, and Reconnaissance (Scout) training at Fort Knox, Kentucky, and then I was assigned to the 3rd Reconnaissance Squadron of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment in Kaiserslautern, Germany, and shipped there on the Geiger.

Previously I had been an Army brat in Frankfurt, Germany, and had gone to Frankfurt High School on the base (at the same time that Elvis was stationed there). After growing up in the segregated South, life on an Army base was a revelation to me, and when I came back to the same segregated South I was very unhappy. I finished high school, wasted a semester in college, dropped out, and all I wanted was to go back to Germany. That's why I joined the Army, cleverly choosing Armor and Europe.

I liked the Army. I learned a lot; how to work, how to be responsible for things, how to live with a diverse bunch of people over a long period of time, how to drive all kinds of vehicles

and operate and maintain different kinds of equipment. I traveled all over Germany on passes and leaves. I spent a subzero month at the tank range at Grafenwöhr, and went on numerous maneuvers in the German countryside. The Army was like a little socialist society where people did their work and, in return, were provided with all the necessities of life—housing, food, medical care, education—as well as numerous amenities like movie theaters, PX, athletic fields, pool tables, Steak Night at the Snack Bar, etc.

But that was the peacetime Army. In 1965 two things happened that changed everything. First, at the end of April, the US Army invaded the Dominican Republic because the US government did not want to see the democratically elected president, Juan Bosch, restored to office after being ousted in a right-wing coup. I was barely 20 but this did not seem right to me.

Then in July the "police action" in Vietnam exploded into total war when our government started drafting 50,000 kids a month to send them there to prop up a corrupt and brutal right-wing government by force. Many of

them, including 21 of my schoolmates from Frankfurt High School, would not come back, and many others who did come back were changed forever, and not in a good way.

These two events pretty much soured me on being in the Army. I started digging through Army regulations and found that I could apply for discharge as a conscientious objector, something that had rarely been attempted before... certainly I had never heard of it. I wrote a five-page essay citing the Sixth Commandment, Jesus Christ, Martin Luther King, and Mohandas Gandhi and attached it to a DA-1049 that went all the way to the Pentagon where it was finally disapproved just a week or two before my release, and now here I was walking down the gangplank of the Geiger feeling relieved not to have killed anybody or been killed myself.

I spent the next ten years doing all I could to end the war, and all the years since then opposing the endless provocations, subversions, incursions, coups, drone strikes, bombings, and invasions of other countries by the United States. I wore what was left of my Army fatigues in the largest demonstrations in the history of the

world in 2003, just before the "shock and awe" started in Iraq. None of it did any good, except perhaps in slowly winning more people over to what is essentially a movement to put back the Golden Rule.

And now, fifty years after I walked away from the Army, finally the first real ray of hope, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders running on a Democratic Socialist and "anti-regime-change" platform. Against all odds, and despite the best efforts of the political establishment, the defense industry, and Wall Street—the very cabal responsible for the unspeakable and disgraceful behavior of the USA since FDR died—millions upon millions of people are flocking to support him. I don't know how it will turn out. All I can say is that I began life when FDR was president and I would very much like to see something like that again before I die.



FRANK DA CRUZ WAS BORN DURING THE FDR ADMINISTRATION IN 1944, SERVED IN THE US ARMY 1963-66, GERMANY. HE WENT ON TO BECOME A SOMEWHAT FAMOUS SOFTWARE DEVELOPER. NOW RETIRED.



PFC Frank da Cruz at the Grafenwöhr tank range, Germany, Winter 1963 or 64. Wearing fatigues, with the added bonus of Russian-style US Army fur hat and 3rd Armored Cavalry insignia on hat and pocket, 7th Army patch (barely visible) on left shoulder.

Leaving Vietnam in 1966

ALLEN MEECE

Fifty years ago my crew mates and I had never set foot in-country but we drew combat pay for being stationed offshore of Vietnam. We provided gunfire support to the soldiers who were attempting to occupy the "Republic" of Vietnam. We did a Desoto Patrol inside the Tonkin Gulf and conducted electronic intelligence by spying on their radio and radar transmissions. We provoked their shore facilities by steaming inside their territorial waters and they sent torpedo boats against us which we sank and instigated a military conflict but avoided calling it a war.

Our warship was built in 1959 and had new five-inch, fifty-four caliber long guns that were fairly accurate to ten nautical miles. We'd drop the anchor five miles offshore and a forward observer in the jungle gave us the geographic coordinates of whatever he wanted to have killed or destroyed. We'd fire off a ten-thousand-dollar five-inch shell every five minutes. Someone joked, "Why don't we just pay them ten thousand dollars apiece not to fight? It's probably more than they make in their whole lives."

We were ten miles away from our targets and couldn't see nor hear our

shots explode under the jungle canopy. It bothered me that they only had rifles and couldn't defend themselves. They were targets in our shooting gallery. We were not noble good guys. We were assassins. "We weren't on the wrong side, we WERE the wrong side."

We ate three hot meals a day and slept on clean bunks in air-conditioning. We learned to sleep though the heavy recoil clanging throughout the ship with every shot from the main battery. We were told that nothing is evil when we're preventing the communists from invading America. The Lie was called The Domino Theory. It was the classic fake logic that says that the ends justify the means. I wondered how and why this immorality started.

We had it pretty good in the years of the 1950s. We had capitalized on World War II and our products were in world-wide demand. Jobs were available, rock and roll was new, cars and gas were cheap and all we had to do was get a job and learn how to dance the new styles and get a girlfriend. But after he had won The Big One, Ike Eisenhower warned us of the new danger to democracy, the military-industrial complex hates to lose its gravy train of monstrous

war profits. We were warned but we couldn't outsmart their power plays.

In 1954 the Vietnamese vanquished the French capitalist occupiers and US warmongers breathed a sigh of relief, they would continue the war the French had abandoned. They labeled Vietnam's war for independence as a communist conquest of the world. They manufactured a fake excuse for a war.

The warmongers' crystal balls showed the catastrophe of the future was the Communist Monolith smashing the American Dream! They screamed with an alarmism that demanded a hysterical response in the present to their make-believe future. They sent over some military advisers and they started their war for power and profit when, as always, there was only a need for more peace.

I enlisted in the Navy in 1962 because there was a military draft in effect and I did not want to fight in a jungle and I was offered technical training and world travel if I volunteered to serve four years. I liked my country and thought I would be helping to defend it. Now I know that defense means to defend the shores and borders of the continental United

States and does not mean defending the mega-corporations' foreign exploits. That is called imperialism, it is NOT the same as defending the country.

By the time my enlistment finally expired in 1966, I had learned that might does not make right and that a glorified government can be wrong and that the wonderful US Navy can be all wrong and that large numbers of good people can be wrong for a long time. The Vietnam War was still perversely called a military conflict and it was escalating with a logarithmic curve of my peers' deaths. My sonar technician rating was highly valued and I was offered a ten-thousand-dollar bonus for re-enlisting. Enough for a good car, enough to pay for one five-inch naval projectile to kill one peasant in his rain forest home. The hippies had been right all along and I got out.



ALLEN MEECE WAS A SONAR TECHNICIAN ON THE USS EDWARDS DD950, 1964-1966. HE HAS WRITTEN A FICTIONAL NOVELLA ABOUT THE TONKIN GULF INCIDENT CALLED "THE ABEL MUTINY," AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM (REVIEWED BY JOE MILLER IN THE SPRING 2014 ISSUE OF THE VETERAN).

1966

LEON WENGRZYN

"I'll go if you do," he said, looking at the building.

"I don't know man, this is scary as hell," I replied still clutching the steering wheel. "Are you sure you want to?" I asked him and myself at the same time.

"Come on, man" he said, crushing his cigarette and opening the car door. "We've been through this discussion enough. I don't want to get drafted so let's see what they say."

"Shit," I said getting out of the car too and standing next to him. Across the parking lot the huge gray building sat looking down at us. Above the entrance the sign read US NAVAL RESERVE AND MARINE CORP CENTER.

"Now let's get this straight," I said. "We're just inquiring about joining and what they got."

"Ask them if they have a buddy plan. You know, join together," he said.

You ask them," I retorted, "Christ, I don't know about joining. I just don't want to go to Vietnam. Maybe they got a deal where you can stay in the states if you join." I was beginning to stutter. I looked at him, thinking of all the years we've been friends. How we've done everything together and now here we are trying to figure out what we're doing next.

"Come on, man," he said in a more determined way, "let's check 'em out." I was glad he was taking lead in this effort but I wasn't so sure I wanted to be lead.

An impeccably dressed in white sailor with an arm full of gold stripes met us in the lobby. The shiny floors, the huge flags, the picture of the president and this stern looking military man just screamed for respect and obedience. It was mesmerizing and mortifying at the same time.

"We want to see about joining," my friend blurted in response to the inquiry of what we wanted.

I sensed an ever so slight grin on the sailor's face as he glared at both of us. "Have a seat," he commanded and disappeared behind a windowless door. My friend and I sat alone along the wall of the huge room, listening to the echo of the door closing.

"Shit," I said, immediately realizing that my voice echoed too. "Man, this is scarier than I thought," I whispered.

"Come on man," my friend whispered back, "they ain't done nothing to us yet." We looked around the room while the picture of the

president glared back at us. The sailor re-appeared with a bundle of papers and some ink pens. He seemed a little softer now as he told us to fill out the forms. Then he was gone again.

My friend and I looked at each other but there was really nothing more to say. We went to work on the forms. Name, address, social security, employment history, schooling, nothing unusual until the part asking WHY DO YOU WANT TO JOIN THE NAVY? We must have seen the question at the same time because we saw the dilemma in each other's eyes.

"Shit, I don't want to join the Navy. I just want to get out of being drafted and sent to Vietnam. If I say I want to join, they got me," I said with a bit of panic.

My friend had to think hard on this one.

"Just put down that you are not sure you want to join but you want to know more about it," he said. I was impressed by his unusual logic.

"What are you gonna put down," I asked.

"I don't know," he replied.

"What" I echoed across the room, "you don't know" I echoed again.

The president's main sailor was right in front of us again. "Don't worry about that part," he commanded reading our thoughts. My heart was beating hard but I could swear I could hear my friends beating too.

"Follow me," the sailor said as he headed to the windowless door. We looked at each other as we stood up. "HOLY SHIT" my friend mouthed in silence as we went through the door.

He led us into what appeared as a small classroom. Long tables and chairs facing the front chalkboard. Overhead projector on one side. The sailor instructed us to sit at separate tables and put a few papers in front of each of us. Then he explained, "in order to evaluate your suitability for service in the US Navy, you are required to take an examination." Then much softer. "Don't worry, this test gives us information we need to assist you in your questions about whether naval service is right for you. When you are done, we can talk about all your questions. If you want to smoke, please use the scuttlebutt, that is, the ashtray." I looked at my friend and I could tell by his grimace that he was thinking the same thing I was. Damn, we left the cigarettes in the car.

"This is a timed test so begin now and I will return when your time

is up," he continued.

I could hear the door close softly behind me as I picked up the pen and began. True or false, multiple choice, complete the sentence, etc., etc. At one point I looked at my friend but he was absorbed by his test. I was beginning to think this was a waste of time. The questions seemed so mundane and some so stupid.

Then the sailor was there again. This time I was relieved to see him. He gathered the papers and told us to sit tight and he would be back in a short while to talk to us.

"Man, I want a cigarette," my friend said as the sailor left.

"Shit, who would have thought you could smoke during a test. This ain't high school," I cried.

"Man, that test was really dumb. How did you do," he asked.

"I don't know. I didn't finish it all." Then we looked at each other in silence again. For all the experience we've had together in our lives, it seemed so unreal to be sitting here in this military classroom so unsure of ourselves and our future. I guess we really never had been faced with the questions of what the future would be for both of us, apart or together. I don't know if we were doing the right thing. Forces of life have grown so big and powerful that we bob along on an uncertain sea just trying to stay afloat. Funny how I'm starting to think in sailor terms.

The classroom door opened and the expressionless sailor motioned for my friend to follow him. "I'll be back for you in a few minutes," said the sailor. Now I sat alone. My gut feeling was that this did not feel right. I felt I was getting drawn in, but maybe that was a blessing. I surely didn't want to go to Vietnam.

It seemed like hardly any time had gone by and the sailor was back. I followed him down a corridor and into a private office. I sat in a plush chair. He sat behind his large desk with a picture of his loved ones and the usual trappings of an active business work place. My friend was not there.

"You did very well on your test," he began. "In fact, you are the 5th recruit to take the test today. Only three passed. The recruit who was #1 was a college graduate. The third place recruit has two years of college. You placed 2nd, so for your level of high school education, you did very well. There are a lot of naval programs that you can quality for if you choose

to enlist." He leaned forward on his desk and gave a well-practiced look of confidence, concern, and congratulations.

I instinctively sat straight up from my usual slouch and said, "Well me and my friend were talking about joining on a buddy plan. Could we join together?" A reasonable statement and question I thought.

The sailor's eyes narrowed. "Your friend did not have a high enough score on his test to qualify for enlistment with the Navy. I suggested he inquire with the Army if he wants to enlist."

Now I can't describe to you how profound the recruiter's statement was to me. Never before had a higher power split our relationship so cleanly and completely. I qualify, he doesn't. The recruiter went on nailing the nails in the coffin of our innocent friendship. Officers Candidate School, Journalism School, Shore Duty in California, Write your own ticket, blah blah blah.

Then, almost kindly, "You don't have to decide right now. Go home and think it over. I'll call you in a few days."

I walked out past the picture of the president. He seemed to smile more now than glare. Outside, the parking lot looked darker. It seemed a lot of time had gone by. My friend was standing outside the car smoking a cigarette. I was glad to see him.

"What took you so long," he began, "I almost smoked the last cigarette." I took the last cigarette from him as he crushed the empty pack.

"Shit, they are trying to get me to join," I said conscious of how careful I was saying it.

"Are you gonna?"

"I dunno," I said.

"Come on man, join up. You don't want to go to Vietnam." I got behind the wheel. He got in.

"Screw it," I said, "let's go cruisin' while we still got the time".

Post script: We both went to Vietnam, me in the Navy and my friend in the Army. We are both 100% PTSD disabled and still best friends. He made E-5 and I never got past E-3.



LEE WENGRZYN IS A MEMBER OF VVAW WHO LIVES IN FLORIDA.



VVAW New York, Armistice Day, 2015: Susan Schnall, Per Odman, George McAnanama, Brian Matarrese, Joe Hirsch, and Guy DeVeaux.

A Warning

JOHN KETWIG

I have been a lifetime member of VVAW for many years, and I have recently become aware of a problem that seems to be causing many fellow veterans to have severe difficulties in obtaining outside or "Choice" medical care through the VA.

The VA Choice option occurs when a veteran lives more than 40 miles from the nearest VA facility, or when a VA facility does not offer some type of specialized care. In my case, I was having problems with a lower back condition that caused intense pain when I would bend at the waist. I lived with this condition for many years, attributing it to an occupational hazard caused by bending over far too many fenders to peer under the hoods of far too many misbehaving cars. Over the past year, however, I found my legs were often numb and clumsy, and my feet were constantly cold, although they felt warm to the touch. I was uncomfortable and losing sleep, and, as these problems got progressively worse, I began to fear that I might end up in a wheelchair. I had described my lower back pain at every appointment with my VA primary physician over the past few years, and finally the pain and numbness became so acute that I insisted something be done. I was finally allowed to visit the local hospital's physical therapy center twice a week for a varied regimen of exercises, massage, and heat and electrical stimulation treatments. That's standard medical practice these days, resulting in a vast network of physical therapy centers in every town and hamlet across the United States. Friends tell me these treatments are sometimes effective, but they did very little for me. I reached a point where walking was very uncomfortable, but standing still for a few minutes made my legs go to sleep. I was constantly afraid of falling, so I insisted my VA doctor do something.

Years before, I had undergone a series of steroid injections into my spinal column by a civilian orthopedist in Pennsylvania. The shots made my pain tolerable, so my primary physician seized upon that and assigned me to undergo a similar series of shots at a local pain management clinic. Those shots were effective in minimizing the pain for a few weeks, but they did nothing for my numbness or cold feet. A second set of "facet" injections caused severe sciatica and leg tremors. My condition was getting worse, and I insisted my primary do something. She finally seemed to understand the seriousness of my problem, and requested that I see a neurologist. That's when things got interesting.

The request had to be reviewed and approved by the VA Medical Center hospital in Salem, Virginia. It is very common for vets in central and southwest Virginia to be sent to the hospital in Salem for treatments, and I have a long and very satisfactory history with that hospital. For all the familiar horror stories that vets tell about the VA medical system, I have to say the Salem hospital is very highly regarded by all the area veterans. It is a clean, efficient, friendly, and well organized place with a caring and very capable staff. It could use a bigger parking area, but that's about the most negative thing anyone can say.

Within a few days, I received a call from Salem to say that they do not have a neurologist on staff, and I would be hearing from a company called Health Net who would set up a convenient appointment for me with an area "civilian" neurologist. After the nationwide appointment scandal that rocked the VA system in 2013, Congress had revamped the outside or VA Choice services program

throughout the VA system, and enlisted the aid of this company to facilitate convenient and timely appointments with area specialists to take better care of veterans.

Sure enough, a few days later I had a call from a Health Net representative. She said she was calling from California, and asked a few questions about my medical condition and my travel limitations. I live between Lynchburg and Roanoke, Virginia, both about 20 miles from my home, so I said I would be willing to travel about thirty miles to visit a neurologist. The caller, Helen, promised to get back to me in about three days and gave me a toll-free number to call if I didn't get a call. After hearing nothing for more than a week, I called the number and was assured that I would get a call within about five days. Again, there was no call and I contacted the Health Net number again, and again. Each time they promised to call me within a few days to set up an appointment, but the call never came.

At that point I spoke to the person at the Salem VAMC who had originally called me. She promised to contact Health Net on my behalf, and

She made it clear that my case was most exceptional, and that a very large number of deserving veterans were still unable to get the medical care they need because Health Net refused to assist or communicate with the VA. She also assured me that it was a nationwide problem . . .

the next day she called to reassure me that Health Net would be calling me immediately. The call never came, and I called Salem again. This time the lady seemed less confident, and she explained again that this was relatively new program put in place by Congress in response to the VA appointment schedule scandal about a year ago. There had been some problems, but she promised to contact Health Net again and discuss my case with them. After about two days she called back to report that Health Net was no longer returning her calls, and she confided that VA facilities "all over America" were experiencing the same problems. She suggested I contact the Salem VA Hospital's Patient Advocate, which I did.

I had met the Patient Advocate previously, and I knew her to be an upbeat and optimistic personality who genuinely cares and regularly solves problems. When I talked with her by phone about the Health Net situation she sounded tired. She called me back a few days later, and she seemed to be choosing her words carefully. She was not getting any cooperation or help from Health Net, on my case or many others. I explained that I was hurting, and asked if she would be offended if I contacted my Congressman. Her enthusiasm was startling, and she became very emotional in explaining that I was far from the only area veteran experiencing this problem. In fact, almost in tears, she suggested that Health Net was the only provider of outside medical care available to the VA across the country, and Health Net had stopped all communications with VA offices nationwide. Again, this was a person who had helped me in a previous situation and I knew she was sincerely interested in helping veterans get the medical care they deserved. She was clearly distraught

because a lot of vets in need were not being cared for.

I contacted a personal friend who works in a VA medical center in another locality, and when that person heard the reason for my call they became very emotional. Health Net, or specifically Health Net Federal Services, LLC based in Arlington, VA, has become totally unresponsive, and currently is providing no services, and refusing to return phone calls or communicate, or cooperate with VA personnel in any way. My friend, who wishes to remain anonymous, explained that previously the VA contracted directly with the individual doctor or his staff, to arrange and pay for "outside" medical services. Payments were made according to a standardized VA rate schedule. For instance, to treat a broken arm they might pay \$100. The doctor's office was paid directly by the VA to deal with that specific medical situation. Today, as a "third payer" or "middleman", Health Net authorizes all VA Choice medical services, contracting with the physician in advance on a case-by-case basis. According to my friend, since taking on this responsibility Health Net has developed a nationwide

reputation for paying the physicians approximately HALF, or \$50 in my example, of what they had been used to getting. Assuming that Congress contracted to pay Health Net a considerable amount to administer these cases, the VA community feels that the company is pocketing those fees PLUS the other half of the medical fees, maximizing their corporate profit to an unethical degree. As a result, doctors are refusing to accept these insufficient payment rates and are refusing to accept any and all Health Net appointments or patients, and veterans are left without medical care. Meanwhile, Congress feels they have solved the problem, and are reluctant to investigate this current situation.

I wrote very similar letters to both of Virginia's US Senators and my Congressman, and immediately received form letters from all three stating that they had passed my letter on to the VA Medical Center in Salem! One Senator assured me that he had taken measures to deal with the VA's appointment scandal and backlog, and a northern Virginia company would now be handling all "outside" appointment scheduling. Health Net, as noted above, is headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. The other Senator's area representative had a Town Hall meeting locally, and I was able to speak with him and explain the situation, and I was able to speak with the Senator's specialist on veterans' issues. I have also spoken with the Congressman's staff member who specializes in veterans' affairs on a number of occasions. Again, both Senators and the Congressman immediately responded to my letters by assuring me that they had contacted the VA hospital in Salem on my behalf, which told me they had not read my letters in detail nor understood the problem in the slightest.

Meanwhile, none of this was helping my medical situation at all. My contacts within the VA system were not at all optimistic that I would ever be authorized to see a neurologist via the VA Choice process. At the urging of a friend who had been battling similar lower back problems for years, I very reluctantly made an appointment to see a highly respected spine specialist orthopedic doctor using my Medicare and Medicare supplement coverages.

