



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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VVAW to Sponsor Children's Library in Vietnam

BILL BRANSON

"You may remember—as I do—thinking, when I was in Vietnam the first time, what a beautiful country Vietnam was, and how nice it might be to come back someday when there was no war. For me that day had now come—I hope you get the chance and take it."
—VVAW member Pete Zastrow, Fall 1987 issue of *The Veteran*.

Fifty years ago, a good chunk of us were still in Vietnam. Wherever we were at in country and whatever we were doing, it was not for the benefit of the Vietnamese people. When we came back, whether it was right away or after some time, joining VVAW was how we coped with what we did in Vietnam and how we fought to stop the war and the impact it was having on our Vietnamese brothers and sisters.

Even when the US war on Vietnam was still raging, we were making efforts to reconcile with the Vietnamese people. In 1972, VVAW member Barry Romo was on a peace mission to North Vietnam with Joan Baez and Telford Taylor, delivering packages to the US POWs. Nixon greeted them with the Christmas bombing.

Over the years, VVAW fought for the US government to officially recognize Vietnam. On July 11, 1995, the US and the Socialist Republic of Vietnam announced the establishment of formal diplomatic relations. This is something that VVAW had called for since the end of the shooting war in 1975.

Over the years many of our members went back to Vietnam, to engage the people, do work, and

reconcile with the people and the country we ravaged. The first post-war VVAW delegation to Vietnam spent 10 days in country. In the Fall 1987 issue of *The Veteran*, Pete Zastrow said, "It is much better to visit Vietnam as guests of the government of Vietnam than as invaders sent by the US government."

One of the projects VVAW supported over the years, especially the Milwaukee Chapter, was the building of children's libraries in Vietnam. Founded in 1999 by Vietnam vet Chuck Thuesch, the Library of Vietnam Project (now called the Children's Library International) set out together with the Vietnamese people to build libraries throughout Vietnam, creating a vibrant system of book exchanges, computer hardware and software, and educational programs. In the early 2000s, VVAW helped to support the Library of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia Project. In 2004, VVAW co-sponsored a library at Kean Village in Laos' Savannakhet Province.

Last year, VVAW sponsored a computer lab in the library in My Lai. The children loved it. We loved it. Our members and supporters loved it. What a way to recognize that Vietnam is not a war, but a people. What a great way to move beyond the carnage we created (and whose after-effects still ravages the people and the land).

Now, we have an opportunity to leave a permanent marker to VVAW's role in reconciliation. We plan to build an entire library in Vietnam. Not just sponsor, or put a lab in, but to build a dedicated library for the children of Vietnam. Plans are to build it in the Bến Tre Province.



VVAW members Pete Zastrow and Barry Romo, presenting a painting by VVAW member Robert Spicher to the Vietnam/My (Vietnam/American) Friendship Society in Hanoi, 1987.

The costs of this project, while not overwhelming, are not insignificant. Thanks to a generous bequest from a long-time VVAW supporter, we have a significant start on our fundraising goal. But we still need your help. We hope to break ground in 2019 and raise enough money throughout the rest of the year to complete the project by 2020. We hope you are as excited as we are about this project and donate what you can.

While we look forward to making a lasting impact where we caused the most harm, we still have to acknowledge the constant attacks on us and our country by the current administration. If it wasn't crystal clear before, there can be no doubt that those who share VVAW's goals of fighting for peace, justice and veteran's rights have not had a more daunting challenge in a long time.

Your contributions to VVAW help

us keep distributing our newspaper, *The Veteran*, to our members, friends, and supporters. Please pass out copies to your family and friends, your local library, or your local VA. Your donations also keep our website going, where we have every issue of VVAW's newspaper online as well as archives of many other articles, photos, and videos. Your donations allow us to make VVAW's legacy not only accessible to all through our website but also to archive them for generations to come. Your donation will also help us to build the library in Vietnam. Go here to support the Library Project www.gofundme.com/vvaw-library-in-vietnam-project.

We thank all of you for your continued support.



BILL BRANSON IS A MEMBER OF THE VVAW BOARD.

Why Are We Still VVAW?

JOHN LINDQUIST

This article first ran in the Spring 1997, Vol 27, Number 1 issue of The Veteran. 22 years later it is still relevant.

If you have been in VVAW for any length of time, you have heard the question before. At various times in our history the question has come up: Why don't we change our name to Vietnam Vegetables Against the World. I'm going to review part of our history and try to answer this question at the same time.

In June 1967, six Vietnam veterans marched in an anti-war parade in New York City behind a banner that said "VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR." This was the official beginning of our organization.

After our first year of working against the war, VVAW decided to join in the Chicago protest at the Democratic National Convention in August

1968. We functioned as medics and joined in various other aspects of the demonstrations during that week. The police riot that occurred there blew our minds, and not much else was done by VVAW until 1969.

In 1969, the My Lai killings became public, and VVAW again moved into action. The veterans of VVAW thought it was important to educate America about the true nature of the war in Indochina and to expose the lie that My Lai was a one-of-a-kind incident. We wanted to expose the war by giving testimony about crimes we witnessed and policies of the war that were standard operating procedure, such as free fire zones, H&I fire, strategic hamlets, and search-and-destroy missions. Not many GIs were crazy killers, but we knew we wanted to end the war and bring our brothers and sisters home. As warriors ourselves we could speak out with the truth about our war.

These local Winter Soldier inves-



tigations (WSI) reinvigorated VVAW and helped lead up to Operation RAW (for Rapid American Withdrawal), a mass march from New York City across New Jersey to Valley Forge, PA. Along the way, VVAW members and friends performed guerrilla theater, helping to bring the war home to the people of America.

From Operation RAW we organized the national WSI in Detroit (January 31-February 2, 1971), and this helped to build for VVAW's most well-known event, Operation Dewey Canyon III in Washington DC, April 19-23 1971.

These five days amazed us and the nation and pissed off Richard Nixon. Fifteen hundred veterans from all over the country lobbied Congress, marched in the streets, educated the people, returned a three-foot high pile of medals, and, on April 24, led the largest anti-war protest in America's history.

The Gainesville Eight trial of 1972-73 pitted VVAW against the power of the FBI and Richard Nixon.

They beat us down to three hundred members, but VVAW survived. Our struggle for survival galvanized us into a fighting force waging a battle for peace and justice. During this time we had our first brush with changing our name.

Building up to the National Steering Committee meeting (NSCM) in Placitas, New Mexico in April 1972, some members from Chicago and California floated the idea of changing the name from VVAW to VVAW/WSO (Vietnam Veterans Against the War/Winter Soldier Organization).

Their idea, in a nutshell, was to get out of the "veterans business" and really get into the role of being "anti-imperialist." Fortunately for the organization, the final decision about the name change had to be voted on again in one year's time.

By October 1973, VVAW had declared war on the VA. Across the country we were occupying VA offices and fighting for decent benefits

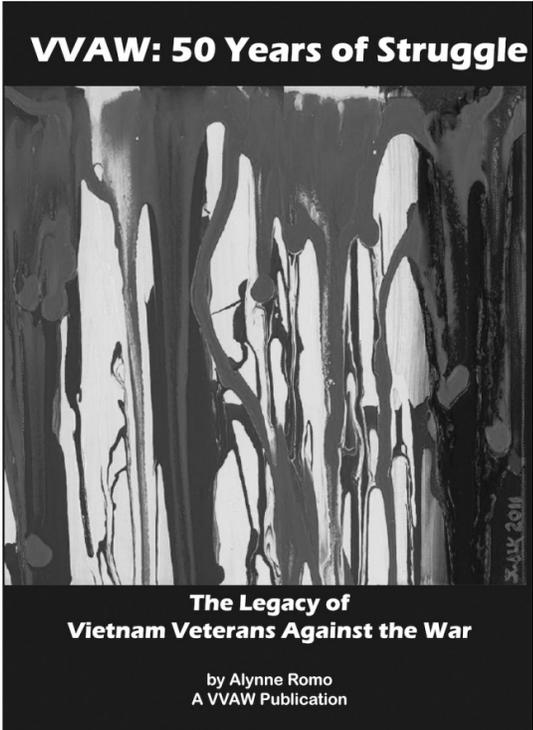
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Available Now: VVAW 50 Years of Struggle



VVAW: 50 Years of Struggle The Legacy of Vietnam Veterans Against the War

The book describes the moving history of VVAW over five decades and provides a timeline of VVAW's positions, protests, and takeovers. It also sets those powerful actions in the context of each era, starting with topics ranging from the impact of the civil rights movement, to the draft, to flawed operations in Vietnam.

By following five decades of VVAW, the reader also sees the evolution of US foreign policy mired in war crimes and domination; the intergenerational failures of the Veterans Administration; the unfolding of the story of Agent Orange; and much, much more.

The book will delight members of VVAW, but it is also written so that they may be understood—so that others can glimpse inside the world of these anti-war veterans and understand why they stood together and defied the wars, the racism, and the injustices of their times.