A bit of background is necessary if the reader is to understand my situation. I am the stereotypical angry and bitter Vietnam veteran. When I got out of the Army I wanted nothing to do with the United States government ever again. I enjoyed good medical benefits as employment benefits throughout my career, although I rarely took time away from work to visit doctors. When I retired and my wife and I found ourselves without any medical coverage whatsoever, I reluctantly applied to the VA for benefits 42 years after my discharge. We lived in New Jersey at that time, and a state veterans' affairs office helped me to submit the requisite paperwork. After a series of long talks, I was persuaded to apply for PTSD benefits, and after a lot of testing I was approved for a disability rating that included free medical care for myself for life. The medical care I received at the VA facilities in New Jersey was certainly not on par with what I had been used to in the insurance-plan sector, but when we moved to Virginia I found the VA care equal to or better than any I had ever known. Until, that is, my back problem.

Back in 1966, at the age of 18, I was into cars and rock 'n roll music. I had absolutely no interest in becoming a soldier, but the draft was relentless and finally I was boxed in. Very much against my will, I enlisted. This added a third year to my obligation, but I would get a choice of training and I hoped I might avoid Vietnam. Of course, when we entered the service we were told that our benefits would be wonderful.

So, finding myself unable to access those benefits, I took the cards out of my wallet and met with the spine specialist at the expense of my Medicare supplement policy. He immediately ordered an MRI, as he considered the MRI done at the Salem VA hospital fourteen months earlier to be outdated. Again, I had to apply the expense to my Medicare supplement insurance.

However, at the same time I decided to be as relentless as the Selective Service folks back in the 60s. I can report that the squeaky wheel sometimes gets the grease. After contacting all of my Senators and Congressman repeatedly, I was surprised to receive a phone call from Health Net's Texas office asking if I would consider visiting a neurosurgeon 49 miles from my home, as I had indicated that I would only travel a maximum of thirty miles. I informed the caller that I had gone outside the VA system due to the delays, and I was seeing a spine specialist instead of a neurosurgeon. She took all the information, and within half an hour (!) called back to inform me that Health Net had been in touch with my specialist, and they would be covering my consultation visit and the surgery if it would be necessary!

A few days later I did receive a letter from Health Net authorizing me to visit the spine specialist for a consultation. The letter was very specific that that's all it was authorizing, but it was a start. The

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Psychedelics for PTSD: What a Long Strange Trip It's Been

VIRGIL HUSTON

I am like so many vets with PTSD. There is nothing unique or special about me. I went to Iraq in 2004 and knew that something was drastically wrong when I took my mid-tour R&R.

I heard about a nonprofit organization called MAPS (Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies) that was funding research on MDMA assisted psychotherapy for veterans with treatment resistant PTSD. MDMA is what is supposed to be the active ingredient in "Molly" or "Ecstasy", although getting real MDMA on the street is pretty rare.

Long story short, I met the requirements to participate in the study, since I had been treated for years by the VA with every anti-anxiety and anti-depressant drug known to man, none of which made me feel better.

This is a three month psychotherapy process. There are non-MDMA psychotherapy sessions before the first MDMA session. This is for the patient and therapists to get to know one another and gain initial trust. These early sessions set the groundwork and rules for the MDMA sessions. They want you to know what to expect and your right to control your own experience. Patients take MDMA only three times under supervision. No big Pharma pills you take three times a day for the rest of your life. MDMA has an extremely good safety profile.

It is also out of patent, so there is no money in it for the drug companies.

The in-between and after treatment sessions are to build on what came out of the MDMA sessions. All the psychotherapy sessions are important, MDMA or not.

This is THE silver bullet for treating PTSD. An earlier study with women suffering from PTSD caused by sexual trauma showed 83% no longer had symptoms after 3.8 years. I was in a Phase 2 study and results have been so good that the big Phase 3 trials are approved by the FDA and will begin soon. These are the trails that will lead to approval of this treatment for everyone with PTSD.

My three MDMA sessions built on one another and took me from outside influences on my life to my inner psyche. I was nervous at first, had never tried MDMA before.

The first treatment, I experienced anxiety when feeling the drug come on, but the therapists told me to breathe through it and ask myself why I was feeling this way. That soon passed into a beautiful euphoria where I was in complete control at all times. I remember everything. I had an agenda, I had work to do. The therapists had to work at getting me to let go and let the medicine do its work. They told me I was allowed to have a good time. What a concept, medicine that doesn't fuck you up and make you feel worse.

The majority of the time you are encouraged to commune within yourself with the aid of instrumental music that ranged from Hindu chants to drums to new age. Close your eyes and let the medicine and music guide your healing. My first session was about general outside influences on my life and how they might impact me, like the Army, my wife, my family and my work history. It was interesting and I knew work was getting done. I felt good about the therapy after it was over.

A month later, my second MDMA session was the pivotal one as far as the immediate and specific influences affecting me. These things were my wife and the specific war trauma. A lot of barriers were broken down during this day. I saw my wife as she actually sees herself, in filmstrips running rapidly through my brain. I needed to see that in order to understand her issues and life. It was very important for both of us. Then the trauma came up, starting with Iraq and then moving on to specific incidents in Afghanistan. This was the first time I was ever able to talk about these things.

It seems that part of the magic of MDMA is that it allows traumatic memories to be brought into the open and looked at and discussed in a neutral and nonthreatening manner. Then, when you restore the memories to the crevices in the brain, they no longer

bother you as much. For me, no more nightmares, no more laying awake at night reliving the trauma over and over. I could sleep again. You don't forget, I didn't want to forget. But, I can now function. Those memories no longer rule my life. This is a wonderful thing.

This treatment saved my life. I have some survivor's guilt as I have been one of the few people to actually get this treatment legally and I know so many more who desperately need it.

MAPS, the non-profit organization funding this research, as well as research on using marijuana and other psychedelics as medicine, needs your help to spread the word, write your Congress members, get the VA and American Legion off its ass, etc.

Check out MAPS at <http://maps.org>



VIRGIL HUSTON IS A MEMBER OF IRAQ VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR, SERVED IN THE ARMY DURING THE COLD WAR FROM 1976 THROUGH 1984 IN GERMANY AND TURKEY. AFTER 9/11, HE JOINED THE NATIONAL GUARD AND WAS DEPLOYED TO IRAQ IN 2004. HE WAS A CONTRACTOR IN AFGHANISTAN IN 2011, A JOB HE TOOK DUE TO HIS PTSD AND BEING OUT OF WORK AT HOME.

A Warning

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doctor took lots of time to explain that I was suffering from spinal stenosis, a buildup of arthritis, bone spurs, and calcium deposits around the openings where the nerves come out of the spine and head down toward my legs. Pressure on those nerves was causing my discomfort, and he assured me that he could make things better by surgery. He also assured me that his office had worked with the VA for years, and he could get them to cover the costs of the operation. He was not familiar with Health Net.

Still in negotiations with a variety of Senators' and Congressman's staff specialists, I made the appointment for the surgery. Soon after, I received a call from a lady from the Salem hospital's administrative staff informing me that the hospital had responded to a number of inquiries from Senators and Congressman, and she was pleased to tell me my surgery had been authorized by Health Net! A few moments later she confided that the folks from Washington had not questioned the hospital about its experience with Health Net whatsoever, but copies of my letters had been circulated to various departments throughout the hospital and I was "a hero" for taking the problem to the highest authorities, and for explaining it so clearly. I was shocked. She made it clear that my case was most exceptional, and that a very large number of deserving veterans were still unable to get the medical care they need because Health Net refused to assist or communicate with the VA. She also assured me that it was a nationwide problem, and that VA personnel all across the country had continuously reported the situation to their upper management, but no one had seen any progress on the matter.

A few days before surgery, I went to the hospital for blood tests, an EKG, and an explanation of what was going to happen. Sure enough, when the discussion turned to payment, the hospital records showed that the billing was to go to the VA, with no mention of Health Net. The doctor's office had made it clear that the transaction would have to go through Health Net, so I drove to the doctor's

office to straighten things out. I was immediately told the doctor's office had nothing to do with the hospital bill, and given a toll-free number to call the appropriate office at the hospital. I went to the car and dialed my cell phone, and they informed me that the doctor's authorization to do the surgery would include the costs of the hospital stay and the anesthetist. I went back to the receptionist with this information, and she made it clear she did not appreciate me doubting her information. Wouldn't you think by now people would know better than to get ignorant when dealing with a Vietnam veteran? I demanded to see a customer relations representative or a supervisor, and was told that wouldn't be possible. I got louder, and insisted. Finally, a lady came down from upstairs, and she actually commandeered someone's office, ushering me in and telling the occupant to "take a break." We had a long and very detailed conversation, she was completely sympathetic to my situation and very familiar with the Health Net problem, and I was assured that the doctor's authorization would indeed include the hospital and anesthetist charges. However, at that moment the doctor's office had not actually received the authorization! The lady pulled up my case on the computer screen and contacted the hospital, informing them of how the billing would have to be written. I left feeling more confident, and the next day I got a call to inform me that the doctor's office had indeed received the authorization from Health Net, and that the hospital had agreed to prepare the bill accordingly. I should point out that this a huge orthopedic practice with many doctors, and seven full-time receptionists to handle the constant influx of patients through the front doors. I was told that, since Health Net had taken over the scheduling of VA Choice patients three years earlier, mine was the FIRST procedure to be authorized by Health Net in the practice's experience.

I am happy to report that the surgery appears to have been completely successful! I am still

recuperating and sore, but when I woke up from the anesthesia my feet were warm, the first time in over a year. My legs are not numb, and the pain in my back is very different. I am confident that when my bones heal from the effects of the surgery I will no longer have the lower back pain that has plagued me for years.

I am not at all confident that I will not receive a great big bill in the mail related to my surgery.

In the few days since the surgery I have spoken with a variety of people within the VA system. They assure me that my case is the ONLY one approved by Health Net, and that they are still completely unable to communicate with Health Net to facilitate medical care for other veterans. I believe Health Net tossed me a bone to shut me up, and of course I should just be quiet and grateful. I can tell you honestly that I have had VA officials cry because they are so frustrated at their inability to help other vets. I would feel guilty if I sat back with an attitude of "I got mine" and let the matter drop. I was copied in a letter from Dr. La Puz, the Director of the VA hospital in Salem, to Senator Tim Kaine, assuring the Senator that I was having the surgery and everything was fine. I wrote to both reiterating the problem, and I am confident that Senator Kaine's assistant has begun to appreciate the problem and dig a little deeper. She has contacted a number of people at the VA, and seems to be pursuing the matter. I doubt I will hear from the Senator again.

I must point out that my many calls to VA people revealed that they are, like most government employees, sometimes severely limited by established regulations and protocols. For instance, it seems that the medical guides suggest or require that a neurologist should be consulted to deal with lower back pain and any resulting numbness, etc. At least two VA health care professionals expressed surprise to learn that a spine specialist can deal with neurological problems related to the spine. One of them called to check on my results after the surgery, and seemed optimistic that my experience might serve to bring a lot of additional doctors into consideration for future

VA Choice procedures like mine all over America.

There's no secret that the greatest status symbol in America today is a lucrative Defense contract. I've recently read about a small roller that is available at The Home Depot or Lowe's for seven dollars, but is billed to the Pentagon at \$1,678. I'm sure the management of Health Net are very satisfied with their profits from the contract to administer the VA Choice appointment process for the VA, and if allowed to continue as they have been going, they will be just one more typical all-American corporation with a big Defense contract making huge profits while they systematically and unethically under perform. Some would say "That's what makes America great!"

I wonder how many VVAW members and other veterans across the country have found that their outside or VA Choice health care has been delayed by Health Net Corporation? I believe the VA personnel I have encountered are sincerely trying to provide quality medical care to the area's veterans, but this company, and the VA's protocol requirements, are not allowing that to happen. This is a long article, but if it helps one veteran to realize that his frustrations in getting the medical attention he needs are not unique, and that the people at the VA may actually be just as frustrated and victimized by this situation, maybe a few more letters to Senators and Congressmen will help. When I get my twenty copies of *The Veteran*, you can bet that a large proportion of them will be distributed around the Salem VA hospital. VVAW has a long history of leading the fight for veteran's rights, and I hope this article might help to continue that proud tradition. Fight on, brothers!



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

Welcome Home

YESENIA FLORES

I was asked to write about the Standdown events by a comrade years ago. I was very much flattered to do so, after all I have participated in quite a few of them although at this point I cannot really give you a number when you ask how many I have volunteered for. They have become such a part of my life that I never really thought of keeping count, I just know that twice a year I dedicate a few days to clean up, organize, and feed the Vets. I have thought so much on how to eloquently speak about this event that, yes, it has taken me years to organize my thoughts. It is very tough to describe this even to those that have not experienced one on their own. It is chaotic, lots of running around, tons of clean up, stack this, throw this out, cook this, mix that. There are so many people involved that I also stopped trying to memorize names. Faces though, those I'm good at.

The event starts bright and early, either at six or eight in the morning depending on the day. As I am walking

into the respective Armory that holds these events I am greeted by smiles by the Vets that have spent hours lined up ready for their number and tickets to be handed to them. Men and women who have lost a lot, and not just in the war but also in their time beyond their service. A lot of them thank me for being a volunteer. In moments like this I just want to hug them and weep, tell them there is no need to thank me. Tell them that I am sorry they find themselves in the predicament they do. Yet I get a smile from them, a good morning, and I have no other choice but to carry that smile with me throughout the day and work just that much harder for them.

Being a volunteer has allowed me to meet so many great people. People that devote their time to this cause on more than just those few days. They fight the good fight for Vets because they know they deserve that and more. I have also had the great pleasure of befriending Veterans whether of Vietnam, the Gulf war, or

the still ongoing war against terrorism. Despite their experiences they are more than willing to lend a helping hand to a brother or sister in need. They talk about what they have gone through, and in those talks I gain so much knowledge, respect, love, and admiration for them. I admitted to one Vet how at times I find it uncomfortable to say "Thank you for your service" to Vets. Not because I am ungrateful but because I wish the situation in our country were a much better one and that their sacrifices made a difference. He was not offended by this at all, in fact he confided in me that he does not say that to Vets either. Instead he says "Welcome home." They might appear like two simple words, but to a Vet they might mean so much more. And even though home might be different to them now, this new approach of being welcomed could lead to a conversation and some understanding. I have learned throughout my volunteer work that sometimes all that a Vet needs is to know that they are being heard.

The Standdown events have become a home to me, a home to many others as well. It is our family reunion we go to twice a year. We check up on each other when we can, catch up on how the months between events have gone. We get older together, complain about our aches and pains. Yet we do it all with a smile on our face. We do it with the knowledge that the military women and men that attend the event will feel welcomed, loved, appreciated, and so much more. We also do it knowing we have a helping hand just around a corner when needed, our family is there to lend that hand. To my Standdown family reading this, see you soon!



YESENIA FLORES HAS VOLUNTEERED AT THE CHICAGO STANDDOWN EVENTS IN ASSOCIATION WITH VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR. SEE WWW.VVAW.ORG FOR LATEST CHICAGO STANDDOWN INFO.

Home: Stolen

GREGORY ROSS

Recently, I went to a few *Warrior Writers/Writing Through The Wounds* workshops. The last one had two prompts: Home Coming and Lost or Stolen. This piece came out of that workshop:

I have come home from war many times. August, 5th, 1970 was the first. Then December, 1979 when I decided not to swim to the sunset in the Pacific Ocean. Again, in January 1980, when I graduated from a VA residential treatment program in Menlo Park CA. I got almost all the way home in 1982 when my wife and I got married and even closer when eleven months later our son was born.

This is my most recent trip home. I made a well thought out decision to titrate myself off two mood drugs the VA had strongly suggested, you might even say gently badgered me into taking. They helped, they helped a lot, but for a while now have made me feel more like I was asleep than calmed. So far I have been doing OK.

The other day, I went to a Dollar

Tree Store because I could not spend a lot of money in a place where everything really is one dollar or less and most is of questionable quality. It was, for me a pleasant way to get out of the house and out of the much needed rain of late. It was early afternoon and the place was overrun with single digit aged children. We are about to become grandparents and I have always liked kids, so it was pleasant to see the parental and child interactions.

At the far end of the store was the toy aisle. A small, maybe five year old boy came around the shelving with a bright blue, red and yellow toy gun. He looked me in the eye, smiled a little, pointed it at me and began pulling the trigger. The toy gun made a small clicking sound. I maintained eye contact and gently said, "I do not like you doing that; please stop." His smile got slightly wider and he pulled the trigger faster. I repeated what I had said, but with just a slight bit more emphasis. He smiled a little broader and continued. I walk with a cane,

which I gently raised and just as he gently moved the toy away from me. We never broke eye contact. I repeated my request but with some more force. You can guess what he did.

At that point, I raised my voice and with a reasonable amount of vocal force said, "I do not like you doing this, I have been shot at for real and it is not a game, it is not fun." Just then his mother, who I had not noticed for most of the interaction, said, "Don't yell at my son." In a firm but controlled voice I repeated my "It is not a game, it is not fun" statement, adding that I had been in a War. She might have guessed if she had noticed my Veterans For Peace button. She and I stared for a moment, then she reached down to her son, gently grabbed his arm and said, "How many times have I told you not to do that? It is impolite."

I turned and walked away. I waited until she had gathered her three other children, paid for her purchases and left. I made sure they were in their car and gone before I checked out and

made my way to my car.

Before the War, I lived in a "Home" of a relatively normal level of anger. After the War and before the VA and "Mood Meds;" regardless of the child's age, I would have lost control, not to the point of physical harm, but I would have gotten very loud. My words would not have been threatening, but the intensity, the harshness, the bellicose energy emanating from my body, from my aura, would have overshadowed my words. This "Home" or reasonable anger was not lost by me, but stolen by greedmongers.

Dedicated to Aaron, Julie and Nancy.



GREGORY ROSS: NAVY, VIET NAM; 7TH FLEET [1968-69]. GRADUATE, VA DETOX AND PTSD PROGRAM [1980]; ACUPUNCTURIST, DETOX SPECIALTY TILL 2011. PUBLISHED IN "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE". FEEDBACK: GANDGANDG@YAHOO.COM

Zak and the Grapes

JIM WACHTENDONK

Many years ago, the Madison Chapter of VVAW, in solidarity with Cesar Chavez's hunger strike for better working conditions for migrant workers harvesting grapes, took turns fasting for three days at a time. That Fall I got a gig in La Crosse Wisconsin opening for Dr. Hook and the Medicine Show. Sukie, the kids and I got there by noon of Saturday and I was supposed to go on stage to open at 8pm. As we strolled by vendor and food tents the sky above looked like it was going to rain. All at once the thunder boomers crashed and the rain came in a down pour. We ran into a larger vendor's tent as did many other folks, standing room only. A lady behind a vendors table had a

large wooden bowl of grapes, was sharing them and she offered some to our eight-year-old son Zachary. Zachary said, "Oh, no thank you. We don't eat grapes because we are in solidarity with Cesar Chavez and the migrant worker." The tent went quiet and the lady with the bowl of grapes looked completely freaked out. She set the grapes under the table looking uncomfortable, as the rain let up. We were so proud of Zachary. Out of the mouth of babes rings justice and truth.



MAKING ART NOT WAR, JIM WACHTENDONK IS A VVAW MEMBER OF THE ZAK WACHTENDONK MEMORIAL CHAPTER, GILLINGHAM, WISCONSIN.

Monterey Fort Ord

STEPHEN B. WARD

There then 1966. Warm summer evening. Driving through Big Sur. With two blondes. In a convertible. Up from Santa Barbara. On our way to SF. Road trip. College kids.

There then the convoy. Out of Fort Ord. A long one. Deuce and a halfs. Clogging the highway. MP jeeps buzzing around. Working to keep it from stretching out. Discouraging people from wanting to pass.

We play cat and mouse. The convoy is in our way. There is no other traffic. We pass and pass. Truck after truck. With their side canvases rolled all the way up. Exposing infantry. Full combat gear. Boys turning and looking down at us as we come up. Expressionless. On their way to Travis. On their way to Vietnam. In

less than 24.

We know there is a war on. Hippies are beginning to appear. We talk about our deferments. Comparing how much time we have left. Hoping it will be over by then. But it isn't yet. Those guys as proof.

We make it through. But now we were not as happy. Bothered that they hadn't waved back. At the teasing blondes. Who wouldn't at least whistle? Young men steeled for seriousness. We ourselves still naive. Shielded by our privilege. That is not keeping whiffs of unfairness from clinging to us as we leave them behind.

STEPHEN WARD WAS A 21-YEAR-OLD COLLEGE KID IN 1966 WHO WENT ON TO REFUSE THE DRAFT.



One Step

JOSEPH GIANNINI

In Vietnam, there is a green Bamboo Viper. Marines call it "One-Step." It bites. You take one-step. You're dead.

Off The Coast of South Vietnam Aboard The USS Iwo Jima

September 12, 1967

A Marine enters our quarters and says, "Captain Landes wants to speak with Lieutenant Giannini." I walk to the CO's State Room and enter. Stand just inside his open hatchway. He is to my left. Lying belly down in the lower section of a bunk bed. Buck-naked! I stand adjacent to his feet. Trying to stare straight ahead.

He turns his head and speaks over his right shoulder. "Lieutenant, you have an image around here of being Peck's Bad Boy. A kid. Not serious." This is not a conversation. I am demeaned by his naked words. He goes on, "You are too close to your men. I'm concerned about you making the right decisions when their lives are at stake. I'm thinking about relieving you. That's all Lieutenant." Without a word, I leave. He has misjudged me. Or this is payback because he knows I hate him?

Four days later, in the dark just

before dawn, we Chopper west to begin Operation Freemont, in Quang Tri Province. The northern most province in South Vietnam. As we come into the LZ, rounds ping against our CH-34 Choppers. We jump out. Run. Form a perimeter. Start setting in, on the west side of a small river. Across is a large village bordered by a thick strand of bamboo trees. The village is eerily quiet. No signs of life. This isn't good.