Published by and for VVAW, research for the book relied on VVAW archives. In addition to telling the overall history of the organization itself, it also thanks over 450 members who helped drive and inspire the organization. Fully indexed for use in libraries and classrooms.

Available for \$19.95 through VVAW's website www.vvaw.org/store/.

Truth, it is said, is war's first casualty. Memory is its second.—Tom Hayden, anti-war activist



The 3 Annies (Luginbill, Hirschman, and Bailey) with Billy Curmano at VVAW 30th Anniversary, May 18, 1997 in Chicago.

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

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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.

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From the National Office

JOE MILLER

New crises, new dangers, new possibilities.

Since our last issue, it seems we have entered a new era, with ever-compounding crises in politics and environment. At the same time, there are new possibilities in politics and citizen activity with fresh new faces and voices in Washington and around the world.

President Chump is in deep trouble with the release of the Mueller documents and a House of Representatives that is finally doing its job. This does not even include the external investigations that put Chump and family in dire straits.

How does President Orange respond? He manufactures a crisis on the border, raises the spectre of "socialism" in the coming election, and threatens to send troops to Venezuela to "save" the Venezuelan people from themselves, a la Henry Kissinger

in Chile in 1973. We might expect troops (excuse me, "advisors") to start landing on some Sunday afternoon. *Military Times* of March 15, 2019, has already raised that possibility.

It is no secret that the US oligarchs have been destabilizing an uncooperative government in Venezuela for some time. What a prize to steal the rich oil fields of that country for the oil barons?

VVAW's position is a simple one. There is no excuse, or reason, however the media delivers it, for a single US boot on the ground in Venezuela, whether the boots belong to US troops, or surrogates. Chump, the boot-licking servant of the .5%, should not be allowed to distract attention from his long deserved perwalk, by attacking or continuing to bring poverty, anarchy and ruin to yet another country. Do we really need to add another conflict to the endless

wars that have been chewing up our troops and our treasury for nearly twenty years?

It is significant that some liberal and conservative veterans organizations are now joining in an effort to challenge the "endless wars". Of course, this is only limited to a challenge of the 2001 AUMF (Authorization to Use Military Force). These groups might be perfectly happy with a mere update of the AUMF, rather than a fundamental challenge to the continued use of US forces as the "World Police". VVAW says this does not go far enough.

We can be heartened by the new energy among young people all over the world toward environmental action, action that takes into account the connections between domestic (police) and foreign (military) policy. Environmental justice requires social justice activism which includes action

against militarism. The obscene spending for the military, nearly \$700 billion in the current budget, must be challenged.

This does NOT mean that VVAW and its partner organizations will end the fight for veterans' rights. We must act to defend the VA from privatization efforts, even though some "liberal" politicians and mainstream veterans groups seem to have bought into the scam.

There is much on our plate right now. We must look for, and take advantage of, any opportunity to engage in the struggle. Not all of us are in a position to jump in with both feet. We must do what we can wherever we can. Join the struggles where you live!



JOE MILLER IS A MEMBER OF THE VVAW BOARD.



VVAW Milwaukee Chapter demo, March 20, 2004.

Why Are We Still VVAW?

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for all veterans. In the midst of all this activity, the idea of changing our name became as popular as a fart in a submarine.

As the 1970s marched on, the fight for universal unconditional amnesty, discharge upgrading, post-Vietnam syndrome, and freedom for Gary Lawton and Ashby Leach drew heavily on our veterans' roots.

Our experience as veterans, warriors, and good organizers also prepared us for one of our longest struggles, the push for testing, treatment, and compensation for Agent Orange (1978-1984).

It started in Chicago in March 1978, when news broke the story of Maude DeVictor, the mother of the

Agent Orange struggle. We began the battle at the Spring NSCM meeting in Chicago, and we carried it to Washington, DC more than once. We first created an information packet to educate veterans and their families, the "Agent Orange Dossier." With this we began to build a movement, organize with other veterans, and demonstrate.

We held national meetings in St. Louis and Washington, DC. We occupied the Capitol lawn in Madison, Wisconsin, and marched in Washington, DC. We held Dewey Canyon IV in DC in 1984, and once again slept on the mall. We marched and demonstrated all over the country on this issue.

With the help of Victor Yanna-

cone we helped organize and sign up veterans in the Agent Orange lawsuit against the chemical companies. We did not win a total victory, but this epic battle will forever be a major part of the history of VVAW.

Between 1984 to 1997 VVAW has been small but active. We worked to stop the war in El Salvador and Nicaragua, we helped to organize some of the largest demonstrations against the Persian Gulf War, and we still work for decent benefits for all veterans and normalization of relations with Vietnam. That battle was finally won in 1995 when the US finally recognized Vietnam. Our public speaking in schools and universities about the war in Vietnam also continues.