Mid afternoon, Captain Landes radios down to me. He tells me to meet him. He's on the small hill, overlooking the river and the village. I walk over and up. Stand on his left. We're facing east. A clear view in front of us. As Landes begins to speak, a lone woman comes out of the bamboo across the river. She begins walking across a narrow strip of white sand. Toward the river's edge. She's in peasant black. Wearing a straw hat. Carrying, on a long stick across her shoulders, two empty water cans. One on each side of the stick.

"Lieutenant, I have a mission for your platoon. Tomorrow morning our battalion is crossing this river. At 0500, take Bravo One down river one mile. Provide left flank security."

The woman is now squatting

down at the river's edge. About 50 meters to our right front. Beginning to fill the water cans. POW! A shot from the bamboo thicket to our lower right. Impacts in the water near her left shoulder. She doesn't react. Continues filling a can with water.

Landes shouts down to Marines set in the bamboo to our right. "What's going on down there?"

An unseen Marine in the bamboo yells up, "There's a VC across the river."

I say to Landes, "That's no VC. It's just a woman."

Landes ignores me. Responds to the Marine, "If it's VC kill it."

POW! POW! POW! Rounds impact near her. She stands with the filled water cans. POW! POW! Turns and begins to step. POW! WACK! A round hits her center back. She falls forward into the white sand. Cans empty beside her.

Without a word, I turn and walk away from Captain Landes. I think to myself. I'm losing my humanity. My heart and soul mostly black. I have to hold on. Protect what remains. Can I?

Off the coast of South Vietnam Aboard the USS Iwo Jima

From a letter to my sister
September 29, 1967

Dear Flo,

"... This fighting to save face and stop Asian communism is bullshit. I don't give a damn about these Asians. Losing American boys to protect them is tragic..."

"... This is a mess over here. I just can't make myself believe we have a good cause..."

"... Flo, I hate being away. I hate everything I'm doing and seeing. I'm getting by but I feel like I'm being skinned alive. I'm losing something out here. I just hope it returns when I leave this place. I wouldn't mind carrying such a heavy burden if I could believe in what we are doing.

Well enough complaining. I'll end now, write again soon. You're still my best friend.

Love Joe."



JOSEPH GIANNINI ENLISTED IN THE USMC IN 1966. HE IS A "MUSTANG," A MARINE THAT ROSE THROUGH THE RANKS, FROM PRIVATE TO CAPTAIN. HE SERVED IN VIETNAM WITH THE FIRST BATTALION, THIRD MARINES, ALSO KNOWN AS "THE HOME OF THE BRAVE."

Standard Operating Procedures

GREGORY ROSS

In 1983 I began studies at the San Francisco College of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (SFCAOM). Most Acupuncture/Oriental Medicine schools in the 1980s were populated by upper middle class, upper class and "trust fund baby" students due to cost. Most offered classes only during the day Monday through Friday. Some required a year's tuition up front and full time attendance. Not, exactly a lower middle class, working class possibility. But do to a cash flow problem, SFCAOM was the first of the Acupuncture Schools to switch to a pay as you go, day and night school business plan.

I signed up as soon as I found out about this change. Three weeks after my interview, which mostly consisted of verification that I was able to pay, I started school. I told no one that I was a veteran. Not my fellow students, not my teachers and certainly not the administrators. I did keep vigilant to the possibility of another veteran in the field, but it was over twenty years before I heard of another veteran doing Chinese Medicine. By then I was well into a career doing acupuncture detox/rehab work mostly in the Alameda County Hospital in Oakland, California. I also worked a couple of years in a clinic in Bay View, Hunter's Point,

San Francisco, California.

All the schools run low fee clinics with supervised treatments by the students. You start out as an observer and go through three levels of internships with both increasing hands-on training and responsibility. I was winding down, preparing to graduate and take the State Boards to get my license. At this level you might have two clinics a day, three days a week, or whatever time you needed to fulfill the State mandated number of clinical hours.

Most clinics, for that matter most, classes were taught by Chinese, Japanese, Korean or Vietnamese practitioners, but this particular clinic was officiated by a Caucasian man, Alphonso, who had graduated from SFCAOM. He and I got along well, but not so well that I told him of my veteran status. One day in his clinic, when we were waiting to be assigned patients, a student came in very upset. She was outraged that her husband was getting to go climb a mountain in Tibet and she could not go because she had to stay for classes. This was not a working class problem. I remember thinking but, not saying, "Life is hard and then you die." I do remember mumbling to myself, "I wish she would shut the F*** up." Alphonso gave me a strange look. Perhaps I was

showing anger that he sensed was not warranted.

She then said that her husband's climb was being delayed because the Chinese Army had invaded Tibet. She was dumbfounded by reports coming out that they had killed, maimed and raped Tibetan civilians. She and many students were unbelieving. How could the people who created this "Beautiful, Balanced, Juxtaposition of Medical Science and Art" be doing such a thing? I muttered, "S.O.P." Alphonso overheard it and asked me what I had said. I replied, forcefully, "Standard Operating Procedures." He looked at me quizzically. I replied to the look with this statement, "Every army over every period of history has done such things. Not every soldier but every invading army, it is S.O.P." He again just looked at me perplexed. I glared at him and said, "I am a Vietnam veteran," somehow thinking this would explain everything. And, in a bizarre sort of way, it did.

Mountain Climbing Wife overheard me, as did a few other clinical students. Soon most students knew of my veteran status. Some stopped talking to me. Some asked the, "How could you do such a thing" question, some thanked me for my service, some did not seem to care, but now that I was "out" I decided to

use it to my advantage. We had to do a research project and most of them were based on common problems such as headaches, back pain, insomnia or anxiety. But I went to the Oakland Veterans Assistance Center and set up a twice a week, twelve week treatment project for "phantom limb sensations".

I especially enjoyed the moment when a particularly self centered obnoxious student, with me in the room, complained to the Professor that he had approached the same Veteran's Assistance Center and had been turned down. He could not understand why. He arrogantly whined to the Professor that it was obvious he was a superior practitioner and I, an inferior student, got permission because I was a veteran. He actually suggested the Center have him take over the project and I could stay on as his assistant. He had no idea he wore contempt like a dress uniform - starched and crisply pressed, all creases in line, brass polished, spit shined.



GREGORY ROSS: NAVY, VIETNAM; 7TH FLEET [1968-69]. GRADUATE, VA DETOX AND PTSD PROGRAM [1980]; ACUPUNCTURIST, DETOX SPECIALTY TILL 2011. PUBLISHED IN "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE". FEEDBACK: GANDGANDG@YAHOO.COM.



The Misfortunes of Mr. Fowler

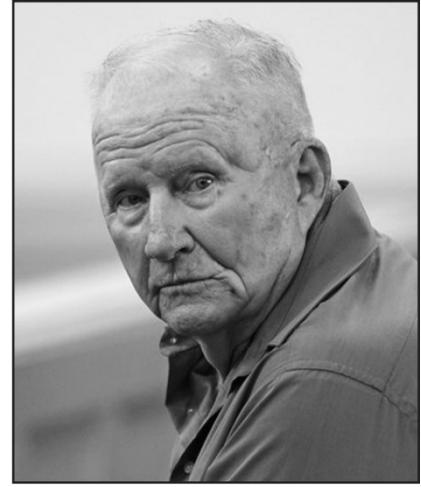
MARC LEVY

Readers of Medic in the GreenTime.com and of CounterPunch know that Medic's decorated Grenadian friend Roger Byer, upon completing his tour with Charlie 1/5 First Cavalry in Vietnam and Cambodia, returned home, only to be arrested by the Cav when the US invaded Grenada. By odd coincidence, Roger was a platoon mate of Sgt. James Bonard Fowler, the man who sparked the Civil Rights movement.

Stateside

In 1965, as the civil rights movement was simmering, Alabama State Policeman Fowler shot and killed Jimmie Lee Jackson, an unarmed black man. He and around five hundred people had just left the Zion United Methodist Church in Marion, Alabama. They were attempting to peacefully walk to the City Jail, about a half block away, where a young civil rights worker was being held. They were met by Marion City police officers, sheriff's deputies and Alabama state troopers. In the standoff, streetlights were switched off (some sources say the police shot them out) and the police began to beat the protesters. Two UPI photographers were clubbed, their cameras were smashed, and an NBC News correspondent was hospitalized for his injuries.

Jimmie Lee Jackson, aged 26, and his mother, Viola Jackson and his 82-year-old grandfather, Cager Lee and others ran to Mack's Cafe, where they were chased by 10 Alabama state troopers. Police clubbed the grandfather, who fell to the floor. His daughter, Viola, rushed to his aid. Jimmie Jackson rushed to his mother's aid and was shot twice in the abdomen by Fowler. He died a week later.



Fowler claimed he acted in self-defense after Jackson grabbed his gun from its holster. After two grand juries failed to indict him, Fowler was transferred to the police department in Birmingham and promoted. Some time after the incident he stated, "I don't remember how many times I pulled the trigger, but I think I just pulled it once, but I might have pulled it three times. I don't remember. I didn't know his name at the time, but his name was Jimmie Lee Jackson. He weren't dead. He didn't die that night. But I heard about a month later that he died."

The shooting sparked the first Selma to Montgomery march that occurred a few days later on what became known as Bloody Sunday.

One year later, while at the Alabaster Alabama Police Department, Fowler allegedly shot 34-year-old Nathan Johnson, who'd been arrested for suspicion of drunken driving. Officers said Johnson had grabbed a billy club from Fowler and was attacking him when Johnson was shot twice in the chest. Subsequently, both killings were removed from Fowler's personnel records.

In 1968, Fowler was dismissed from the state police for severely beating his supervisor, T.J. Barden, who had given Fowler a low performance rating. State troopers who witnessed the event saw Fowler ram Barden's head into a car windshield, knocking him unconscious. Fowler appealed his firing, but lost the case. Not long afterward, his brother, CSM Robert Allen Fowler, assigned to C 1/5 First Cavalry, was killed in Vietnam. Having previously served in the military, at age 35 Fowler joined the Army to avenge his brother's death. After basic and advanced infantry training he was sent overseas to his brother's old unit in Vietnam.

Recalling his time as a medic in Charlie 1/5, Roger Byer, who is black, declined to speak about Sgt. James Fowler in combat, noting only that an officer of mutual acquaintance felt much the same as he. However men on Charlie company's Facebook page recall Fowler with fond regards. I obtained Fowler's redacted military personnel file from the National Archives in Saint Louis. His war record is impressive.



Fowler's post war years are fuzzy. He married a Thai woman and lived in Thailand, returning to Alabama several months a year. He had the misfortune to spend nearly five years in a Thai prison for either running drugs or being framed for the crime. In that matter, Fowler had previously acted as a prosecution witness in a murder for hire case, in which Green Beret Sergeant Major Edward J Gleason, involved in an Okinawa-Thai smuggling ring, enlisted Fowler to kill a superior officer. Fowler and a person of authority believed he was later framed in retaliation for his testimony. While jailed, Senator John McCain advocated on his behalf.

In 2007, forty-one years after the event, Fowler was charged with first degree and second degree murder for the death of Jimmie Lee Jackson. In 2010 he pleaded guilty to one count of second-degree manslaughter, and apologized for the shooting, but reiterated he had acted in self-defense, believing that Jackson was trying to grab his gun. He was sentenced to six months in prison and was released after serving 5 months due to health problems which required surgery.

In 2005, Fowler's daughter, Tracey Schraeder Fowler, sued him, claiming he beat her in the back of the head, and choked her. Fowler counter sued, claiming his daughter owed him \$5,000 and she assaulted him; he prevailed in court. In 2015 Schraeder Fowler told the UK website Daily Mail.com that her father was an American hero and not racist. Interviewed by John Flemming of *The Anniston Star*, Fowler claimed that he'd been born and raised among blacks, but was unsettled by the civil

rights movement:

"I'm on the side of J. Edgar Hoover. I think [Martin Luther King] was a con artist. I don't think he's got a snowball's chance in hell of getting into heaven. No more chance than I do. His goal was to screw and fuck over every white woman that he could."

"They don't want to be called nigger, they don't wanna be called jigaboos. But they won't hesitate to call you a honky, a redneck, a cracker and," gesturing to his wife, "her a slope head or a slant eye, fucking gook. They won't hesitate to do that. They won't hesitate to wear their colors, green, black and red, but they will get mad if you put the Confederate flag on the front of your car. They say to hell with your heritage, your culture. And we have just surrendered to that."

"I think that segregation was good, if it were properly done. Now, you got to give equal funds and they got to be handled right. I don't believe in completely mixing the races. I don't think that is gonna help anything."

James Bonard Fowler died on 5 July 2015. A local obituary omits his law enforcement career.

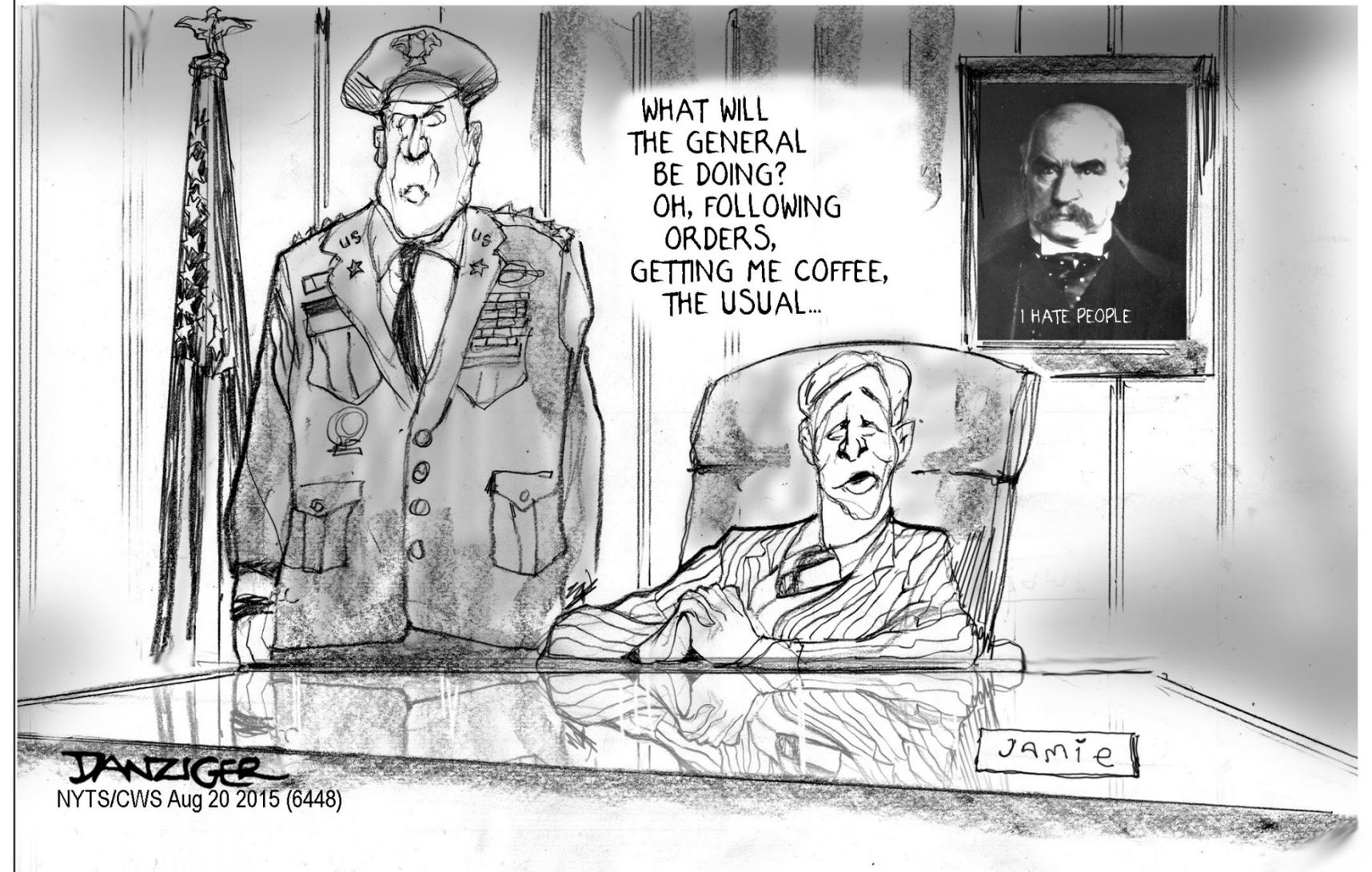
Jimmie Lee Jackson was a Vietnam veteran. I have requested his records from the National Archives.

The FBI's Civil Rights-Era Cold Case Initiative is re-assessing dozens of unsolved or inadequately solved racially motivated homicides from the civil rights era. Among them is the death of Nathan Jackson, Jr.



MARC LEVY WAS A MEDIC IN DELTA 1/7 FIRST CAV IN '69-'70. HE LIVES IN SALEM, MA. YOU CAN REACH HIM AT MEDICINTHEGREENTIME.COM.

General Odierno, Commander of the Iraq Success, is Hired by Jamie Dimon





THE VETERAN

SECTION C

Volume 46, Number 1

Spring 2016

The Burn Pits

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

The Burn Pits: The Poisoning of America's Soldiers by Joseph Hickman (Skyhorse Publishing, 2016)

For a number of years, we have believed that Vietnam veterans were poisoned by Agent Orange, and the vets who have conducted the War on Terror in Iraq and Afghanistan had their very own unique plague in the after-effects from Depleted Uranium-tipped projectiles. We haven't heard much about DU recently. Maladies experienced by our soldiers after exposure to our military's chemical warfare just don't command much attention in America's corporate-owned media. Hopefully, that is about to change.

"The Burn Pits" is a small book, less than three-quarters of an inch thick including its hard cover, but it tells an enormous story. It seems our troops in Iraq and Afghanistan have been forced to live in an environment of thick, black smoke from the burn pits, which are giant open holes where the American military has burned the waste over the past fifteen years of our adventures in those two countries. Now, it should be pointed out that military installations in the US of A. are required to use environmentally-friendly incinerators to burn their garbage, but that requirement was never imposed upon our occupations in the Middle East.

When the US first moved large numbers of American troops into Iraq and Afghanistan, it was soon clear that they were generating an enormous amount of waste, garbage, and trash. The military did not feel their highly-trained and all-volunteer soldiers should be relegated to garbage men or women, so the Pentagon turned to KBR to construct burn pits where the accumulated trash of war could be incinerated. KBR is, of course, a huge defense contractor, formerly Kellogg, Brown, & Root, a subsidiary of Halliburton Corporation. KBR does many millions of dollars of business with the Pentagon, and is considered a go-to company whenever the military needs something done. So, back in 2003, the Pentagon tasked KBR with creating

and maintaining burn pits to dispose of the trash from our wars against terror in the Middle East. Surprisingly, those contracts only required the burn pits, with no mention of future plans to construct environmentally friendly incinerators at our bases! KBR brought out their bulldozers and dug big pits, threw in all the trash, covered the mess in jet fuel and tossed in a match. According to "The Burn Pits," the wastes that were burned in these pits, day and night, for years, included petroleum, human waste, hazardous electronic wastes, office equipment, glues and adhesives, solvents, treated wood, rubber, pesticides, asbestos, styrofoam, plastics, aerosol cans, gas cylinders, explosives, batteries, medical waste, paint and paint thinners, human body parts, and animal cadavers. The pit at Camp Taji in Iraq burned approximately fifty tons of waste per day, and the one at Balad Air Base disposed of roughly one hundred and forty-seven tons per day. In virtually every case, the burn pits were constructed in close proximity to barracks, mess halls, work stations, medical facilities, and areas where large numbers of American soldiers and local civilians were forced to live in thick, black, pungent smoke clouds day and night. To make matters even worse, a number of American bases were actually built upon the sites of former Iraqi chemical weapons factories or storage units. Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this entire affair is the author's interview with retired Lt. Colonel Rick Lambreth, who had been in charge of construction of the burn pits and also the rebuilding of Iraqi bases for his employer at the time, KBR. Lambreth was reluctant to speak with Hickman, as he had "received threats from KBR telling him to keep his mouth shut." Lambreth states that there were no soil samples taken, or testing of any kind, of the sites where American bases would be constructed. Once the bases were manned by thousands of Americans and the burn pits were operational day and night, Lambreth says no air quality tests were ever conducted. The author is unable to point towards any official

acknowledgement of the problem by the DOD or the VA. Suffering veterans who have submitted claims have had them denied. Hickman suggests that upwards of 59,000 American troops have suffered serious illnesses from breathing the smoke from the burn pits, including a strong possibility that Vice President Joe Biden's son Beau, who died of brain cancer after serving in the atmosphere of dense black smoke in Iraq.

It is not surprising that American troops and Iraqi and Afghani civilians began to feel sick. Hickman gives numerous examples of Americans who have suffered, and even died, from a range of cancers. While the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) deny that there is any service connection to their illnesses, a Dr. Anthony Szema at Stony Brook University School of Medicine has investigated and found high levels of titanium in the lungs of veterans who had been stationed at Camp Victory, and he found that vets who had been deployed to Iraq or Afghanistan have far higher rates of cancers and leukemia than vets who were never sent to those countries. Also, he found that those vets were having children with birth defects at a rate three times greater than vets who had never been to those countries. At the rear of the book, the author lists over 160 symptoms and diseases that are occurring at significantly higher rates among the soldiers who have lived in the black clouds of smoke from the burn pits. There are no statistics available to tell us the effects of the smoke on the people of Afghanistan or Iraq, but it can be assumed that they are also affected. The real scope of this tragedy is unknown. Unfortunately, our government and the companies it employs have shown that they intend to keep it that way.