When we go about our work, we proudly use our name Vietnam Veterans Against the War. On our trips back to Vietnam, our button and name are recognized and respected. Till the last one of us dies, or we dry up and blow away, our name will not change. See you May 16-17, 1997 in Chicago for the 30th Anniversary.



JOHN LINDQUIST IS A FORMER VVAW NATIONAL COORDINATOR AND A MARINE VIETNAM VET.

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

Suppose . . .

What if Donald Trump did jail time? How would you like to be on that ex-president Secret Service detail? Not good duty. Then again it would probably be one of those country club prisons. Maybe you could improve your tennis game. Trump likes golf. Maybe he could build and donate a golf course for the prison. It wouldn't cost too much because the land would be free and he doesn't always pay his workers, and then he could bring in Mexican workers who don't have papers. As he found out from personal experience, they come cheap. Maybe that attitude explains why he has no problem shutting down the government. He's used to getting work out of people he doesn't pay. But I digress. Suffice it to say that adding a golf course to the prison complex would please many future politicians.

Maybe we could send him and his entourage to Guantanamo Bay. The government doesn't seem to be sure of what to do with Gitmo, so re-develop it. Returning the land to its rightful owner doesn't seem to be on the agenda. With John Bolton now in charge of US policy in Latin America redevelopment is not likely an option. He probably has plans to use Gitmo as a jump off for an invasion of Cuba or somewhere to the south of Miami Beach. Too bad. Gitmo could be the perfect place for Trump's confinement — a perfect place to build another Mar-a-Lago. However, to make him comfortable you would have to move the current inhabitants. He probably couldn't deal with any Muslims. Then he could relax and spend his free time channeling Richard Nixon. "I . . .am. . .not . . .a. . ."

There's no doubt he would get special treatment. I wonder what kind of prison job he would get. It is alleged by fake news that he has trouble reading, so the library is out. Do they still make license plates? Maybe that's too skilled for him. I wonder if he's ever washed dishes. He blew his chance to learn KP back in the day when he (or dad's connections) convinced the draft board that he had bad feet. I seem to

remember that there was an epidemic of bad feet back then. I wonder if Dad ever made him wash. Maybe he dried. Maybe he'd get into a prison where the prisoners were farmed out to work for local companies for less than minimum wage. That's a concept he could understand.

Then there's rehab. If he gets an early out from his prison, isn't he supposed to spend time in a halfway house? The only problem with that (for him) is that there might be some poor people at his halfway house. Losers. That's what he would say. Losers who couldn't pull themselves up by their dad's bootstraps. He might hire

Trump. It's the case of Jeffrey Epstein. He's the billionaire convicted of sex trafficking. His punishment is that he has to go to the office every day and return to confinement at night. Sounds like it fits Trump. I can imagine what that confinement looks like. Maybe this is the kind of confinement an ex-president would get. Or even a sitting president

Surprisingly, several people in Trump's orbit are going to get jail time. I say surprisingly because most operators at that level find a way around the law. These Trump people turned out to be the gang who couldn't shoot straight, and they're going to

came out of his mouth, is the center of our attention. He has a need to be the center of attention and is well practiced at putting himself there. He uses outrageous statements that will stir somebody's pot or declare something is true when it is not: also known as fake news.

The result of this dynamic is that every day there are things that Trump has said or done which we are talking about. All of us react, whether we are interested in politics or not, whether we're interested in social justice or not. The result is that the conversation revolves around his daily opinions and is diverted from things that need to be talked about. Why isn't there more serious discussion of the effects of climate change? Or affordable housing and homelessness? Ongoing wars that have lasted too long? And so on. Granted that in the past issues of social justice usually got decided by decision makers who did not take to heart the well being of the populous. And granted that it might not happen in the future. Still, under that process, you sometimes can get a good thing done. That doesn't happen without debate and confrontation, but if it is on the table, it's always possible. Some of these newly elected congresspeople are raising important issues. This is a good thing. One hopes that the conversation will remain invigorating.

For now, Trump is the person who usually sets the daily agenda. As a result, you usually don't get to these serious discussions. I don't know if he consciously does this or if him being so needy is the cause. Either way, discussion is limited. If he soon fades into history, there's a better chance to get to the point where the people have more say. What happens to Trump is not the most important thing. Sure. If he got jail time, it might give many of us a warm feeling. And it will be progress when he is gone. Then we will have to struggle with the next administration.