When we sent our young people to the Middle East to fight the War on Terror, it was very common to see vehicles traveling the streets and highways of America sporting yellow stick-on ribbons exhorting us to "Support Our Troops." Of course,

those stickers were never allowed on military or government vehicles. If America's soldiers and veterans are ever going to get a fair shake from the DOD and the VA, it will be due to the efforts of reporters like Joseph Hickman, and the relentless pressure from veterans' organizations. "The Burn Pits" is an important book that should be on the shelf of every high school library across the United States.

Latest news: On March 3rd, 2016, Reader Supported News revealed that the Department of Defense has refused to carry "The Burn Pits" in its stores, which include all Army and Air Force exchanges, or PXs. The book is new, but it is already an Amazon bestseller, and has garnered many favorable reviews. The publisher calls DOD's action an "outrageous and blatant example of government censorship" and suggested that the DOD has a responsibility to "do everything within their power to inform returning veterans about these potential health hazards instead of covering it up." He describes the DOD's refusal to make the book available to today's active duty service men and women representative of "the military's ongoing efforts to cover up a problem that is developing into the Agent Orange scandal of Iraq and Afghanistan." The many Vietnam veterans who read this newspaper will be sympathetic but not surprised. "The Burn Pits" deserves to be in every high school library across America, located nearby to the recruiting brochures. "An Army of One" has long been a curious recruiting slogan, and with Joseph Hickman's superb book THE BURN PITS, the potential enlistee might find a dire warning about how little the US government and its military really cares about the individuals we call our troops.



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



We Gotta Get Out of This Place

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

We Gotta Get Out of This Place: The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War by Doug Bradley and Craig Werner, (University of Massachusetts Press, 2015)

Perhaps more than any other war in America's history, the Vietnam War allowed non-combatants to become familiar with the common foot soldiers, not just as soldiers caught in an ugly and tragic situation on the other side of the world, but also their feelings, their humanity. Vietnam was America's first televised war, and the reporters were allowed to access the kid next door. Of course, the Pentagon quickly put an end to that, but the sad history of Vietnam continues to offer a wide variety of troubling and poignant glimpses into the hearts and minds of soldiers in combat.

Vietnam has been called a "rock 'n roll war." The soldiers assigned to The Nam had grown up with some great rock 'n roll emanating from Mom's radio. We learned to toddle, to balance upon a two-wheeled bicycle, and to pick up our rooms to a background that transitioned from big bands through doo-wop to the exciting sounds of Danny and the Juniors, Elvis Presley, Chuck Berry, and Fats Domino. The army of eighteen year olds sent to Vietnam in early 1968 in response to the Tet offensive had been about ten in 1960 when Chubby Checker made The Twist an international pop music

phenomenon. We were in our early teens when the Beatles first played the Ed Sullivan Show, and we experienced all the angst of adolescence at a time when pop music exploded in quantity, quality, and accessibility. We were the first American fighting force to have portable radios, taking our rock or country music everywhere we went. We were the first American army to have widespread access to cars, and a few guys actually had 45 rpm record players hanging under the dashboard on "her" side, so the girlfriend of the moment could keep the sounds coming while we were busy driving. Soon, modern science and space-age technology gave us the 8-track player, and we were able to carry whole long-playing albums in our cars!

For a few years, music flowed at us in a variety of styles, and all in a high quality that will probably never be equaled. There was surf music, soul music, the British invasion, folk music, rhythm and blues, horn bands fusing rock and jazz, and country music. Modern transportation allowed the musicians to tour as never before, and every small city or bedroom community had a Top-40 rock 'n roll radio station. It was a time of great freedom; Bob Dylan's "The Times They Are A'Changin'" was our anthem, the sexual revolution (and the pill) came along just as we were reaching adolescence, and music challenged us to get involved in "the movement."

We dreamed of surfing in California, or marching with Dr. Martin Luther King to desegregate the South. We dreamed of becoming astronauts and walking on the moon, or going to San Francisco where we could wear flowers in our hair.

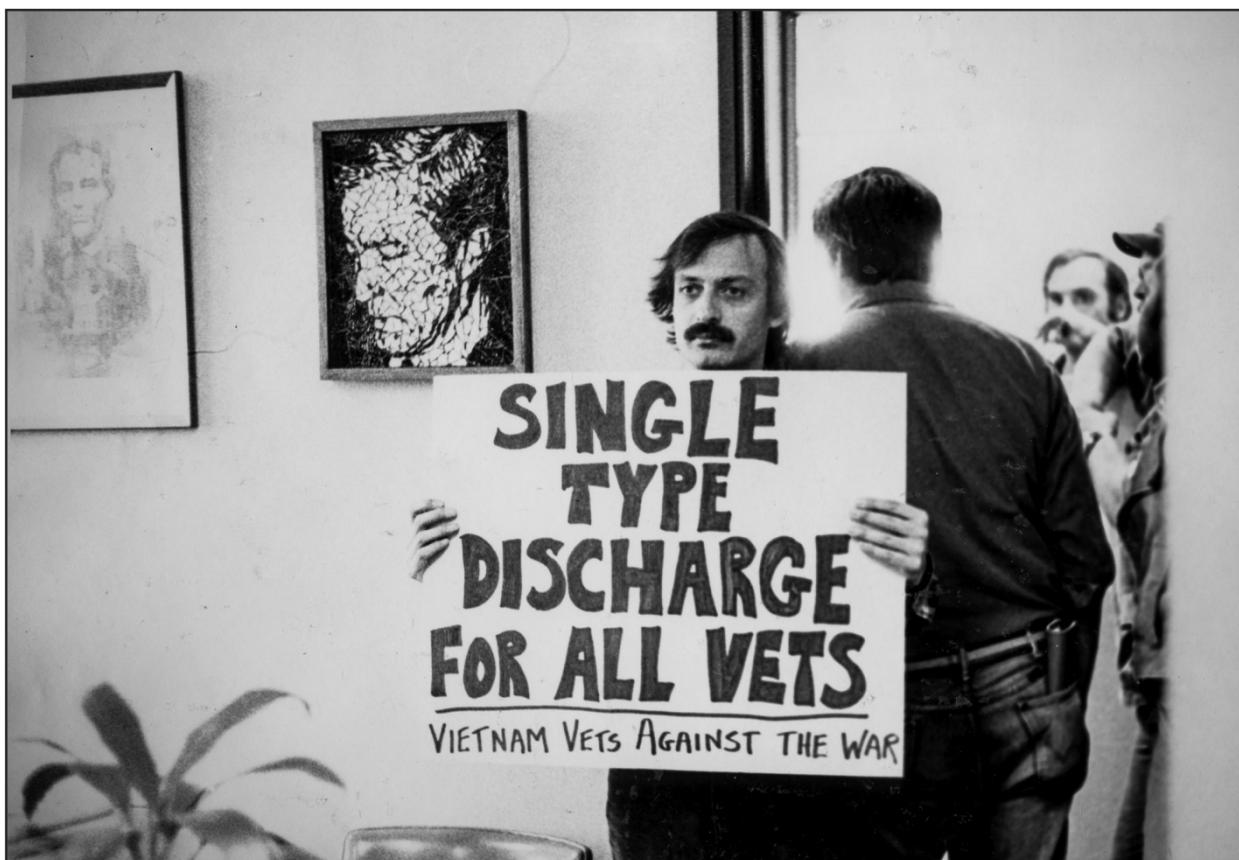
From this glorious celebration of American freedom and creativity, many of us were torn away by the Draft. We were made to accept that we had no real freedoms; we were rounded up and taken away to stark army encampments. They took away our colorful clothes and shaved away our long hair. Instead of the Beatles' "All You Need Is Love", we were required to chant "Kill, kill, kill!" Our barracks had cages over the light bulbs and sheets of polished metal for mirrors, and too many of our comrades chose suicide instead of military service. There was a short leave, and then a long plane or boat journey to the other side of the globe, and we were in Vietnam! This was the real thing. Friends were getting hurt and killed in the most terrible ways. Rockets and mortars fell out of the sky, spreading fields of hot shrapnel that shredded or tore anything in its path.

We were far, far from home and everything we thought we knew about life and truth. We missed Mom's home cooking and holiday celebrations. It was tempting to forget that those things had ever really existed, but then we heard a familiar song from

home and we knew the world was still turning on its axis. The military gave us a network of radio stations, AFVN, and sometimes we got Filipino rock bands covering some of the hit songs from home. Some of the guys bought reel-to-reel tape recorders from the PX, and their friends sent long tapes of the local Top-40 station, or maybe even Ed Sullivan's guest band, or this week's Shindig TV show. At the time, music from home provided some connection with what was happening back in The World, and some faint hope that we might get back there, and back to normal lives some distant day. The Animals' song and so many others were a lifeline for Americans in Vietnam. This is an excellent book that allows a wide variety of Vietnam veterans to describe the importance of that lifeline, and the enormous influence the lyrics of popular music had upon our generation and "our" war. I can't imagine any Vietnam vet below the rank of Major reading this book and not being delighted.



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



Ed Damato.

Finger Paintings

MICHAEL BURKE (REVIEWER)

Finger Paintings by Bob Bakert (CD Baby, 2014)

We're among the many admiring fans and friends filling audiences at The Hungry Ear in northwest Atlanta and we've been doing so for a growing number of years. My beautiful, witty and very with-it wife Renee gets full credit for getting us there a few years back. We're always looking forward to this totally awesome and amazingly inexpensive night out. For about the cost of a cheap six-pack and a few canned items for the CDC food bank, we've never departed "The Ear" dissatisfied or disconnected from the music and entertainment served up there. All top-drawer talent, with music profoundly pleasing to eyes, ears and inner spirit. So, support your local music-makers!

What we really want to say to *The Veteran's* audience is get the new "Finger Paintings" cd; written, produced and performed by an Atlanta gentlemen who migrated here from Buffalo, New York. Buffalo's deep freeze winters might have played

a role in his relocation, yet his true motivation was coming here to make music and continue his education. If you've ever been wintered at Camp Drum, say in the 10th Mountain Division, you'll probably have no difficulty at all recalling all the ice. Especially that which formed on eyebrows, nose and mustache, if you were authorized to grow one back then.

Not only is this former Buffalo dude one helluva fine musician and terrific vocalist, he's very likely the best song-writer and arranger we've ever met personally. Bob Bakert is a hip easy-going middle-ager, who is quite possibly the best bundler of top music talent this young reporter has ever seen. For years we've taken in the shows Bob produces at The Ear, which by the way is a coffee house bubbling over with high-octane stuff. As a matter of fact, I've heard that the question Bob gets asked most following a show is straight out of an old Billy Joel hit, remember, "Say man, what are you doing here!?" "Finger Paintings" is a landmark album for Bob Bakert and the entire

cast of top musicians and backup singers, mainly because Bob wrote seven of the outstanding arrangements himself, among other things. His musical accompaniment is not your typical four-piece band, but rather an outstanding fourteen-piece orchestra brought together for this extra-special CD from Bob's little black book.

Kindly be aware that "Finger Paintings" instrumentation isn't your old standard three guitars and drums. This set includes a cello, kalimba, mandolin, viola, nylon guitar, fretless bass, drums, piano, electric bass, tenor sax, pedal steel, upright bass and of course, Bob Bakert himself wailing away on either his steel string acoustic, electric or nylon guitar. Also quite fortunate for listeners of "Finger Paintings" is the two really great female backups adding just the right touch. This, pardon the expression, but this awesome album features sixteen top-notch performers in all.

Should I absolutely have to pick one favorite out of the entire litter it would have to be Spanish Rain. Why? Well, quite frankly because this very

rhythmic and romantic song can really get us old guys out on the floor and dancing. The lyrics and Spanish guitar produce an articulate love-story much like the Marty Robbins great story-songs of fifty years ago. I've Been Thinking, Partners and My Blues are truly beautiful romantic songs in one man's candid view of the real world of love and parting. There's a lot more of course to this fabulous package and one should listen to and enjoy them all together.

Bob Bakert's music and lyrics traditionally garner multi-star reviews. Should you be unable to get to Atlanta and The Hungry Ear, you might just want to order your copy at www.bobbakert.com.



MICHAEL BURKE IS A FORMER ARMY NCO IN OPS-INTEL, WITH OVER 10 YEARS OF SERVICE, INCLUDING TOURS IN GERMANY, KOREA AND VIETNAM. PRESENTLY THE FORMER LONG ISLANDER IS VVAW'S ATLANTA CONTACT.

We Gotta Get Out Of This Place

JOHN ZUTZ (REVIEWER)

We Gotta Get Out of This Place: The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War by Doug Bradley and Craig Werner, (University of Massachusetts Press, 2015)

Music got many of us through the war. It reminded us of home. It helped us maintain. It gave us a place to retreat from the reality of war.

The war in Vietnam had a soundtrack (pay attention to any movie about the war). It gave us a common experience. It soothed us, it excited us, and it united us.

Though the book points out the divisions the music spotlighted, those divisions existed before the music influenced us. Early war/late war,

head/juicer, the music differed in some significant ways.

Bradley and Werner briefly mention the beginning of our common musical experience – cadences in boot camp. They mention Jody but pass over many other juicy lyrics, to begin their examination of the sounds of our war.

They fill most of the book with discussions of popular music, and they point out how some popular music, the stuff written by vets, was influenced by their experiences. They highlight Hendrix. There's a nice interview with Country Joe. They do a pretty good job of pointing out those influences, with some oversights (they mention Archie Drell and The Bells' "Tighten

Up", but neglect the influence of his Purple Heart).

The book has a few other factual problems (John Lindquist will die when he finds they enlisted him in the Army). Even with those few shortcomings, they give voice to many vets, allowing them to reveal which music effected them, and how.

They allow veterans who didn't have popular success an area at the back of the book. That gives voice to troubadours like Jim Wachtendonk and Lem Genovese.

They post their unscientific "top 20" with "Fixin' To Die Rag" at #2, and "We Gotta Get Out Of This Place" at #1. They put Bruce Springsteen's "Born In The USA" at #18, the only

tune in their lineup, which came out after the war, in 1984.

The book examines how the music changed during the war, and how the troops changed as well. It gives a number of examples of that metamorphoses. However, they neglect to look at the chicken/egg question: Did the music change the troops, or did the troops change the music?

It's an easy read, and it will bring back some memories. I hope the authors go on and examine the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.



JOHN ZUTZ IS A MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN BASED MEMBER OF VVAW.

New Pentagon War Manual Reduces Us To "Level of Nazis"

SHERWOOD ROSS (INTERVIEWER)

Law of War Manual by the Office of General Counsel, Department of Defense (June 2015)

The Pentagon's new "Law of War Manual" (LOWM) sanctioning nuclear attacks and the killing of civilians, "reads like it was written by Hitler's Ministry of War," says international law authority Francis Boyle of the University of Illinois at Champaign.

"Historically, this is a terrible development," he added in an exclusive interview with this reporter. "We are reducing ourselves to the level of the Nazis."

The grim, 1,165-page-long document, issued in June by the Defense Department's Office of the General Counsel, also sanctions the use of napalm, herbicides, depleted uranium, and drone missile strikes, among other barbarities.

Boyle points out the new manual is designed to supplant the 1956 US Army Field Manual 27-10 written by Richard Baxter, the world's leading authority on the Laws of War. Baxter was the Manley O. Hudson Professor of Law at Harvard Law School and a Judge on the International Court of Justice. Boyle was his top student.

Boyle today is the leading professor, practitioner and advocate of international law in America. He drafted the the Biological Weapons Anti-Terrorism Act of 1989, the US implementing legislation for the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention.

"Over the years, 27-10 has

proven to be a total embarrassment to the Pentagon because it sets forth a fair and accurate statement of the Laws of War both as of 1956 and as of today," Boyle says. He termed the new manual a "warmongering" document.

"The new document seeks to distinguish between 'legitimate' and 'illegitimate' acts of military violence against civilian targets, using the criterion of military necessity," points out Peter Martin of the World Socialist Website.

"Thus, acts of mass slaughter of civilians could be justified if sufficient military advantages were gained by the operations."

The bulk of the document, Martin continues, "amounts to a green light for military atrocities, including mass killings."

Martin said the most comprehensive previous such document, the 1956 Pentagon field manual, did not state that civilians, unlike military personnel, should be spared "unnecessary suffering" because it assumed... "that any deliberate targeting of civilians was illegal and a war crime."

Among the flagrant violations of international law sanctioned by the Pentagon's new LOWM, Martin writes, are:

- Legitimizing the use of nuclear weapons. LOWM states, "There is no general prohibition in treaty or customary international law on the use of nuclear weapons." This flies in the face of a number of existing

international covenants. Under the UN Charter as interpreted by the World Court in its Advisory Opinion on the Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons, even threatening to use nuclear weapons, as the US and Israel have threatened Iran, is illegal and thus a war crime.

- Authorizing the use of banned incendiary weapons such as napalm, herbicides (as Agent Orange in Vietnam), depleted uranium munitions (as used in Iraq). Napalm, for example, is banned under Protocol III of the 1980 UN Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons.

- Authorizing the use of cluster munitions, mines and booby-traps, the LOWM rationalizes that "the United States is not a Party to the Convention on Cluster Munitions." That's a disgrace, of course, when the overwhelming majority of nations have signed it.

- Defends drone missile attacks, both by the Pentagon and intelligence outfits such as the Central Intelligence Agency, declaring flatly: "There is no prohibition in the law of war on the use of remotely piloted aircraft." To the contrary, targeted killing off the battlefield is prohibited.

- Authorizes the use of exploding hollow-point bullets, stating the US is not a party to the 1868 St. Petersburg declaration banning their use. At this writing, the US is only 147 years late.

In sum, the move by the Pentagon to supplant the 1956 manual with the LOWM represents an effort to justify

the excesses of its trillion dollar-a-year war machine, one that is as large as the next dozen nations combined.

The Pentagon today operates some 900 military bases globally, allegedly for defense, yet engages in warfare in a dozen foreign countries. The new Pentagon manual illuminates in bold print the downward drift of the US from a democratic to a totalitarian society.

LOWM has received no play in a media "following orders to conceal from the American people the Pentagon's preparations for new and more massive war crimes, along with the destruction of democratic rights spelled out in the US Constitution," Martin says. Indeed, it seems TV "news" stations beam more commercials than news stories, and reports of any carnage inflicted by the Pentagon are virtually non-existent.



SHERWOOD ROSS IS A MIAMI-BASED AWARD-WINNING JOURNALIST WHO FORMERLY REPORTED FOR THE NEW YORK HERALD-TRIBUNE, THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS, AND MAJOR WIRE SERVICES. HE WORKED AS A REPORTER FOR THE CHICAGO DAILY NEWS. HE HAS CONTRIBUTED TO NATIONAL MAGAZINES AND HOSTED A TALK SHOW ON WOL, WASHINGTON, DC. IN THE SIXTIES HE WAS ACTIVE AS PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTOR FOR A MAJOR CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATION.

Guns and Drums

The war is winding down
and the bodies are wrapped in winding sheets
The war is winding down
and they're shipping the bodies home
The war is winding down
and the widows grieve alone
The war is winding down
and men and boys cry out in their sleep
The war is winding down
They make it sound so neat

But what is that sound in the sky?

It's guns and drums. It's drums and drones. It's drones and they hardly saw them coming
It's guns and drums. It's drums and drones. It's drones and before this day is through
a thousand dead whom we never knew

Hurroo... Hurroo.... ?

—Minnie Warburton



VVAW National Collective, Chicago, 1974.

The Devil's Chessboard

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

The Devil's Chessboard: Allen Dulles, The CIA, and the Rise of America's Secret Government by David Talbot (Harper, an imprint of Harper-Collins Publishing, 2015)

David Talbot is a noted journalist, the founder of independent news source Salon.com, and that author of "Brothers", an insightful biography of John and Robert Kennedy. "The Devil's Chessboard" is a crowning achievement, a dark and troubling history of America's post-World War II subtle and insidious turn away from Democracy and the concept of one man/one vote to a secretive and deadly environment of manipulations and assassinations that became the Cold War, and perhaps even more.

"The Devil's Chessboard" is basically a biography of Allen Dulles. With his brother, John Foster, the Dulles brothers achieved positions of great responsibility in the post-World War II government, and were instrumental in directing the focus of America's foreign policy away from any and all peaceful pursuits. The brothers began their rise to power prior to WWII, running a legal firm that helped American companies deal with the growing Fascist movements in Germany and Italy, and vice versa. When the war broke out, Allen actually opened an office in Switzerland and the brothers enjoyed huge financial and political rewards for laundering assets seized by the Nazis, and discreetly finding buyers for the vast treasures seized by the Axis forces. As the war wound down, Allen was particularly effective in helping a number of his contacts, Nazi officials responsible for the Holocaust and many other atrocities, to escape prosecution and find post-war employment in positions of responsibility throughout Europe and yes, in the US. Had FDR lived to see the end of the war, it is highly likely that Allen Dulles would have been charged with treason as he worked to shield his Nazi friends from prosecution.

President Truman realized he was in over his head as the Soviet Union and China emerged from WWII as world powers, and he allowed the Dulles brothers, along with a number of other anti-Communist ideologues, to orchestrate a great East vs. West struggle that would become the Cold War. It was their life's work to eradicate Communism and to fight it to the death wherever it might be suspected, much less found. John Foster Dulles became President Eisenhower's Secretary of State, and Allen became head of the new Central Intelligence Agency soon after President Truman created it from the old OSS.