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

Why isn't there more serious discussion of the effects of climate change? Or affordable housing and homelessness? Ongoing wars that have lasted too long? And so on.

some of these people for less, but if he had to sleep there? Naw. The Secret Service wouldn't let him. Who knows? There might be an immigrant there. That could be dangerous. And what if that immigrant were from Central America? One of those eight-year-old assassins separated from Mom? And what would his base say about that? Living with those people?

The one worthy bill passed in the first term concerned prison reform. Among other things, it would reduce time served for non-violent offenses. Supposedly Jared Kushner was a force behind the passage of this bill. You think he did this for his father-in-law, maybe get him off early? Or maybe this is intended to help the whole family. Jared and Junior seem to have been skirting the law a time or two themselves. This could help Trump. Or there might be another case that would be a guideline for how to punish

pay. Some of them anyway. Dumb. Most who get that high have a get-out-of-jail-free card. Happily, these people don't. Maybe even Trump. It's about time.

A big problem with Donald Trump as president is that the political conversation is always about him or whatever nonsense comes out of his mouth or twitter finger. I'm not a historian, but I would guess that never before has there been anybody who so dominated the agenda of public political discourse. On a slow news day, he will create some controversy just to keep us all reacting. And make no mistake, some of his lies and innuendos and fake news do generate interesting discussions. We all get our interest up and get involved in this game. He got us. He, or what

Notes from the Boonies

PAUL WISOVATY

I occasionally have a hard time coming up with something about which to write in this column, although Jeff has been quite helpful. He suggests such topics as countering the privatization talk regarding the VA, and "struggles for our benefits in these dark times." With regard to that one, I have a good friend who has the misfortune to have been a "blue water sailor" in Vietnam, and as such is ineligible for benefits related to Agent Orange exposure. The House passed the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act unanimously, but two Republicans in the Senate shot it down. Real surprise on that one. There is also the issue of the rise of the suicide rate among veterans, although *Fox News* assures us that the President is working on that one. But the title of my column is *Notes From The Boonies*, so I guess that I should leave the above areas to those more knowledgeable than I (no shortage of them) and just stick to the title. What is going on down here in central Illinois?

As I am a district officer in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, I make frequent visits to posts in this area. About one week ago I attended a meeting in Mattoon, Illinois, and on the way to the restroom found a bumper sticker prominently displayed on a wall. Following the very common POW-MIA symbol (I had a column on

this subject a few issues ago), were the words "Boycott Jane Fonda, American Traitor Bitch!" Kind of subtle, but after I thought about it a while I figured it out. I, of course, removed it, although I am certain that it has since been replaced.

The above was not a one-time sort of experience. I have more than a couple of times gone into a VFW restroom and found, in a urinal, a "Hanoi Jane" sticker. Kind of coincidental that it was in the urinal, or maybe not. But here is my favorite story. I was talking to a nice guy who is what is called a ride captain with the Illinois Patriot Guard. In all fairness, this organization does a whole lot of veterans funerals, often at the Camp Butler National Cemetery near Springfield. They donate a lot of time and hard work doing that and deserve our appreciation for that. But there was (I thought) a recent problem.

The ride captain told me that he had to say something to one of his riders (who are not required to be veterans). The guy showed up at a funeral wearing a very attractive jacket, with a 4" x 6" patch sewn on the back that read (I'm not making this up) "Fuck Jane Fonda." The captain told him to remove the jacket, not of course because he had any problem with the sentiment, but because the

event was — did I mention this? — a funeral. My response was that Jane had risked her career and possibly her life protesting our invasion of a foreign country. The captain either thought that I was joking or just didn't want to get into the subject and turned and walked away. I guess I sure know how to end a conversation.

Of course, there is that one thing which cannot be avoided. The above-noted individuals frequently note that — here it comes — Jane was once photographed sitting happily upon a North Vietnamese anti-aircraft gun on one of her trips there. Not a good thing to do. My recollection is that Jane not too long ago apologized for having done that. While I can't quote her, my recollection is that she said something to the effect that she was really, really, really sorry. She was young and caught up in the whole thing ("thing" being our invasion

of Vietnam), and just kind of did something that she shouldn't have done. Hell, I've never done anything like that, or if at least if I did, I was lucky enough not to have someone photograph my doing it.

One last thing. I have on the wall of my man cave a personally autographed photo of John Kerry, and a personal letter from Senator Kerry thanking me for having purchased, at our local veterans memorial, a brick with his name on it. But you know what I really want? Sure you do. An autographed photo of Jane Fonda. Come on, Barry. Help me out.



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



For illustration purposes only.
VVAW DOES NOT SUPPORT the sentiment on this bumper sticker.