Allen Dulles delighted in mixing with the rich and powerful, dressing extravagantly, playing with the ladies, and conducting the risky undercover business of international espionage. He was highly respected for his clandestine abilities and daring, but he was also feared. He seemed to find mortal enemies everywhere under the category of Communism, but he swore no real allegiance to any country, political party, or government. Dulles was a technician, a zealot focused on international destruction of an ideology he abhorred, and his attentions changed regularly. He organized the overthrow of Mohammad Mossadegh in Iran, and the youthful and charismatic Jacobo Arbenz of Guatemala, and he played a key part in organizing an unsuccessful coup attempt by the French military against their President Charles DeGaulle. The CIA was deeply involved in the overthrow and assassination of Patrice Lumumba in the Congo, a campaign that was directly opposed to the wishes of President Kennedy. Dulles recognized no limits to his mission to safeguard America's national security. He allowed the CIA to create a vast scientific study into "deprogramming" and "mind control" that might be used to extract information from supposed Soviet agents, but the experiments were performed upon unwitting American GI's and prisoners, with no

accountability for the results.

Left to his own devices, Allen Dulles built the CIA into an all-powerful, super-secret foreign policy band of rogue agents who created and administered America's foreign policy with scant regard for the official business portrayed in the evening news. He maintained surveillance upon every member of the government, and employed any and all tactics to intimidate them into leaving our country's foreign relations to his lawless gang. When Fidel Castro's rebel army took over Cuba from the corrupt Batista regime, they nationalized a number of American companies and closed a chain of very successful casinos and resorts run by the American mafia. Allen Dulles quickly recruited the mob to help with his plans to remove Castro, and President Eisenhower allowed him to form, train and equip a small army of Cuban refugees to invade Cuba and remove the pro-Communist presence from the Caribbean. When President Kennedy was elected, he allowed the CIA and Joint Chiefs of Staff to continue planning the invasion, but refused to allow any American air cover or boots-on-the-ground military involvement. The Bay of Pigs invasion was a disaster, and Kennedy soon recognized that the CIA's bold strategy had been intended to force him to yield and allow air support when things began to go bad. No one had expected Kennedy to resist, and Dulles and many of his cohorts labelled the new President a Communist. JFK resisted their urgent pleas to nuke Havana, then Laos, Berlin, Peking, and even Moscow. Ultimately, the President fired Allen Dulles and his top lieutenants from the CIA, but Dulles maintained a powerful group of associates, friends, and dedicated anti-Communists. Things were heating up in Southeast Asia, especially as the CIA became involved in refining and transporting opium and heroin to the world's markets.

Soon after Kennedy broke

with all Cold War precedents and announced that the US would seek to avoid nuclear war with the Soviet Union by undertaking a new peaceful policy aimed at disarmament and cooperation at a key speech at American University, he was assassinated. Like many other historians and scholars, author David Talbot feels strongly that Allen Dulles was uniquely positioned and experienced to orchestrate that tragedy, and also the later assassination of the President's brother Bobby.

"The Devil's Chessboard" is a frightening and amazing book, extremely well-written and accessible. The reader comes away feeling shocked that so much evil, manipulation, disinformation, ideological murder and mayhem, international intrigue, and raw treachery could be done by an insider working within the US government, in fact bringing us to the very brink of nuclear war. How did the CIA seize so much power and control, defy the elected structure of that government, or avoid prosecution for unimaginable crimes? And, assuming just a portion of the stories in this well-documented book are true, what does that say about the true nature of our Democracy? Clearly, America's prestige has been severely damaged by the history of our foreign policies since World War II, and clearly some of the most terrifying architects of those policies are influencing the current election-year debates that have America divided and Americans feeling desperate. "The Devil's Chessboard" is well-written, entertaining, a disturbing but most informative book, and highly recommended.



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Dave Cline Was The First To Shake My Hand And Say Welcome Home Brother

same Kalashnikovs, newer M-16's
cities were the jungles
sandstorms instead of monsoons
same burning homes
Hellfires instead of Zippos
we convoyed, never humped
near beer instead of beer
no day passes, no Tu Do street
but something called an X-Box
wi-fi porn, not much grass
same lies pouring from TV
different newscasters
same blood pouring from twenty year olds
different countries
same war profiteers
different boogie man
DU instead of Agent Orange
pills instead of heroin
torture pictures in higher resolution
regionally appropriate racial slurs
same Johnny Cash
Kid Rock not Hendrix
no Bob Hope
and a much lamer Jesse James
same despised puppet regime
same buses to DC
same boonie hats, different colors
but when I got home from Iraq
wise uncles inspired
instead of condemned

—Nathan Lewis is an artist, activist and Iraq vet. He makes handmade paper from military uniforms with other veterans. They call it Combat Paper.

American Refuge

He was born back in '49
An orphan of the storm
Back then when the breath of war
Was all that kept him warm.

His papa he don't know about,
His mom? It's just as well...
It's funny when you come that way
It's like you're spit from hell.
So maybe that's why he sees himself
Like a thief that's on the run
Somehow he has cheated life
Or to him some cheating's done.

Air raid drills! Bomb shelters!
Face the eastern wall...
Teachers lined us up and down
Along some inner hall.
Yea those were the 50's
When fallout drills were fun
Naive to the reality of
Where you gonna run!

"Don't worry 'bout the world, son"
said dad in '63
"But they just killed the President"
(and with him part of me).
The Joplins and the Hendrix
and the Dylans brought it home
Be careful what you treasure here—
you'll grieve it when it's gone.

The war raged on in Asia now;
A place for him to hide.
A place for indecisiveness
When you're all torn up in side

A place for being angry
A place to vent his hate
A place where you're accepted by
America, the Great.

But all that too soon fell apart
Like water through a sieve
Until it drained his reservoir
And sapped his will to live.
So he killed his "self" with alcohol
And he killed his "self" with drugs
And rearranged his ethics
To co-exist with thugs
And tho they shared his brevity
His innocence was lost
"Grieve if you ever had it,
And all the pain it cost."

So he crawled out of the gutter
To seek the steel of self
And found amidst the clutter
An ore of inner wealth.

No longer encumbered
Like the python sheds his skin
No longer does he fear his fear
And stands to walk again
And in his search for some significance
If equal means the same
He'll thank the world to pass him by
And never know his name.

—C.F. Harrienger, Jr.

Meeting The Enemy: A Marine Goes Home

AARON M. DAVIS

Meeting the Enemy: A Marine Returns Home by Suel Jones (BookSurge Publishing, 2009)

Combat is best described as hours upon hours of boredom fractured by moments of complete insanity. At this time, we were praying for some period of boredom, but we knew an offensive probably was building against us. We didn't know when they'd hit. All of the probing, sniping, hit and run tactics, and shelling were to wear us down, so they could catch us exhausted and with our guard down. We'd been in the bush more than a month, and needed relief badly, but it seemed that every unit along the DMZ was under attack, taking casualties, and short of men. We had to do with what we had.

The Marines wanted tough kids who didn't understand they weren't bulletproof and were straight off momma's tit, so they were easily disciplined and were malleable. All of us always thought it would be someone else. I suppose that's the way the mind works, or insanity would take place.

I had put off the draft as long as I could and turned 24 in Vietnam. I was the oldest in my platoon including the LT. I was twenty-four-years old, and a father figure to a bunch of teenage killers.

When I returned to the US in 1969, I couldn't get Vietnam out of my mind, and I didn't understand our involvement. I knew the story line about fighting for freedom and democracy for the people of South Vietnam. After a short time in Vietnam, I knew that line was unadulterated bullshit! So begins the journey for Cpl. S. Duane Jones USMC in Vietnam 1968-69.

He went to Vietnam, Duane and came back Suel Jones. I've known Suel since I met him at a VFP convention in Boston 2004. His Texas drawl is fun to listen to, and as nice a fellow Marine as he is, he will not embellish or gloss over the truth of his combat experience in Vietnam.

"Meeting the Enemy: A Marine Goes Home" was not only a catharsis for Suel, but for him a "truthful and honest" story of combat, PTSD and eventually, in 1998 returning to Vietnam to live. I want you to read the book, not just because of its brutal truth, but because Suel donates 50% of the proceeds to Vietnam Friendship Village, Project Renew and other Agent Orange remediation projects benefiting the Vietnamese people.

OK, so let's give you a taste of the book:

Walking Point

We had been moving a couple of hours, when I suddenly dropped to one knee, raised my hand for the company to stop. I wasn't sure, but I thought I had seen a movement in the brush down the trail...could have been an animal, a man darting or just the breeze fucking with my mind. I crawled forward...the gooks could be watching me...waiting for the right time to take me out...or let me go by and hit the main column as it passed through.

Heat

Heat exhaustion was a daily occurrence...the temperature over one hundred...flack jacket and helmet held the heat in like a fuckin' wool blanket...arrived in country weighing a solid 170 and now 145.

Identifying fellow Marines

I lost most of my squad while they were landing in a hot LZ...I was in 3rd Med with malaria...the CO came to get me to identify bodies at Graves Registration...that's when I knew most of the guys in my squad had been killed...sat on my bed wanting to cry...

C Rats

Living in the bush while surviving on C Rats was never good...only with tabasco sauce...toasting it with a heat tab or C-4...I pinched off a bit of C-4 to cook a can of spaghetti...Every Marine's dream: pound cake,

mixed fruit...

Ambushes

The gun was set, camouflage and cover...my legs and back cramped...had to sit motionless with sweat streaming down my face...

Bitten by a Rat

(I had trouble believing this one)

We dug in shallow and tight inside the DMZ...the last night on OP, I had crackers and peanut butter. I didn't feel the little fucker until he bit my hand. I woke up screaming...a fuckin' rat had bitten me and now I was dying of hydrophobia...Doc Foreman laughed his ass off...

Chaplain/Sunday Services

I sat in the foxhole...listening to his prayer to guide us in the insane killing and dying. I couldn't condone a preacher praying to God to help us kill...I was raised Southern Baptist...I was a christian before coming to Vietnam...God taught "thou shall not kill."

Kit Carson Scout

Suel asked him, "Are you a communist or a capitalist?" Kit replied, "neither, I want to survive"...A well educated Kit continues, "It's all about money... War is good for the rich in America... while you fight, they drink and play with the money you die for."

Kids/Waiting for ride to 3rd Med

Kids walked 6 miles from Tin City...they walked toward me... probably only wanted candy, gum or cigarettes...I saw them as the enemy...I kept yelling "di, di mau"...I locked and loaded...I didn't want to kill them...I fired above their heads and sat down shaking as they ran away...

Wounded/Medivac

I was laying on the ground...something slammed into my back...like a shock of 100,000 volts of electricity. I blacked out. Doc told me the wound

was superficial and he would pack it then got me on the chopper. The flight to 3rd med was short...my war was over...trage doctor said bullet missed my spine by less than a centimeter.

Jobs/PTSD/Marriage

Had some rough times which ultimately led to his returning to Vietnam in 1998.

Welcome Home

I was halfway around the block...a Vietnamese man stopped me and said "Hello sir, where from?" in broken English. I said "USA." He said, "you been Vietnam before?" I blurted out, "yes, 1968 with the US Marines." "Oh," he exclaimed, "you enemy!" Then he threw his arms around me, and with a big hug while laughing, "welcome Vietnam!" The Vietnamese forgive and move on. The Vietnamese seem to be able to forgive us. While in Vietnam...I thought of them as ignorant peasants...After living here for a few years, I learned that poetry, art and music are the soul of Vietnam. A great part of their ability to forgive and move on, is due to the deep spiritual side of the Vietnamese.

Friendship Village

Built by Vietnam Veteran George Mizo...opened its doors in 1998 to 10 children...now serves 120 kids and around 40 Vietnamese veterans. As a veteran, I felt I owed the Vietnamese people. I felt as a warrior...I was not complete until I returned...to help heal the wounds of war. This small project, some 16 kilometers southwest of Hanoi, seemed the perfect place to return something, to give back, to start the process of reconciliation.



AARON M. DAVIS IS A FORMER MARINE AND ARMY OFFICER. NOW RETIRED, HE IS A VETERANS FOR PEACE ACTIVIST AND VVAW CONTACT FOR UTAH AND ARIZONA.



Waging Peace

PAUL K. CHAPPELL (REVIEWER)

Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist by David Hartsough with Joyce Hollyday (PM Press, 2014)

David Hartsough's book, "Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist," is an inspiring testament to the power of conscience and compassion. Many people see peace as an abstract concept, but Hartsough shows us how peace is a lifestyle of love and courage. In fact, Hartsough shows us over and over again that love requires courage. It is a message that we need to hear now more than ever.

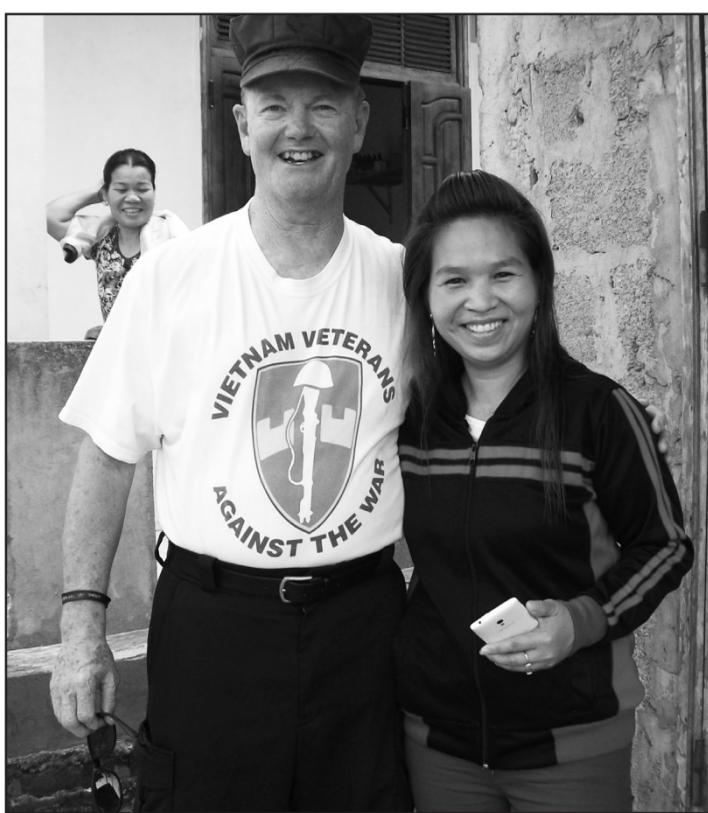
"Waging Peace" is an adventure story that recounts Hartsough's journey to wage peace. This journey takes him around the world, from segregated lunch counters during the civil rights movement to conflict zones in various countries. "Waging

Peace" describes the influences that shaped Hartsough as a human being, such as meeting Martin Luther King, Jr. and learning from the example of his parents. Hartsough's lifelong commitment to peace serves as an inspiration to others, including myself.

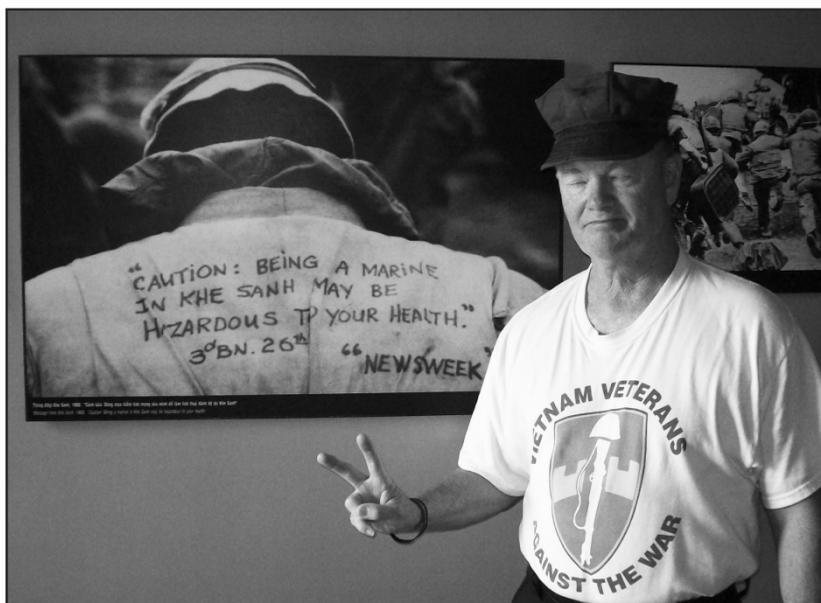
The health of our nation and planet depends on us learning to embrace the lifestyle of love and courage, and Hartsough's life's work is an example for us all. What Hartsough's life represents is not just an adventure story or a life committed to waging peace, but the direction humanity must go toward if we are going to survive as a species.



PAUL K. CHAPPELL GRADUATED FROM WEST POINT IN 2002, WAS DEPLOYED TO IRAQ, AND SERVES AS PEACE LEADERSHIP DIRECTOR FOR THE NUCLEAR AGE PEACE FOUNDATION.



Aaron Davis in Vietnam, 2016.



Aaron Davis next to a picture at Khe Sanh museum in Vietnam, March 22, 2016.

snapshots from the edge of a war

CHRIS FISCHER (REVIEWER)

snapshots from the edge of a war by John Buquoi (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015)

This review first appeared on <https://readersfavorite.com>.

In a beautiful and emotional work of poetry by poet and Vietnam veteran John Buquoi, "snapshots from the edge of a war" is a collection that readers won't soon forget. Poetry is a unique genre. The best of it has the ability to transport the reader to a different time and place, and a different sense of emotional being. The worst does none of that, and can be a confusing mess of jumbled words. Luckily for readers, John Buquoi's wonderful work falls into the first category. Containing

all the emotions that go along with wartime experiences, as well as the insight of a clearly reflective man, the vignettes contained in "snapshots from the edge of a war" are simply a collection of perfection.

I loved "snapshots from the edge of a war." Loved. It. How's that for a review? Well, it's honestly how I felt about this masterful work. Poet John Buquoi has done a fantastic job at creating poems that are emotional without being syrupy, that are realistic but still veiled, and that tell a complete and total story about his experiences in Vietnam. Any reader who enjoys poetry in any form should absolutely read this collection. And any person who is not 100% sure about poetry, but is interested in history, especially the history of the Vietnam War era, should

give "snapshots from the edge of a war" a chance as well. I very highly recommend this collection of poetry. I hope that poet John Buquoi will work on a second collection. If it's anything like "snapshots from the edge of a war," it will be a work to treasure.

John Buquoi, was trained as a Vietnamese linguist at the Army Language School in Monterey, California and then assigned to the US Army Security Agency, 3rd Radio Research Unit (3rd RRU), a military affiliate of the National Security Agency (NSA) in Saigon and its Detachment 'J', in Phú Bài, Vietnam during the period 1963-1965.

After separation from the Army, he returned to Vietnam and was employed for over five years as a civilian for various defense

contractors, during which time he worked and traveled widely throughout the country, spending time in virtually every province in South Vietnam.

The poems in this volume are, after over 50 years, echoes of that experience in a series of reflective narrative vignettes which one critic has called, "...first-rate in every respect, resonating on all levels—emotional, personal, factual, historical, literary..."

His work has been published on Vietnam Full Disclosure, the web site Vietnam War Poetry and accepted for publication in the journal, War, Literature & the Arts.



McNamara's Band

Oh, the guns went bang and the bullets sang,
And the dominos feign a fall.
And up pop wonderboys of privilege
To make the big game's call.

The Kennedy clan had a master plan
To stem the dreaded tumble;
The Gulf of Tonkin got hawks a-honkin'
"Bomb Hanoi!" ... "Let's have a rumble!"

The ducks and geese march in a row,
And the drums of war are grand,
They wear dark suits and tootle flutes
As Camelot sinks in the sand.

There was Rusk, the Dean of the statecraft machine,
Bundy and Rostow and Sorenson too
All eloquent boors who sent men on tours
To avenge the French—who fried at Dienbien Phu.

They poured their brains in the Vietnam stew.
The best and the brightest—raptured by skies
Black with bombs and fleschettes,
And patches of ashes where once stood My Lai's.

A sleeping generation woke, smelling smoke—
But couldn't find the burning pyre.
All they heard were the demagogues' cries,
"We must fight fire with an even bigger fire!"

The war that no one understood
Was now pursued by fakes and fops
Whose long range plan was just a scheme
To make our doughboys global cops.

But the venal Vietnam adventure failed.
The dream of Pax Americana died.
And fifty thousand mothers wonder why
So many gave their lives for those who lied.

Now, three decades later,
MacNamara's brooding face is on my screen

"Forgive my arrogance," he seems to say
"How about a hand for coming clean?"

"Oh no," I say to him who spills the beans—
Who now admits some errors of his ways.
Wars are more than games of chance,
You still know more than what you say.

I say there's shame still unrevealed;
Atrocities and genocides yet to be stated;
Acts of guilt and shame still unaccounted for.
Murders in the night still unadjudicated.

It's not the stars that fan the winds of war;
It's the heads and hearts of jefes and bosses
Who sow the bloody fields with death
To satisfy ledgers of profits and losses.

MacNamara and his band were just a handy
Bunch of clowns, cast in a play no God would write.
A drama with so many malefactors
It would take a tome to cite.

Their names could fill another wall—
A wall of malice and greed.
Big Mac's war was just another scene
In a tale of where gold and power breed.

Mac's plea for absolution doesn't wash.
The blood keeps seeping through.
Now no one's left from the gang of war
To pay the piper's due.

When will peace and ploughshares reign?
When will the bombs be banned?
When men see war as the devil's scourge
And mothers and sons take a stand.

—Freddy Dolgon

Army Reserve Officer Against the Vietnam War

GERALD E. MIKKELSON

My active opposition to the Vietnam war began in earnest in 1965 when I was a PhD candidate in Slavic Languages and Literature at the University of Wisconsin. Specifically, I wrote letters urging my representatives in Congress to take action preventing President Lyndon Johnson from sending a half million US troops to Vietnam. I received somewhat encouraging replies from Sen. Gaylord Nelson and Rep. Robert Kastenmeier although no one in Congress was speaking openly against the buildup at that time.