No Health Care System is Perfect: But I'll Take VA Health Care

JACK MALLORY

I'm a Vietnam vet. I've gotten my health care through Vet Centers and VA Medical Centers for the last ten years, when I retired, left for-profit care, and became a VA patient. I've also got nearly 2,500 hours in as a volunteer at one medical center where I staff the information desk and transport wheelchair patients to their appointments.

I've seen VA health care from these perspectives. As an academic, I've also looked into the quality of VA health care quality through readily available secondary sources like Phil Longman's *Best Care Anywhere* and Suzanne Gordon's *Wounds of War*.

Discussions among vets about VA health care often devolve into individual stories, frequently complaints, about specific cases and/or claims that "The VA doesn't give a shit," or "The VA's just waiting until we're all dead." This, of course, feeds the privatization frenzy. I've tried to provide them with alternative info in the form of the statistics that show VA health care to be as good or better than "civilian" care in many areas—see the books referenced above. But numbers don't seem convincing to non-academics, so when *The Veteran* asked me to contribute my experiences with VA care, I decided to stick with my personal story.

As an "uncompensated employee" at the VA Medical Center, I have the chance to observe interactions between patients and staff (about a third of whom are vets) and shoot the shit with patients myself. I get a feel for the culture of VA health care. Watching those interactions, I see almost entirely respect, care, and professionalism. Vets tell me they like, or love, their VA health care because they feel respected, cared for, and treated professionally.

The first time I walked into my Med Center, I saw an employee dealing with a WWII vet in a wheelchair with obviously sincere concern, compassion, and affection—far beyond the practical requirements of the situation. I had the feeling that if I lived to 90+, I might expect the same kind of care. (To provide complete transparency, that employee has been my significant other since shortly after that event, 6 1/2 years ago!)

And the culture of VA care is something that could never be

replicated in a for-profit setting. Vets, of all ages and eras, understand each other, know how to speak to and support each other. Vet humor, likely unacceptable outside the VA, is a huge part of that culture. I had a great bullshit session with a patient awaiting a fitting for a glass eye a few weeks ago: We brainstormed ideas about designs—an American flag? Eagle, Globe and Anchor? (a Marine, obviously)? Trump's face, just for shock value? Maybe a mirror, so others would see their own faces in it? Not a likely conversation elsewhere else. Plus the usual when were you in, who were you with, were you ever at Fire Base ____? A patient brought me an 11th Armored Cav hat just as a thanks-for-volunteering gift last week! The VA provides a level of cultural comfort we'll never find at our local doc-in-the-box clinic/hospital.

I've had the good luck to be pretty physically healthy. Most of my VA care has involved treatment for PTS and associated issues. I've had four therapists: Two great, one good, one useless. The useless one was a Vietnam vet, whose expertise and therapeutic focus was on getting his patients up to 100% disability. Currency, not care.

The two great ones were women who had never been in the military. The first, whose name I'll mention because she died a few years ago, was Carol Ahern. I know several vets at the Hooksett, NH, Vet Center who will tell you that Carol kept them alive, others that say she saved their marriages, through their work with her. When I was part of her PTS group, some of the vets had been working with Carol for 10 years or more. I've been working with the other woman for three years; I'll leave her name out because I haven't asked if I could share this. I decided that the best way to describe the quality of care I receive from her is by sharing a letter that I wrote:

"Dear _____,

I've been asked to write you a kind of "attagirl!" letter for your retreat/training whatever it is. I'm honored to do that.

Vets are an untrusting lot, or at least that's true of many Vietnam vets I know. We don't much trust society in general, the government, the VA, and clinicians in particular. It is, I think,

a symptom of both PTS and moral injury. For a therapist to win a veteran's trust is not an easy accomplishment.

You've done it. You've earned my trust, and from what I've seen in the PTS and Moral Injury groups you have won the trust of all of us. Veterans whose service spans several wars and several decades seem to have concluded that you can be trusted, that you have our best interests in heart and mind. How have you convinced us? What has worked?

I see it as the result of four processes. You listen. You understand. You care. And you respect us enough to learn from us.

Like a good teacher, you spend more time listening than talking. You ask questions, you prompt, you bring the answers out of us rather than telling us the answers. We often don't know what's going on inside: our conversations with you help us make that clear to us.

You are clearly knowledgeable enough, from both training and years of working with vets, to understand what we tell you—I suspected that when you and I first talked about Jonathan Shay's work. If you were familiar with Jonathan's work, you were not only knowledgeable but even likely to be a decent human being! You understand the military culture and the tactical situations which have created our experiences. When you don't understand, you ask for clarification, but it's rare to see you surprised. This creates a feeling of safety in group and individual sessions—we're not about to shock you, to trigger some kind of condemnation.