I also participated actively, though not as a leader, in opposition to the war at the UW in Madison. This included marching in anti-war parades, participating in demonstrations and teach-ins and distributing anti-war literature on campus. I heard speakers both anti-war and apologists for the war, including Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Senator Ted Kennedy. I attended a gigantic anti-war demonstration at the Washington

Monument in our capital with Judy Collins as principal performer.

I did the above while serving in the active US Army Reserve, first as a 2nd Lieutenant and finally as Captain. I wore a beard while traveling in uniform in spring 1967 to Fort Collins, Colorado, to represent my unit in preparing for our annual two-week summer camp scheduled to take place a few months later.

In August 1967 I became an Acting Assistant Professor of Russian at the University of Kansas (Lawrence, read Jayhawks) and without tenure continued my anti-war activities, participating in protests (now with a two year old son on my shoulders). I gave lectures off campus emphasizing the extent of casualties and futility of our losing war when our fatalities were approaching 60,000 and more than a million Vietnamese people.

During the presidential campaign of 1968, after LBJ announced that he would not seek another term as

President, I was treasurer of the local chapter of Kansans for Alternatives (later Kansans for McCarthy) going door to door in Lawrence collecting signatures on a petition calling upon the Kansas Democratic Party to seek the nomination of Sen. Eugene McCarthy rather than Vice President Hubert Humphrey who was tainted by his support for his boss, LBJ, in continuing to pursue the ever more elusive goal of victory over the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops.

In Kansas we collected over 40,000 signatures opposing the war that were sent to Topeka prior to the Democratic Presidential Convention in Chicago (read Abby Hoffman, Mayor Richard J. Daley, and the Chicago Seven).

When the Chicago bloodshed ended, Humphrey nominated, and the dust settled, it seemed like all our efforts had been to no avail. However, the judgement of history proved otherwise. Subsequent US

government policy makers failed to avoid the same mistakes in Iraq and other places. The war finally ended in 1975 in part because of the anti-war movement.

None of the above suggests for a moment that I was any sort of hero. However, while I did not fight and risk my life among you folks on the ground in Vietnam, I did my part and now that is a source of satisfaction to me in retirement.



GERALD E. MIKKELSON WAS ON ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE DURING THE VIETNAM WAR. COMMISSIONED IN AUGUST 1959 THROUGH ROTC, HE FULFILLED AN EIGHT-YEAR OBLIGATION IN THE US ARMY RESERVE, DIVIDED BETWEEN STINTS OF ACTIVE RESERVE AND ACTIVE DUTY THAT BEGAN IN NOVEMBER 1959 WITH SIX MONTHS AT FORT BELVOIR, VIRGINIA, INCLUDING ENGINEER OFFICERS' BASIC COURSE (BOOT CAMP) AT FORT BELVOIR.

Last Plane Out of Saigon

DANIEL C. LAVERY (REVIEWER)

Last Plane Out of Saigon by Richard Pena and John Hagan (Story Merchant, 2014)

Beginning at the Traveling Wall in Austin, Texas, a smaller replica of the National Vietnam Memorial, Richard Pena expresses a somber emotion for those who died in Vietnam seeing a woman's tears. He knew her pain would never cease. Pena was on the last plane out of Vietnam after spending a tour as a medic in Saigon. His photo was taken by a Viet Cong soldier when that final plane left. He recognized himself carrying his law school brief case upon returning with a delegation at the War Remnants Museum in Ho Chi Minh City in 2003. Pena's journal entries while serving from 1972 to 1973 as an Operating Room Specialist are aided by John Hagan, author of nine books and many articles as professor of Sociology and Law, Northwestern University, who comments on the context of Pena's story in history with references.

Pena's parents were proud of their Hispanic heritage and taught him by example. His father won a Silver Star for his service at Iwo Jima. Pena won best all-around high school athlete in San Antonio, Texas. He attended University of Texas at Austin when students burned their draft cards and protested the Vietnam conflict. The My Lai massacre struck raw nerves his senior year. Soon at Kent State, National Guardsmen killed four students and wounded more wrenching America. His low lottery

number made it certain he would be drafted. He tried to fail his physical but they were taking anyone who breathed then and entered the Army, June 14, 1971 as one of the last drafted.

Pena arrived at the 3rd Field Hospital in Saigon during the North Vietnamese siege of An Loc when they shot down four aircraft and killed nearly all the residents. This was a few months before Nixon's presidential election during an opportunity for peace talks to resolve the conflict. His objections to pressing for peace were politically motivated as Humphrey would have gained substantial support as a peace candidate despite his role with LBJ. Nixon's voice on tape in the oval office showed he proposed nuclear weapons to succeed but Kissinger replied he thought it would be too much. Nixon said, "I don't give a damn" about civilians killed by US bombing, *USA Today* reported February 28, 2002. While peace was possible Nixon refused to press for it and made the South Vietnamese think if he were president they would get a better deal prolonging the war needlessly and causing more than 20,000 more American deaths.

Pena called Vietnamization a catastrophe demonstrated graphically as he arrived. Young ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) troops threw down their weapons and fled with villagers as the North Vietnamese launched an unprecedented invasion. They expected 200 or so casualties but 2,000 marched toward a 100 bed hospital 60 miles away. However

many were mortared by Communists on Highway 13 and others accidentally killed by our B-52s. The Air Force accidentally missed the Communists and hit a South Vietnamese village! Pena joined a group of fifteen who worked the Operating Room confronted by death and built a strong companionship. Soon a C-130 aircraft crashed from mechanical failure causing them to expect many casualties. Burn patients were the worst, difficult to look at, tough to treat, and many died. The first soldier's face appeared plastered red, hair and eyebrows burned away, red burns ran the length of his young body. He had a wife and young child. They smeared Sulfamylon cream over him, feeling helpless. His coworker said he would soon die. A sergeant arrived with a broken ankle and numerous lacerations. These professionals knew the risks but it is for the young whom Pena felt the most sorry. The lifers have some control but not the draftees. The sergeant wanted to know how many survived but Pena couldn't tell him only three made it. Pena wondered how many were on the plane and learned there were forty five. The government released only the number fourteen. Such lies insulted Pena and the others. It added brainwashing to misinformation.

Soon an allied Cambodian arrived by air in desperate condition and needed a transfusion from someone with B positive blood. Pena readily provided it as the only one with that type. The doctors said he couldn't

survive the operation, yet he wouldn't live without one! They amputated his left leg and blood splattered all over the floor. A nineteen year-old soldier was shot in the head and died from his wound. An American asked him for a cigarette but he didn't have one, so he shot him in the back of the head at point blank range with a .38 pistol. A clean-cut man named Holley had a wife he never cheated on but once. He was found the next morning in a lover's embrace as the girl had put ground-up glass in his food, the sixth American that girl killed. Soon we understand how Pena felt an impermanence sweep over him and all his previous concerns seemed small and unimportant.

Much later Pena became President of the American Bar Foundation and State Bar of Texas. His practice started as a solo attorney for the common person, without an office using an old beat up car. He felt his experience in Vietnam gave him the courage, willpower and confidence to stand up against injustice and fight for his clients. "It was the road less traveled, but it was my road."



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

Frankie and Jonny and Mommy Too

DANIEL C. LAVERY (REVIEWER)

Frankie and Jonny and Mommy Too by Greta Marsh (1stWorldPublishing, 2013)

One kind woman's determination to adopt a Vietnamese War orphan, make this truly an inspirational story. Written in heartfelt verse, Marsh dramatically presents the struggle of one woman to adopt a Vietnamese orphan surviving at the Govap Orphanage. She hopes to save him from the ravages of the Vietnam conflict, where his parents were victims of the outrageous My Lai Massacre. Greta, a Jewish single parent, with three girls in college, wanted to find an orphan that her thirteen year-old son, Jonny, could help grow up in Long Island, New York with a loving family. Frankie was the name Jonny chose for the orphan in honor of his recently deceased grandfather.

Her first obstacle was an

unexpected confrontation with discrimination despite her responsible job as a probation officer in Family Court where she worked with troubled children and single parents. The adoption agency sent her a letter stating she was unqualified to adopt because "Every child deserves two parents." They would, however, permit her to adopt a physically or emotionally disabled child. Outraged, she wrote them: "Who is in greater need of 2 parents, a physically and/or emotionally disabled child or a relatively healthy child? You should be ashamed." They did not respond.

Religious bigotry struck next when a local friendly Vietnamese Priest told her a child was waiting for her in Vietnam, but the agency told her twice: "We do home studies for Christian families." She informed the Priest of the prejudice. He paused and then said he could not help. She

wrote: "Dear Father, Jesus was a Jew who never left his religion and I do not think he is smiling kindly upon you."

After many years of struggle Greta's dream of adoption was fulfilled when she, her grandmother, Aunt, and thirteen year-old son, Jonny, arrived by plane in Vietnam. She finally adopted a five-year-old boy baptized, David, who became, David Frank. The family welcomed him with love. Soon Jonny felt sad for him because he looked scared but Greta ensured that Frankie would be a part of a compassionate family. They dressed him in an adorable suit and found a mixed breed Dachshund Frankie named Suzi for him. He learned soon to ice skate, draw, play piano, and liked to build sand castles on the beach.

Marsh adds a summary of the My Lai Massacre, military problems of rape, sexual harassment, suicide, civilian casualty statistics, Agent

Orange, and the extension of the Vietnam War to Laos and Cambodia. The author says she intends the money earned from her book will be used to help wounded vets and their families. Greta Marsh's wonderful story of how she succeeded in saving the life of a Vietnamese orphan who became integrated into a loving American family shines with the finest sparks of humanity. She reminds us at the end of her inspirational story the Talmud says: "To Save One Life is as if you have Saved the Entire World."



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Gainesville 8 demo, 1973.

An Idea, and Bullets

JACK MALLORY (REVIEWER)

An Idea, and Bullets: A Rice Roots Exploration of Why No French, American, or South Vietnamese General Could Ever Have Brought Victory in Vietnam by William Haponski (Amazon Digital Services LLC, 2016)

We lost. They won. When a nation loses a war, it's not a judgement on the morality of the war, on the bravery of our soldiers, on Congress, on the media, on hippies or anti-war protesters. It's because one side fought longer, smarter, better than the other. In a world in which we are too frequently at war, we should want to know why we lost the war in Vietnam.

Lt. Col. William Haponski wrote "An Idea, and Bullets: A Rice Roots Exploration of Why No French, American, or South Vietnamese General Could Ever Have Brought Victory in Vietnam" to explain why and how the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong were able to fight longer, smarter and better than the French, the Americans, and the South Vietnamese. How and why, as he puts it, "the Vietnam War was lost before our first American shot was fired," or the first French shot, or the last South Vietnamese shot. How did the North Vietnamese win on the ground in Vietnam, which was the only place that mattered?

Haponski is a career Army officer with two tours in Vietnam, and subsequently a military historian. This book is his attempt, a very successful attempt, to answer the question I and many other Vietnam veterans ask, "What in the hell was it all about?" To answer this question, Lt. Col. Haponski uses his experiences, US, ARVN and North Vietnamese unit histories, interviews with Vietnamese military on both sides, information from Vietnamese civilians, and numerous secondary accounts.

So what did the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong have that enabled

them to fight longer, smarter, and better? What did we lack? "Fire in the belly," says Haponski. Haponski argues that fire in the belly comes from the power of an idea: independence and unification — goals that evolved throughout centuries of Vietnamese history, the same goals that motivated the American Revolution. We attempted to combat this idea in Vietnam the way we fought German and Japanese armies during WWII, with firepower, and destructive capability. We were unable to destroy this idea militarily and unable or unwilling to convert our WWII thinking into strategies and tactics that could destroy or change the idea. Anti-communism, the Domino Theory, international credibility — these aren't goals that create fire in the belly.

On a personal level, "An Idea, and Bullets" explains why I always felt like the red-headed stepchild as an S-5, Psychological Operations/Civil Affairs officer in the 11th Armored Cav during 1969-70. Haponski explains the enormous "cultural" power of the WWII military generation and their military descendants who were determined to fight WWII again. Engaging the VC/NVA in major battles, made it impossible to carry out the pacification of populated areas and Vietnamization which might have allowed the South Vietnamese to fight a war that a foreign army couldn't fight for them. The allure of Patton's motto, "Find the Bastards and Pile On" trumped "Winning Hearts and Minds."

I had gone to Armor Officer Candidate School, trained to be a speed-bump in the path of a Soviet attack in Germany. But I received orders to the Special Warfare Center at Ft. Bragg, and a couple of years in the 8th Special Forces converted me to the special warfare model of counter-insurgency, which makes the political, hearts 'n minds battle of even greater importance than the military battle.

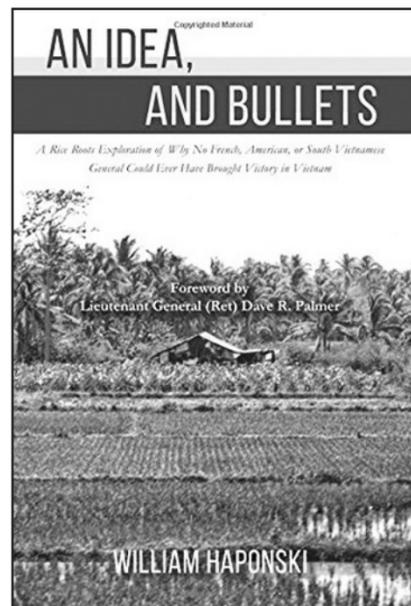
While combat units in Vietnam

like the 11th Cav had organizational slots for S-5 folks who specialized in the political aspects of the war, most commanders never really understood their crucial importance. Our enemies had understood this since their wars against the Japanese and French, and this is what made their victory, and our loss, inevitable. As a fellow Cav trooper put it to me recently, "It always seemed to me that the mission of the Blackhorse in the war was almost the definition of hubris. By the time you are committing an Armored Cavalry Regiment in a counter-insurgency operation, you have already lost."

After a few months of trying to implement my psy-ops/civil affairs training with the Blackhorse, I knew something was wrong, but I didn't know what. In the daily hurly-burly of MEDCAPs, tossing leaflets out of helicopters, running loudspeaker missions in the air and on the ground, and negotiating with Vietnamese authorities for school or clinic construction in the villages, there wasn't time to compare lessons from Ft. Bragg to realities in III Corps.

A month after I got to VN, Nixon announced Vietnamization, turning the war over to the ARVN, and the beginnings of US unilateral troop withdrawal. Then, during July and August we had attacks throughout our AO. During heavy fighting between US and NVA units, South Vietnamese units took little part. I remember riding to a contact to do loudspeaker appeals to the NVA to defect. On the way to the sound of the guns we passed an ARVN unit with hammocks still slung between trees, brewing tea. Vietnamization seemed a farce.

Pacification, in the form of building schools or clinics in the villes, was frustrated by corrupt village/district/province authorities, as Haponski also recounts. And no matter how hard we hammered the NVA, or how many chieu hoi leaflets we dropped or loudspeaker broadcasts



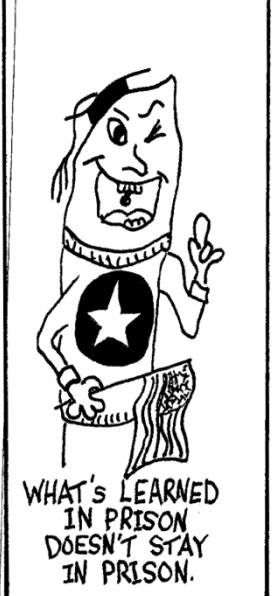
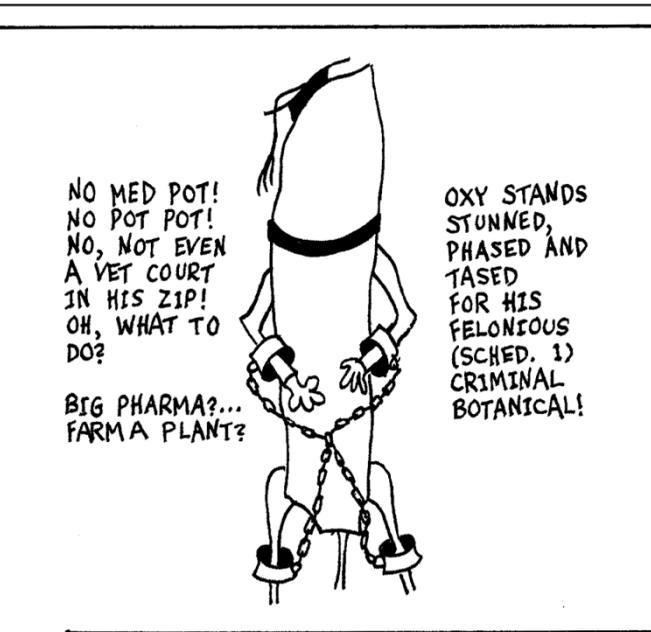
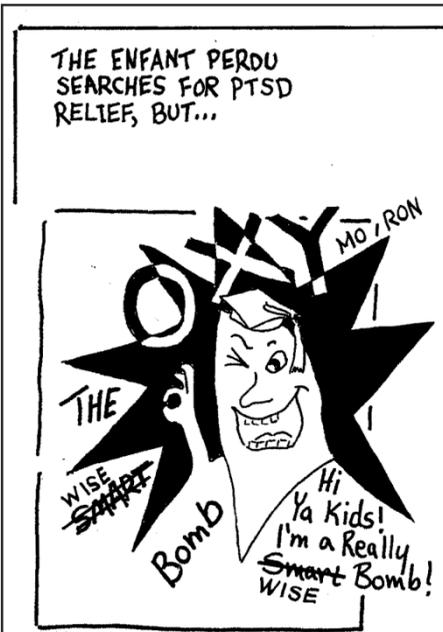
we did, NVA defectors were almost nonexistent. Fire in the belly kept the enemy fighting. Our allies seemed to lack that fire completely.

Ideas win wars, not tanks, planes, and guns. Fire in the belly, not firepower, motivates soldiers, and societies, to fight longer, better, and smarter. In the famous exchange between an American and an NVA negotiator, a week before the fall of Saigon, the American said, "You know, you'll never beat us on the battlefield." The Vietnamese replied, "That may be so, but it is also irrelevant."

Haponski leaves it up to his readers to abstract lessons to be learned from Vietnam, other than to say that such lessons exist relevant to our current war(s) in the Middle East. He quotes "the commander of US Special Operations in the Middle East" who says, "We do not understand the movement, and until we do we are not going to defeat it . . . We have not defeated the idea. We do not even understand the idea."



JACK MALLORY IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER.





THE VETERAN

SECTION D

Volume 46, Number 1

Spring 2016

When I Was Stupid

BILL SHUNAS

When I joined the Army and went to Vietnam I was older than most, having already graduated from college. At the time I was a supporter of the war, taking my cue from *US News and World Report*, *Newsweek* and the daily newspaper. I thought communism needed to be stopped. I wasn't gung ho enough to enlist, but when the draft board called, I said okay. I did support the war so if it was my turn, well. . .

Actually, I had thought about this before there was a Vietnam war. When I was twelve, the Soviet Union invaded Hungary. I knew then and there that we had to stop the commies. At the age of twelve I also noticed that we were having a war every five to eight years. I figured that we were due for a war about the time I would be the right age. That was scary and about the only thing I had correct before Vietnam.

So the draft board got me, and eventually orders came for RVN. I thought that me being in a non-combat MOS that maybe this wouldn't be a bad year. I could be safe, and because we were kicking ass I would be lucky enough to experience both war and post-war operations. At Cam Ranh Bay, where I landed, I noticed the troops who were leaving. Unlike us who had fresh fatigues and fresh faces and hope, these guys had a different look. I couldn't place it, but it was like "Whatever."

For my first five or six months in-country I still supported the war although I was becoming cynical and

anti-Army. Guys didn't generally talk against the war. Mainly they bitched about being stuck here. Then there was Hans. When I arrived, Hans only had three or four months left in his tour. He lived in the same barracks down at the other end. Never once did I talk with him, but a friend told me that Hans said that when he went back home he was going to protest the war. At the time I was still pro-war, but I was impressed with Hans, maybe a little in awe at his defiance.

Eventually my mind changed. Maybe a contributing factor was visiting Saigon a few times and seeing poor people in the neighborhoods on the outskirts of the city, while downtown were the fancy buildings left by the French. Maybe it was the time a buddy talked me into going golfing. Where? The Saigon Country Club. There we became a threesome with the wife of a CIA agent. After golf we sat around on the terrace, and she bought us a few drinks. Too spooky. Same guy liked the horses and talked me into a trip to the Cholon racetrack. If golfing was elegant, this was dicey. Cholon and its track had been a center of attention during Tet as you could tell from all the bullet pockmarks on the walls. It had been closed for months after Tet. Didn't seem like they wanted us here.

Then there was the mama-san who cleaned our hooch. Due to language differences, communication was pretty simple. But I did find out that she thought President Thieu was a

big number 10. Other casual contacts with Vietnamese civilians produced the same number.

I was always interested in newspapers and in the back of my mind had an interest in journalism. That being the case, press freedom was an important concept to me. Somewhere around Thanksgiving I read where President Thieu closed down a Saigon newspaper. This was the thirty-fifth newspaper closed by the Saigon government. Maybe it wasn't a big issue in and of itself, but for me it was the final nail. This war was wrong. We were fighting on the wrong side for the wrong people.

About two weeks later I received a Christmas present from my sister. It was a shirt she had made with a peace symbol on the front. Wow! What to do with it? The company was going to have a Christmas party, and I decided that I would wear this shirt to the party as a statement. After that decision, days were filled with dread and angst until Christmas came. On the day I put the shirt on and with much anxiety went to the party. This was probably the second most proud thing I did in my life.