And while you are a clinician (what an awful word!), you aren't clinical. You care about us, as veterans generally and as individuals. That care is evident in every interaction: the handshake, the smile, and the eye contact at the beginning and end of every session. We're often looking for any hint of insincerity to justify our mistrust. Your sincerity is obvious. And, in a society in which real caring for veterans seems rare, and among some vets who themselves don't believe the government/VA really cares, it's incredibly important for vets to see that someone does.

As an educator, I know that the fact that you learn from us as much as we learn from you is enormously

important. It shows that you are open to new ideas, new understanding. You are growing in what you do—the next time I, or any other vet, walks through your door we get an even better counselor. A session with you is an opportunity for us to understand ourselves better, and an opportunity for you to understand vets better. It also shows that you respect us as sources of that new understanding. We aren't just "patients," or "clients," but people who interact with you as fellow human beings: a conversation rather than "therapy." Again, as a lifetime teacher, I can look back on my time in the classroom and value the immigrant students who taught me so much about their lives and their importance as young, new Americans. I think I can sense the same thing going on in your mind vis-a-vis veterans. I loved those students; forgive me if I think you love us as veterans.

Can there be anything more important than re-instilling trust in those who no longer trust the people or institutions they live amidst? I can't imagine that there is. You do that, _____, and I thank you for it."

_____ does this work because she cares about us as veterans, not because the VA pays her bigger bucks than she'd make in private care. And I'd far rather be treated by someone who cared for me, who did it because she believed it was worth doing than someone who did it for the bucks.

I'm not claiming that _____ is an average VA employee, clearly. But I hope that by passing this letter on it will convey the appreciation this vet—like many vets a pretty suspicious, mistrustful, skeptical individual—feels for the effort, the expertise, and the understanding that she, and VA health care generally, represents. Keep our health care in the VA, improve it within the VA, and keep it out of the for-profit system!



JACK MALLORY IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER. HE SERVED IN VIETNAM 69-70 AND JOINED VVAW IN 1970. HE'S ALSO AN ARCHAEOLOGIST, AN EDUCATOR, AND A DAD. LIKE SUPERMAN, FIGHTING FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND HIS OWN VERSION OF THE AMERICAN WAY. HE WON'T CLAIM TO BE WINNING, BUT WTF ELSE CAN HE DO?

The Hardest Challenge With Homeless and On the Edge Veterans

JIM MURPHY

Similar to other regional groups like VVAW and VFP, the Finger Lakes Veterans Peace Coalition (Central-Western NY) does outreach to troubled veterans. Our key discovery point is Loaves and Fishes Food Program/Soup Kitchen where I am frequently present. Staff from there, like Navy Vet JR Clairbourne, identify veterans and the process begins. We are 'connectors' not therapists. Beginning with conversations, we find out what these veterans are missing: housing,

jobs, friends, have bad paper, etc. Many veterans are not connected to the VA and/or have mental health handicaps like depression. They are totally unaware of their VA benefits, large or small.

We have a team of veterans that are prepared to help with all needs like food cards for local grocery stores (drinkers get food co-op cards), finding housing, furniture discovery and delivery and some socialization. The core of our group is our local

Warrior Writers Chapter... Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nam, C.O.s, etc.

The challenge is that of the veterans' negative outlook on life after what is often years of dysfunction. It is difficult to get some veterans, that often have lived outdoors in the woods, to find ways to have positive interactions with landlords and public housing officials. We're trying to confront in a fun (?) process to teach our hurting brothers and sisters to learn more positive communication skills

with those who can affect their lives.

We are always in need of suggestions. What have you seen working for these brothers and sisters?

Contact me at murphyvetsfor@gmail.com.



JIM MURPHY IS A LONG-TIME MEMBER OF VVAW.



VVAW Board member Meg Miner speaking at Veterans Day event in Chicago, November 11, 2018.

Either Save the VA or Stop Making Veterans

JIM WOHLGEMUTH

I retired from the Federal Government and then taught school in North Carolina, keeping my Federal Health Care and picking up NC public servant health care. I was more than covered, I did not need the VA. Then in 2012 melanoma caught me off guard. Thankfully I found Dr. John Stewart at Wake Forest Hospital. First of all, he calmed me down. Then he gave me options. The final protocol was lymph dissection. So all in all, I became cancer free but not without the chaos of the for-profit health care system. When the doctor sewed me up, he put a special dressing on the incision to reduce infection. After a day I was ready to go home and all packed and dressed when Dr. Stewart and the other doctors told me that Blue Cross/Shield had not approved the silver dressing. It was hard for me to understand, but they had to take the dressing off, put a regular dressing on, which required spending another night in the hospital. Dr. Stewart at Wake Forest clearly knew what was needed, but Blue Cross said no and then spent the extra money to keep me in the hospital another day.