It turned out that my shirt was no big deal. That's because I was tame compared to many of my fellow soldiers. This party had a local band and lots of food, beer and booze. Guys became surly. The US Army was cussed up and down. The CO, the XO, the First Sergeant and the Supply Sergeant sat at a table in the middle

of the area. Guys were yelling at and disparaging them and their war and Army life and what have you. Things were said in no uncertain terms. Those at the CO's table sat stone faced with their arms folded tight against their chests. More beer brought out more threats. It wouldn't have surprised me if things had gotten physical. And so went the night. My Christmas shirt with its little peace sign was background material.

I returned to the States in April of 1970. If you remember your history, in April of 1970 there was a large troop withdrawal, and there was our invasion of Cambodia. That invasion sparked more anti-war rallies and marches. At one of those rallies at Kent State, four students were shot down.

I came home on a Thursday, and on a Saturday, nine days later, there was a march in downtown Chicago to protest the Cambodia invasion. I went down there, and I was a little late. The march had already started and was going by me. Then in the proudest moment of my life I stepped off the curb and joined the march. I was razzed about my GI haircut, but accepted. Two weeks later I went to another march protesting Cambodia and Kent State. That was two marches in less than four weeks as a civilian. About face.



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



Armed Forces Day, 1975.

From a Letter to a Hootchmate

JOHN CRANDELL

Well hello there.

All of these miles and a third of a century later, since that morning you and I said goodbye next to the door of that hootch, below Hon Kon, overlooking the legendary Golf Course - way out there where they parked the Hueys at Radcliffe. That was May 1970. Hello, and I haven't been able to find your address in the directories in all these years. I remembered that you were from Chicago. Then, a few weeks ago on the Internet, I got a hit. So here's to say hi and will skip the personal stuff presently. I've long wanted to rework an old story written in '73 and finding your name finally induces me to proceed. (Don't laugh too hard now, hey?) As memories fade - those audible rumors nearly forgotten, thwap of rotor blades, click of adding machines, thudding clump of mortar, single crack of AK in the pitch black quietude.

These landscapes that I stare at every day, two that I found and admired at the Officer's Club in Hong Kong - of junks floating in the moonlight off of Wan Chai and the view down towards the harbor from atop Victoria Peak. Here in this wood paneled war room and the shelves beside the door lined with volumes by journalists, historians and veterans of violence - at The Citadel, in the delta, on Mother's Ridge, at Con Thien, Dak To, in the Ashau - the watershed draining westward out into Laos and the very particular Battle of Ia Drang, headwaters of which we stared across, towards the special forces camp set on the rise of jungled hardwood - with

a single light burning each night and to our right lay the precipitous gorge at the southern edge of Camp Enari, Pleiku province, II Corps.

In the ten months there below Dragon Mountain I never managed to regain my bearings. Not once. The sun seemed to rise in the west and set in the east and in the final months outside of An Khe I was even more disoriented, can't recall where it rose or set in relation to Hon Kon Mountain, the eight hundred foot peak wrapped within the base perimeter. Now, surrounded by wood I sit again and stare, imagining the scene as viewed from a slick flying eastward along Route 19 - March the first, the day the entire Fourth Division hyed up and over Mang Yang Pass towards the coast. The sight of so much armor, artillery and loaded trucks, a necklace of olive drab laced across red clay cutting through green foliage. I'd ride that road as shotgun weeks later in a lone Duecenhalf with ever silent Bonjour at the wheel. He'd bunked in hootch 20. Both that and hootch 19 had been emptied and the doors boarded up by then. The latter had been the scene of the company's foremost heads sharing T at Bill Back's bunk. In presiding at those affairs he was by far the coolest, most self confident member of the Fourth Division postal unit, had maintained contact with the division's best providers supplying the most potent weed from Thailand. He and his buds lit up right there beside where I bunked and the phonograph spun and his muse always alternated between "Days of future Past" and "Abbey Road." Clouds of ganja

scented the air; "evening exits from gravity's embrace" as they say. Tunes by The Moody Blues seemed odd and way out to me at first but soon came to resonate, deeply.

To wake each morning was to return to a prison nightmare. So when I eventually saw the hootch scene in the movie "Platoon" it was more than a revelation, it was a time-warp - corkscrewing downward in that twin engine Caribou, banana trees contrasted against reddled terrain, all the red dust in dry season covering every square inch of our lives, the stench of wasted men, wasted lives lined up at my window, their needing to send a package homeward, then jump a Slick in misery, back to the boonies with arms and bandoliers and monkeys perched upon their shoulders, the monstrous beetles crawling in through the doors to escape the deluge, white phosphorus exploding at the edge of that gorge.

The very last one that I could forget would be Black, he with his laconic heavy lidded air of disgust with the military, most particularly with our parents and their mores which had wrought our landing on the other side of the world. Every time that I've read of photographers Sean Flynn and Tim Page I've thought of him and the battle which erupted as he landed, ran for cover at LZ Merideth, his later reflection that any of us rear echelon commandos would give our right nut to be able to get out there and see front line reality. Having reveled in hiking and the out of doors growing up blue collar I anticipated the prospect and in retrospect, squalid and soul sucking is

all that I can say of it (not a speck of violence) after spending a night there months later, near the Cambodian border. For us, going forwards wasn't mandatory. One simply volunteered. If only I'd had a camera to record faces, amid desolation, red terrain and every shade of green imaginable.

Do you remember that journalist who bunked across the aisle from us in our hootch at Enari? That small scrawny guy who was so erudite, the brightness in his eyes when he first arrived, and how his lights faded as the months rolled by. Gradually he spent more and more time in the field and the sap just drained out of him. And then he disappeared. What had he witnessed? We'd gotten there thirteen months after Sirhan shot Robert Kennedy and we couldn't have voted for the candidate even then, stuck in a war zone, in a pseudo democracy waiting for Dick Nixon to reveal his secret plan to end the whole affair.

So this is what I've remembered.



JOHN CRANDELL RECEIVED HIS DRAFT LETTER ON THE DAY MLK WAS SHOT. OTHER THAN THE 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION, HE SERVED WITH THE CONTINENTAL ARMY COMMAND AT FORT HARRISON AND THE FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION AT FORT HOOD, HE CHASED JANE FONDA THRU WESTWOOD VILLAGE CIRCA 1979 TO TRY AND THANK HER. SHE THOUGHT HE WAS UP TO NO GOOD AND WOULD HAVE NONE OF IT. JOHN LIVES IN SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA.

New Year

"Merry Christmas, Boys"—greeting on a wreath at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of Baltimore County

In the winter dusk, I round the corner of the courthouse and there it is— that block of granite carved with the names of so many boys of my generation,

same as ever, but graced now with snow. I remove a glove and touch one name—a boy I might have fumbled toward in the dim light of the CYO, a boy I might have kissed

but for a certain number in the draft. I take a photograph. I don't know why. I see myself reflected in polished stone, bundled against the cold, camera blocking

half my changed face. Oh, dear boys, all these hometown years, these Christmas wreaths, Easter lilies, paper flags on Memorial Day and the Fourth of July—I don't know what

to bring, but here I am. My kids are older now than you were when you kissed your weeping moms and flew away to Nam. My kids have children of their own.

—Madeleine Mysko, served in the Army Nurse Corps from 1969-1970 on the "burn ward" of Brooke Army Medical Center.

Blood on Canvas

Blood.

Blood stains from any war are the same.

Blood of young men and women.

Names do not matter.

They have hearts as that stopped beating, families who began to cry and the enemy marks one more kill.

Red blood.

Red blood marks us all. When it dries upon the canvas, it leaves room for the next.

The living who witness young lives falling away, while the deafening sounds of bombs, gunfire, helicopters scream to keep them focused ... The living are imprinted with the onslaught of all 5 senses for the rest of their lives.

Peace to all.

—Judy Posusney

Rice Paddies

Rice Paddies Moonlight

Alone and full, the moon
Floats over the house by the paddies.
Into the night the water reflects the stars above.
The bright silver spills on the water never still.
The image more brilliant than precious silk.
The circle without blemish.
The empty paddies without sound.
And in that silence the rice grows.
The same clear glory extends for a thousand paddies.

The same brilliance for a thousand eyes.

Variation On A Theme

A narrow rim along the rice paddies crunches underfoot to each step high above the sun beats down on the fields, dry and yellow

in the summer heat, wide and warm and empty, with the occasional bush emphasizing the clarity of an open landscape inviting him to sit down, back against a hot rock, pleasing, soothing. Staring ahead into the trembling distance having no thoughts of tomorrow or yesterday - there's the rock, and the wide, wide prospect, falling away, falling slowly, slowly away.

—David Sandgrund

Inspired by Ashby Leach

JAMES BENTLEY

I was a member of VVAW in the 1970s and met Ashby Leach while I was attending City College of New York. I marched with other vets during the Free Ashby Leach campaign. Ashby observed me studying an organic chemistry textbook while I was with other veterans marching in support of his trying to get accepted into medical school. I was in a special program in the city university called the CUNY baccalaureate program and graduated magna cum laude. I got into this program after working as a volunteer at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City making plastic reproductions of actual dinosaur bones. The program enabled me to get college credit for that work and allowed me to make my own curriculum and attend any school within the City University system.

At the end of each semester I sent the VA all my transcripts. During that time the VA suspended my educational benefits for 6 months twice because they would only accept one transcript and said I was only attending school part time. This forced me to take every measure possible to survive so I ate peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for breakfast, lunch and dinner, rode a bicycle and roller skates to get to school. All the money I had left were pennies I saved over the years. I had to take the subway into Manhattan one morning in order to get to school. After waiting in line to get to the token booth the man in the booth told me to go to the back of the line because he had no time to count the pennies I put into a roll. My train was coming into the station and if I missed it I would miss my class so I gave him all my pennies and jumped the turnstile to catch my train. I told him to give me my change when I get back which he did.

After school I roller skated to the VA office to confront them about

cutting off my money for school. After taking a number and waiting in a big room with a large number of other veterans my number was called. I entered a smaller room and the door was left open. I politely explained my situation to the VA representative who admitted the VA was at fault but told me they would issue me a check to reinstate my benefits in two months. I did not have enough money or food to last another two months. It seemed to me that the VA was trying to force me to quit school. I had no other choice but to do something drastic. However I did not want to get arrested because that would prevent me from getting into med school. So I raised my voice so that everyone on the entire floor especially the other veterans in the large room outside could hear me.

I let everybody know how the VA was mistreating me but did not use any profanity, did not threaten anyone, and did not touch anyone. I let them know I was a Vietnam veteran and sat behind an M60 machine gun on the back of a truck and that there was no justifiable reason on earth that any war veteran should be forced to beg and suffer for their guaranteed rights that were granted by our government for sending me to war. They had 5 VA policemen surrounding me in a big circle but I left them dumbfounded and they could not do anything to me for expressing my freedom of speech that I was sent to war to defend. I think that if they arrested me they would have a riot on their hands so finally the VA representative told me, "OK OK, I will get you your check in two weeks."

I was accepted into med school at SUNY at Buffalo in 1979. When I was interviewed I told the doctor who interviewed me that I wanted to be a doctor for the people. During my years in med school I invited Vietnam

vets into my school to talk about PTSD and Agent Orange. I did well in the first two years and shared my notes with anyone who failed a course especially biochemistry. I helped a lot of people stay in school because of this, especially minority students. In my 3rd year I had to transition from classroom to clinic and still pass exams.

I was the first in my family to become a doctor and my family was poor so I did not have the same background as most students. Because of the work load I was unable to pass the exam at the end of the rotation and the school attempted to throw me out. Upon learning this my family, classmates and the local Vietnam veterans organizations helped me get another chance to take the exam. All I asked the veterans groups to do was write a letter but many wanted to do much more than that. However I did not want to win the battle and lose the war.

After being given another chance I took 3 months off and studied hard for the exam and got one of the highest scores in my class while riding a bicycle to see my patients in the hospital in blizzards at 4 am. I had 3 times more patients to follow than other students and gained the respect of the department chairmen under whom I worked. One foreign medical school graduate who was an intern made a negative comment about me for smiling and the school forced me to see a psychiatrist.

I was told they want to see if I am fit to be a physician. I thought they were trying to prove I had PTSD to use that as a reason to throw me out of school. I knew that if they did that I would not be able to hold back the veterans who gave me their support. The school wanted me to see their hit man, a Dr. Lawrence, who gave another student whom I attempted

to help stay in school a negative evaluation which prevented him from graduating med school. He later killed himself after getting a job as an orderly in a hospital and overdosing on drugs he got from a med cart in the hospital.

I held off as long as possible but finally was prevented from entering the fourth year until I was evaluated. Fortunately Dr. Lawrence was on vacation so the school had to give me a list of alternatives. I took the list to the VA hospital to review with other doctors I previously worked under who knew I was a Vietnam veteran. From that list I was able to choose a doctor who would give me a fair chance, Dr. Graves. After asking questions about my life, Dr. Graves wrote a very kind letter for me that prevented the school from throwing me out. I graduated med school in 1984.

I am a medical doctor now and I see a lot of veterans in my practice to whom I tell my story and the story of Ashby Leach. There is much more to my story that I have not mentioned especially about how my dad who was both a WWII and Korean War vet was fired from his job after suffering a stroke from a ruptured artery in his brain which was caused by an accident on his job that threw our family into poverty. However that is another long story.

I would like to somehow let Ashby Leach know how he inspired me to fight back and that I have never forgotten what he did for other veterans as I have and continue to tell other veterans about him. He may remember me for carrying and studying my organic chemistry book. I would like him to know that I was successful and have never forgotten him nor the support I got from other veterans.



Vet Battles For Better Life: Free Ashby Leach

VVAW

Reprinted excerpt from the the October 1976 (Volume 6, Number 25

"I stood and looked at the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. Then I looked up at the Terminal Tower—at that Castle of Capitalism—and I knew what I had to do. . . The barrel of my shotgun was stuffed with all the letters I've written to change the system for vets."

With these words, Ashby Leach, a 30-year-old Vietnam veteran described his decision to take over the offices at the Chessie system (the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad) in the Terminal Tower in Cleveland, Ohio. Like thousands of veterans all over the country, Ashby Leach had reached a situation which called for desperate action.

Ashby had served as a medic, and received a Purple Heart. He had seen first hand how the rulers of this country preach "freedom and democracy", "but then throw away the lives of working people for the holy cause of profit. Following his military service, Ashby had become an apprentice mechanic at Chessie and found out even more clearly how the "system" shows its gratitude to veterans: once they are used, they are just thrown away.

As part of job training the vets were promised, there is a program where, when the veteran is working as an apprentice to learn a job, the government will make up the difference between the apprentice pay and that of a journeyman—in the case of Ashby, something like \$1.50 per hour. When the Chessie system and the VA denied him these benefits, Ashby began a letter writing campaign to get these wrongs righted. At one point he

even picketed outside the hotel where the Chessie President was staying, demanding to see the President. It was here that Ashby was told that he should go to school.

And he did. But, after he was finished, despite their guarantees, the Chessie system refused to give him his job back. All during this time and after, Ashby had written to company and government officials to protest the kind of mistreatment he was getting. His letters were ignored. Nevertheless, he persisted. This summer he even wrote to each one of the members of the Congress; still there was no action on his plight.

Frustrated by all these dead ends, on August 26th Ashby Leach took over an office on the 36th floor of the Terminal Tower, where the Chessie system has its national headquarters. Among his 9 hostages was R. C. McGowan, vice-president of administration for Chessie, and it was McGowan who negotiated with Leach about his demands. According to the police, Ashby demanded reinstatement of the GI Bill for all Vietnam veterans, and reimbursement of all Chessie System veterans who had been cheated out of the Bill while working for the railroad. Ashby's wife Linda described the event a little differently: "Ashby believes the company broke its promise by not rehiring him after he left to finish his schooling under the GI Bill," she said. "He believes he is doing it for all the other Vietnam veterans who could not find jobs when they returned home."

After 9 hours, Ashby released all the hostages unharmed after McGowan promised that GI benefits would be extended to Vietnam

veterans employed by Chessie and that Vietnam veterans who worked for Chessie would be reimbursed for GI benefits. Ashby also demanded media coverage for the demands in order to get the situation of veterans—not just those in the Chessie system, but all Vietnam vets—in front of the American people.

Millions of people watched on nationwide TV. Outside the Terminal Tower when Ashby surrendered, there were thousands of people gathered—many raising clenched fists and cheering. Ashby Leach had made a statement that not just vets, but everyone who's been messed-over and pushed around by the system could take as their own.

Many of Ashby's friends had died on the battlefield. Others, returning to the states, their lives ruined, turned to dope and crime. But most came back seeing that they had a battle to wage right here at home, whether it be in the factories, unemployment lines, schools or VA hospitals.

No sooner had he surrendered to the police than Chessie went back on its promises. The media made him out to be a lunatic, just the same way they deal with Vietnam veterans on TV program after program. The police allege that he harmed several hostages. And the courts indicted him on 16 counts. His bail was set at \$450,000. But the fact is that Leach hurt no one—that is, no one except the precious images of the Chessie system and the VA. His demands are just demands. And this is exactly what the big corporations like Chessie and their hired politicians, and administrators can't stand—that their filthy lies and promises have been exposed. Worse

they fear that the courage of Ashby's actions will inspire others to stand up too. And that is why they've come down so heavy on him.

The mother of Ashby Leach, talking to reporters, said that after he was laid off by Chessie, her son became very angry. "He's been very upset." She said. "He said they're not treating the veterans right. He doesn't think it's right that anybody gives all they can to their country and then gets treated that way."

VVAW stands shoulder to shoulder with Ashby Leach. VVAW will continue to organize and support struggles of vets, whether it's in the schools, in the unemployment lines or whether it's actions such as that of Ashby Leach. We demand that he be released and that his demands be met. We call upon people to join us in a campaign to secure his release and press forward in the struggle.



Am I the Only One Who Saw This?

GARY HUBBARD

I arrived in Da Nang in July of 1969 and was shuttled off in a cattle car to Camp Tehn Shaw [sic]. One of our first indoctrination classes was held by a Navy Lt. He told us of the evils that lurked just outside the main gate - grass, pussy and the like. After the meeting most of us went outside the main gate to purchase exactly that. Thanks Navy Lt.

After a few days I was assigned to the A.F.D.L. 23, a floating dry dock in Da Nang Harbor. At the time I was a 20-year-old Seaman 1st Class. We worked 12 hour shifts, 10 days a week, with 1 day off, and stood a 2 hour watch every 3 nights. I wish I

could remember the exact date but it was probably between September and October 1969, sometime before the monsoon started. Anyway, I had the 2am to 4am watch. The floating dry dock had wing walls around it where the men slept and ate chow. Each wall was about 20 feet tall and at the end of each wall was a round watch area about 10 feet across that overlooked Da Nang Bay. My job was to walk along each wing wall and watch for swimmers with my M-16. Then I would go to the end of the wing wall and toss a percussion grenade, I would then go to the other wing wall and repeat this every 15 minutes.

At some time into my watch, I tossed my percussion grenade, turned my back on the bay and fired up a joint. Then the sky behind me lit up like it was noon time. I turned around and a huge fireball rose in the sky over either Army side or Air Force side. Understand this is across the bay several miles and it looked like an atomic bomb. Then the rumble of the blast came across the bay and the bay itself began to produce swells that rocked the dry dock.

I asked my C.O. about the blast the next morning and he knew nothing about it. I wrote my father about it and he said there was nothing on the news

about this huge horrific explosion. I'm guessing that the VC tunneled under an ammo dump on the Army or Air Force side causing great damage.

Anyway I persisted with my inquiry about the phantom blast and the next thing I knew I was transferred to a life of luxury in Cam Ranh Bay.

I am 66 now and have never found another vet that knows anything about this. Respond to VVAW at vvaw@vvaw.org if you know anything.



GARY HUBBARD WAS IN THE USN.R. HE SERVED VIETNAM JULY 1969 TO JULY 1970.

Epiphany

I hear the lost children of Viet Nam singing
 Here comes the endless stream of girl and boy singers
 Dressed alike in white blouses with red neckerchiefs
 Coming out of the mists, coming toward us,
 Joyful and jubilant as if on parade,
 Marching gaily into the tropical sunlight
 Onto the imaginary strand of the Mekong Delta
 Where the rivers of Fire and Memory converge,
 In the place where echoes of a bygone century
 Are transmuted into epiphany and Time has no dominion.
 They sing children's songs in their angelic voices,
 Their once terrified, innocent faces marked for death
 Now filled with pulsing, sanctified breath,
 Transformed by the charity of a loving afterlife.
 Here, the half million babies born dead and disfigured,
 Poisoned by Agent Orange and blown to bits by bombs
 And burned alive by napalm
 Are restored to life. Here they are greeted by
 The last two American men of conscience,
 Senators Wayne Morse and Ernest Gruening
 Who voted against the maddened mob of their colleagues
 Clamoring for war, only to lose by a count of 98 to two.
 Here, Gruening told me, "Sherwood, we will never live
 this war down,
 Not in a hundred years, not in two hundred years."
 The two American senators look uncomfortable in their
 pinstripe suits
 In the sweltering, tropical sunlight of the reedy river
 As the children crowd around them, having no fears,
 Singing of forgiveness, singing "God Bless America,"
 They reach out, hoping to touch the two forgotten men
 Of peace and conscience, tugging at the senators' suit
 coats, praising them.
 Begging for candies, the children are rewarded with
 chocolates,
 In an endless supply, more numerous than all the bombs.

—Sherwood Ross

Vinh Long, 1st View

The helicopter lifted off	A water hyacinth
Leaving him alone	Blue petals sparkling
Heart pounding, sweating	In the sunlight
In the hot and humid breeze	A gift from
His clothes sticking to his body	A serene beauty
Shielding his eyes from the river's glare	Behind him traffic noises
He watches brown water rushing past	Tinny motors, squeaky horns
Green vegetation floating by	Mingle with the distant
Catching on the rocks	Unintelligible voices
A woman washing clothes	From the market
Another collecting the water hyacinth	From passing boat
Straw hats covering their heads	The air filled with strange odors
The breeze blowing	Fish, drying vegetation
Their baggy pants	Food from the market stalls
Their thin blouses	Avoiding the bicycles and motor bikes
At the river's edge	He turns and walks
A young girl stands	Down the road
With a sweet, tender look	—David Sandgrund
Smiling she hands him	

US Admits "Mistake" in Bombing Hospital



NYTS/CWS Oct 7 2015 (6488)

DANZIGER

April 24, 1971: Washington, DC

JOHN RETALLACK

These are photographs I made at an anti-Vietnam War demonstration on the Mall in Washington, DC, on April 24, 1971. Long ago, I know. There were 200,000 of us there that day. The event was organized by several anti-war organizations. But the major event was the previous week. It was organized by Vietnam Veterans Against the War and was titled Dewey Canyon III: A Short IncurSION Into the Country of Congress. It was an important step in the campaign to end the war in Vietnam.

VVAW members were on the Mall in Washington, DC from April 19th to April 23, 1971. There were important events. Gold Star mothers (who had lost their sons) marched to lay a wreath at Arlington Cemetery (denied). VVAW members threw their medals on the Capitol Steps. There were meetings with congresspersons including Bella Abzug, Shirley

Chisholm and many others including Ted Kennedy. Some even visited the campsite. John Kerry, spoke before the Senate Foreign Relations committee. His speech is still available on YouTube.

I was not there until the day after. I came to Washington from New York City on a bus loaded with mostly young wannabe protesters. This event was organized by several other anti-war groups. Our four-hour trip started at 6:00 am. There was the opportunity to make new acquaintances, talk, sing and sleep. We all had different agendas. I had my camera and spent the entire day photographing. It was a photo opportunity for me. Having just graduated college, I was beginning my career in professional photography; in advertising, not journalism. Nonetheless I was against the war in Vietnam. I was a veteran in service before Vietnam and served in

Germany in the Army Medical Corps. I was there just long enough to see some of the first seriously wounded treated in the major Army hospitals.

On Saturday, April 24 many of the VVAW vets stayed to meet and march with the new arrivals, 200,000 of them. Many VVAW members mixed and marched with the newcomers, adding meaning and legitimacy to the day. Their presence gave great significance to the proceedings. You could feel the excitement in the air. The upside down flags, an officially recognized signal of distress, were visible everywhere. Some of the new arrivals were older veterans who had experienced Korea and WWII. Everyone wore buttons from one or another organization. All were serious. They had come to see and to be seen. There were numerous spontaneous conversations, marches and demonstrations.

My entire time was spent

watching and photographing.

Now in retirement I have the opportunity to accomplish things I have always wanted to do. I have made an artist's book of the photographs.



I AM CURRENTLY A VVAW MEMBER. I WAS IN THE ARMY MEDICAL CORPS STATIONED IN GERMANY 1962-1965. AFTER DISCHARGE I WENT TO COLLEGE AND STUDIED PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY. I THEN MOVED TO NYC TO PURSUE A CAREER PHOTOGRAPHING FOR ADVERTISING. IN 1980 I BEGAN A CAREER TEACHING AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL WHICH BROUGHT ME TO ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, IN THE SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHIC ARTS AND SCIENCES. I AM NOW RETIRED AND AM PURSUING A CAREER IN FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHY.



Remembering David Curry

TOM ASHBY

Thanks to Barry Romo for authoring the article "Remembering David Curry" in the Fall 2015 issue of *The Veteran*.

David and I met when he was Mississippi State Coordinator for VVAW. I was, at that time, State Coordinator in Alabama. Our friendship continued as he directed the Vet Center in Mobile while I was with the Birmingham Vet Center. Mr. Romo's biography on David mentions he was framed for selling drugs (conspiracy to distribute cocaine). Who would, and why, do such a thing as frame a sociologist? Critics of his politically unpopular views on civil rights, perhaps. His views and public statements certainly did not endear

him to Judge Hand. More likely the framing I believe was for two primary reasons: 1) stop the veterans movement in Alabama and 2) elevate Jeff Sessions to the US Senate, a seat in which he, to this day thirty-four years later, still sits.

So, US Attorney of the Southern District of Alabama, Jeff Sessions, under the tutelage of then Alabama Senator Jeremiah Denton, a noted former POW and Vietnam War hero, became a major architect of the so-called frame-up. Denton detested rank and file Vietnam vets who spoke against the US policy and who were, in his view, a bunch of drug addicted misfits. I know Denton felt this way because he told me so himself. Misfits

who somehow received federal funds to open a service center for Vets in his home state, in Mobile.

David Curry, Don Reed, Director of the Birmingham Center, and I were targets of the set-up. Trials in Birmingham and Mobile followed. The inevitable outcome, convictions for all. With players like Grady Gibson, FBI agent provocateur, expert witness, practiced liar, and as a crowning testament to his character, convicted murderer and Brevard Hand, Federal Judge in the Southern District of Alabama (Hand's back story is relevant and explains, in part, his later treatment of David).

At trial with Hand presiding and Sessions prosecuting, Grady gave a

stellar performance. David and I were made out to be partiers, drug abusers, and sociopaths unconcerned for our clients. There was little evidence other than Grady's testimony of any wrongdoing. Nothing else supported the conspiracy charge. Session and Hand were in lock step throughout.

The fact that the conviction and incarceration followed David the remainder of his life is a sad fact indeed. David stood strong in Vietnam in court and in prison. My life was made better by having known him. Janet and Zoe should be very proud. Know that David is remembered in Alabama.



Letter to Editor

Dear Marty,

I was pleased to talk with you the other day, especially about VVAW.

Short Bio: I was born in 1944 in Joplin, MO, the son of a veteran of the First Special Forces of WWII. My dad, an metallurgical engineer, died in 2008. In WWII he was torpedoed en route to Europe by a U-boat and injured his neck trying to escape from a lower deck. My dad is proud of his WWII service, but over the years he has become more and more critical of America's increasing military role on a global scale. Should we be the world's policemen and if so to what extent, and do the negatives outweigh the positives in committing our young men to combat?

I grew up in the Chicago area and attended the U. of Missouri and the U. of Tennessee.

In 1965 I dropped out of school and joined the Navy, and after boot camp at Great Lakes Naval Training Center, I was sent to study Vietnamese at DLI West Coast (Army Language School) in Monterrey, California. I graduated after 36 weeks and was sent to Naval Support Activity in Da Nang. So. Vietnam. I was 21 then.

In Da Nang I did some

interpreting, but mostly was attached to what was called Civic Action Division whose goal was to pacify and reimburse Vietnamese civilians for collateral action war damages. We paid out money as well as built homes and supplied food and some medical care to various outlying hamlets and villages.

My thoughts? Well, Ho Chi Minh in both North and South was a national hero. He was the Vietnamese equivalent of George Washington. He liberated Vietnam from the Japanese and then the French. So, not surprisingly, Uncle Ho was so mot (no. 1).

So after Dien Bien Phu and another revered liberator, General Vo Nguyen Giap, what did we bring after the Gulf of Tonkin and LBJ? We increased VD, prostitution, civilian casualties and, lastly, I'm not sure to what extent, the Ky and Thieu regimes were ever able to stand on their own without our military to back them up!

So it was not surprising that once we left it was a matter of months before Saigon fell.

Did we not learn from the lessons of the French defeat? Vietnam subjected us to a broader national discussion. Was the vaunted Domino

Theory really overblown? What I saw in Vietnam the short time I was there was that the suffering of that poor little place was far greater than any possible good our military was accomplishing. The Mel Gibson movie "We Were Soldiers" was an excellent account of what we were up against militarily and the miscalculations and the underestimating of the enemy's will to fight.

When I got home to Chattanooga, to where my parents from Chicago had moved, I went back to college and graduated. But during this time I underwent a transformation in the support I had for the war, and the more I reflected on my experience, the more against the war I was. Could it be that winning WWII gave our military a falsely inflated ego and had an effect on the folly of our future conflicts? I think so. The same folly applied to George W. Bush's invasion of Iraq after 9/11.

The French again advised caution. General Shinseki was fired for suggesting to Donald Rumsfeld that as many as 250,000 troops would be necessary to keep order during an occupation of Iraq. And damn it, Robert MacNamara in his mea culpa book finally came to terms with his

admission that Vietnam had been a tragic mistake.

So why are we not calling on Congress for an open debate in deciding about what to do with ISIS and Syria? We also have an Iraqi Army that so far has not demonstrated the will to fight. Now where have we witnessed that before? The South Vietnamese Army?

Now Marty, I am not an overt pacifist. But if we ever send our kids into harms way again, the least we can do is have an open lengthy debate in Congress and an up or down vote on going to war. Our presidents are not Napoleon Bonaparte! They are the elected, civilian commanders in chief of our armed forces, but only, and here's the rub, only if Congress does its constitutional duty and votes on whether to send our troops to war. The Gulf of Tonkin Act and the Presidential War Powers Act are both blatantly unconstitutional! We need to stop WARS OF CHOICE.

Sincerely, Mike C. Bodine
Chattanooga, Tennessee



Shooting Flies with My M16

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by the size of the soaring area over a prospective food source (meaning me)? Was there a hidden population of reserve flies always there to fill the empty slots? Was there a master fly in charge of the count and would signal when more reserves were needed?

Like I said, you get loopy.

While staring at the flies, I got inspiration. I thought, "I wonder if I could shoot a fly with my M16?"

Shooting them out of the air didn't seem possible, but they'd land on the sandbags and sit there awhile. I got out my rifle and slid a magazine into it. I aimed and did a little calculation to adjust my aim for something as close as one foot and waited for a plane to take off or land. You could have set off a hand grenade when one of those planes, especially the four-engine C-130's, took off and nobody would hear the bang of the gun.

I fired. Missed the little bugger by 2-3 inches. Finding another one, I adjusted my calculation, waited for a plane, and fired. Still missed it by about an inch. Adjusted and fired again. Got the little prick. Boy did that feel good. And it killed some time. The whole thing must have taken a good 20 minutes.

Not entirely sure I wasn't attracting attention, I casually leaned over the side of the tower and gazed around like I was diligently looking for Charlie. Not a body moving. It was

noonish or later and everybody was staying out of the sun. I didn't have to worry about a sneak inspection (although they tried), as anybody coming up the ladder would cause the whole tower to shake and sway. I sat down again.

Looking up, I noticed that some flies would land on the railing and I could see them in profile. That was better because it wouldn't leave a bullet hole. So adjusting my aim, I started pot-shooting the little bastards off the railing. I shot holes in the railing a few times, but I got so I could hit them first time, every time. I actually ran out of ammo. And amazingly my shift was over — I'd killed not only a bunch of flies, but a bunch of time. I quickly cleaned up the brass and shifted the sandbags around so my partner wouldn't see the bullet holes.

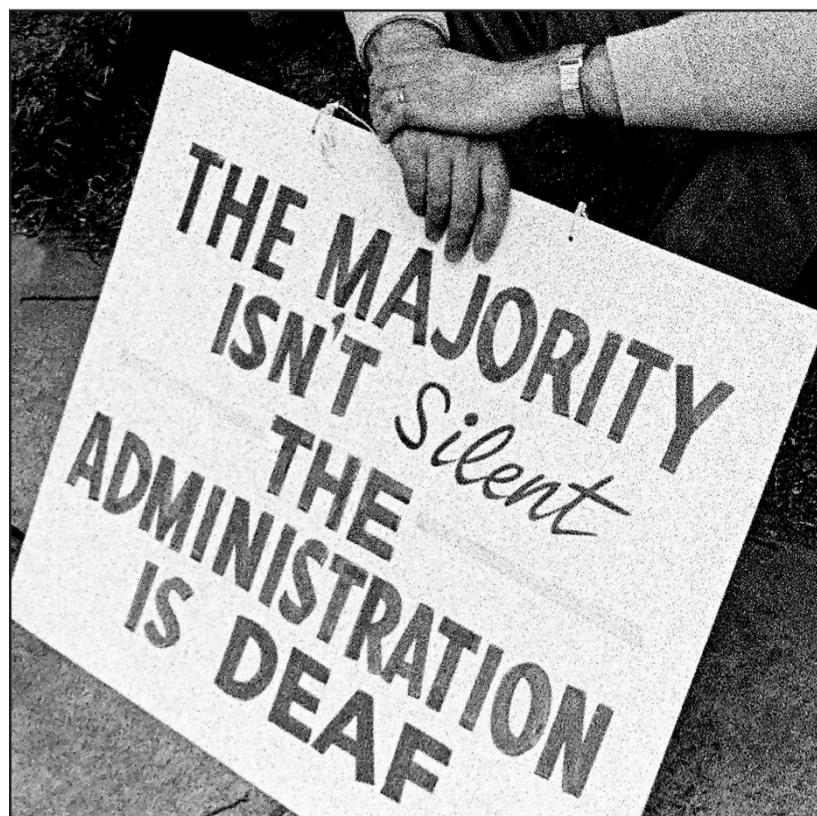
Over the next week I shot every fly that came into that tower. It was an amazing release of frustration and hostility. I always went down now feeling better than when I went up. My partner wondered why I was now bringing bandoleers of ammo up the tower. I told him, "To shoot flies." He looked at me like I was nuts and climbed out of the tower.

I got so I could sometimes shoot two flies per aircraft taking off. Just one when an aircraft landed as the noise wasn't sustained as long. Each time I fired, all the flies were startled

and it would take a second before they'd land on the railing again and give me a target. Periodically I ran out of flies (so there went my theory about a hidden reserve unit of flies) and I was pissed there weren't any more to shoot. But I didn't have long to wait because in Vietnam there are always more flies. And I was very good at waiting.



MICHAEL PAUL IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER. HE JOINED IN 1971 WHEN HE GOT HOME, LAPSED IN MEMBERSHIP FOR MANY YEARS, BUT REJOINED A FEW YEARS AGO. HE WAS IN VIETNAM AUGUST 1970 TO AUGUST 1971. HE WENT TO NCO SCHOOL AND ACHIEVED BUCK SERGEANT. HIS UNIT WAS B-BATTERY, 2ND OF THE 12TH ARTY. HE GOT 14 DAYS LEAVE BEFORE GOING TO VIETNAM, DIDN'T LIKE HOW SHORT THAT WAS, SO HE TOOK ANOTHER 16 AND THEY TOOK A STRIPE. SPENT HIS YEAR THERE AS A CORPORAL.



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.



VVAW 25th Anniversary, New York City, 1992.

RECOLLECTIONS

Ponchos and Memory

PETER SABLOCK

I was drafted at 18 and was a perfect example of an apolitical, carefree and quite unconcerned young adult. I was well read, really knew my history, knew what war was, but really, it was the other guy who died, it would never be me. In my foolishness I was an immortal. I cared nothing about politics and longed to see what war was about. Hell, I was raised on dozens of Hollywood movies where the bad guys died and the good guys (mostly) lived. And they all died quietly, fell over when hit, and it was done. I went a baby and came back 100 years old, scared of noises, scared of crowds, scared of the dark, especially the dark, hating the government and wanting nothing from it, and angry. Oh the anger, the tendency to go from calm to uncontrollable rage in 15 seconds. How did that happen to me?

When someone says "thank you for your service" I respond "thanks" and then change the subject. But really, I'm angry. Did they just get a little endorphin rush from their good deed? Do they feel noble now having said that? Do they have any idea what I did over there? Would they say it to a participant of the My Lai nightmare? How do they know I didn't do something like that? What they should do is apologize for all

the ways the experience warped us. Apologize for the government, with data from 3 wars, utterly failing to help us transition back to the world.

Soon after arriving in VN, I reported to the divisional in processing unit. It was situated next to a chopper pad. As I stood outside, a Chinook with a sling under it came in to land. The sling was filled with ponchos. The NCO told the 11 Bravos among us that we were their replacements. The ponchos held bodies. So began my journey.

I often think that there are dozens of Vietnam's. The VN of the units that first deployed together, the VN of the replacement, the VN Army pre-drug and drug. The VN of anti-war attitude, the VN before the attitude "outed." The VN of the delta, the VN of the tea plantations, the VN of triple canopy and steep rugged hills and mountains. The VN of urban, the VN of settled populations. The Army of the brigade and division base camps and the Army of remote company sized fire bases. The VN of free fire zones with all locals removed to large camps. The VN of an armored/mech unit, the VN of an infantry unit. The VN of cold milk and ice cream at dinner and the VN of a canteen of warm water with beans and franks. And all this is important

because no one can know what it was like unless they were in your VN.

Oh, I know, there are overarching aspects we all share. It's what bonds us together. But the devil is in the details. We all know what a round sounds like as it snaps by your head, but were you hugging the ground, or standing up in an APC?

My M113 carried a floor of M60 ammo boxes and 50 cal boxes. We hoped that they would deaden the blast from a mine. Of course if we are moving quickly and throw a track, and the vehicle rolls, then we die, crushed under 1,000 lbs of ammo. Oh wait, let's solve that by sitting up on the back hatch. Oops, perfect target. A mech/armoured unit never surprised anyone, they could hear us coming kilometers away. When we took fire it was because they were set up and ready for us. And crap they were good soldiers; the NVA 22nd Regiment is the stuff of my nightmares.

After almost 50 years, I can still strip down my M60 step by step. I can feel the receiver tucked under my right arm, the belt feeding over my left, and smell the gunpowder. I can remember which C-rats came in the B1A, B2, and B3 units. I can still taste that god awful unchewable Hershey jungle chocolate bar. I remember the smell

of burning shit in half a 55 gal drum, a body 2 days old, feel the blast wave of a Chicom, and the ball of plasma from an RPG going off beside me.

For a brief period of time I walked the edge and came through it. And on one dusty late afternoon in dry season, when I was the only one left capable of standing, I did my job.

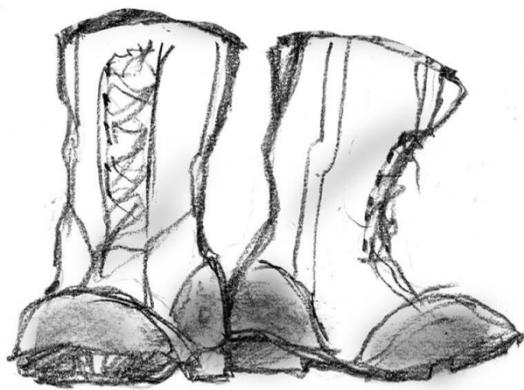
Fact, the plasma jet from an RPG going off 3 feet from your face looks like a miniature sun and will deafen you for several minutes. Daily questions I ask myself. How did I not get completely ripped up? Why was I fated to get the one-in-a-million "you live" card? How did they miss with the follow-up grenade? Why did I run at them? Why did they fade back? So many questions and no fucking answers.

I am the last of my crew, all have gone from battle, suicide or strange cancers. I keep them alive as they were, as I was.



PETER SABLOCK SERVED WITH BRAVO
1/10 CAV 4TH INFANTRY DIVISION
1967-1968. HE TEACHES GEOLOGICAL
SCIENCES AT SALEM STATE UNIVERSITY
IN SALEM, MA.

It's NOT the
Boots on the
Ground
that Matter...



DANZIGER NYTS/CWS Nov 30 2015 (6529)

It's Whose Feet
are in the
Boots on the
Ground...

Your father
Your mother
Your son
Your husband
Your wife
Your daughter
Your friend
Or some kid
you didn't know
who joined the service
because he didn't have
the money to go
to college...



Shooting Flies with My M16

MIKE PAUL

The cloud of flies never seemed to change, yet it constantly changed. They looped around in a random pattern that was so intensely random that I suspected it wasn't random. They had their area that was always equal distance from me and from three sides of the guard tower. Just watching the cloud didn't seem to reveal any pattern, so I decided to just watch single flies. I locked my eyes on a fly, but I soon lost it in its constant abrupt twists and turns.

The military can make you wait like nothing else on the planet. Wait long enough and the mind can get seriously loopy. I was in a 40-foot guard tower overlooking a landing strip in some horrid little backwater in Vietnam. I'd been there for hours and I had hours to go before being relieved. I only had my steel pot, my M16, and a couple of canteens of water.

There was little possibility of being attacked because none of the hooch girls (they did our laundry) had disappeared. They always were gone about a day before we were attacked. Even so, I'd occasionally look down in the hopes of seeing a VC, anything to break up the boredom. I did four-hour shifts in this tower as punishment for screwing up.

I had read or re-read every book on the whole base. The few Playboys were completely beaten to death. I'd been up there for four-hour shifts (I traded back and forth with another guy being punished) for about two weeks and I had another week to go.

It was 90 degrees or more (no thermometer so it was always a guess), no wind, any higher humidity and we'd be under water. I'd sit and sweat and watch the flies buzz and fight in a little cloud above my head. If I nodded

off, the little tormentors would land on me and try to get in my eyes, so I couldn't sleep. And you had to keep a stick or something moving in front of your face to keep them from landing.

Every now and then an incredibly loud aircraft would take off or land. The sun would move and I'd watch the shadow move across the floor of the tower. Gun fire could be heard occasionally. I'd shift to a new spot to keep out of the sun. But no matter what, I was sweating and sitting on a pile of sandbags listening to the flies buzz. Hour after hour after hour.

The little cloud of flies got my attention again. The cloud seemed to always stay about the same size, and the number of flies resting various places seemed to stay the same. I started counting how many were flying and how many were sitting. I got so I could count them pretty

accurately give or take two or three. My counting became important so I kept tab by writing down my counts on the side of a sandbag. I waved an empty sandbag in the cloud and dispersed them, but soon they were back and at about the same count. So I killed a few and then counted them again. The count was about the same. So I counted the ones sitting, about the same. So I killed some more and then counted again. The flying and sitting count was about the same. So I counted the corpses on the floor. That amount should have reduced the flying and sitting populations by the same amount. But it didn't.

What's going on here? Was there only a certain number allowed to fly or sit? Was that number determined

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