So let's just say that history showed that Dr. Stewart knew what he was doing because without lymph glands you become subject to infections and lymphedema and I was. Three more trips to the hospital

over the next two years; if only Blue Cross/Shield would have approved the silver dressing who knows.

Well we moved to Nashville to take care of the grandkids, and so I had to relinquish Dr. Stewart and Wake Forest, but there was a big well-known hospital in Nashville. So my records were transferred, and I start making appointments. The big hospital in Nashville clearly did not have the feel of Wake Forest. Doctors and nurses did not seem to have the time to talk, exams were less than Wake Forest thorough, and I just felt pushed along. I talked to a vet friend, and he said to check the VA. The VA medical center was in the vicinity of that big hospital, so I checked. After some questions, they said I was eligible, and they got me going. The first thing that shocked me was they were setting up appointments for me, not me having to set them up. Seriously, what medical facility does that? Then they arranged for what I needed based on my melanoma history, they also made me get all my shots and a colonoscopy. They cared about me; I was not a period-of-time during the day to just check off the list.

I have now been with the VA for three years or so, and since then I have had thorough exams by the dermatologist, released from the oncologist, my eye issues checked and analyzed (I have floaters and a

new set of glasses), a laparoscopic appendectomy (meaning I was home the same day with just a couple of holes in my stomach, no incision), and when I went in to get some relief to a cough and cold, they took a chest X-ray just to make sure. I go there and come out feeling better.

Listen, I am no one special. I happened to find myself tied up in the Vietnam conflict some 50 years ago, not by choice, but it happened, and it sticks with me. I am just a retired old grandpa who now depends on the quality medical service I get at the VA to keep me vertical. I look at what this Trump administration, the Republican party, and Wilkie are doing and have done and it hurts. I see the unfunded Mission Act expanding a flawed choice program by pushing Veterans into the private sector while bleeding the VA Medical Centers slowly dry. I talk to people who know that the VA has some 40,000 vacant positions but still provides medical care at the same level or better than that big production line hospital next door, but for how long. I see how any little issue from a VA Medical Center makes front page of *USA Today* and *The Wall Street Journal*, while the private sector hospital problems that exceed the VA are rarely mentioned. I see congressmen, especially on the Republican side (but not always)

wrapping themselves in the flag and yet following the lead of the Koch brothers and their front group Concerned Veterans of America to undermine VA Medical Care. Thank goodness for Suzanne Gordon and her books about VA Care. I appreciate the Veterans Health Care Policy Institute (VeteransPolicy.org), VVAW, and Veterans for Peace for all the work they are doing to try to save our VA.

But you know what disappoints me? I am so disappointed and disheartened when I talk to my fellow Vets who say they depend on the VA and it should not be privatized, and then they will turn around and vote against people who want to save the VA for veterans. And the reason: the media or the Republican's call them a socialist. We need to fix fund and staff the VA, or we better stop making veterans, we better stop making war.



JIM WOHLGEMUTH IS A MEMBER OF VVAW WHO LIVES IN NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE. HE SERVED ON THE WESTCHESTER COUNTY FROM 1969 TO 1971. HE THEN SERVED ON THE PT DEFIANCE LSD 31 UNTIL DISCHARGE IN 1972. HE CAME HOME, WENT TO COLLEGE GOT MARRIED HAD KIDS AND NOW GRANDKIDS.

On Listening to Veterans

JACK MALLORY

Veterans and active duty military can't be simplistically categorized as heroes or villains, truth-tellers or liars, any more than teenagers or any other group of Americans. What we have in common is our commitment, at some point in our lives and with varying degrees of free will, to serve society, to the point of putting our lives at risk.

We are human beings: family, friends, strangers. We don't want to be idealized, or condemned, judged and jammed into some box that fits an easy stereotype. Many of us simply, deeply, want to be understood by those whose tax dollars pay us, buy our weapons, and sometimes send us to war.

Americans do not understand

the experiences of their military. The lack of understanding that separates us and the rest of society is both cause and effect of our difficulty in talking with you frankly and honestly. We have trouble speaking the words, and you would have trouble listening to them if we could utter them. We live in a society that does not speak our language, and we form a culture that you have never lived in. Making judgements of those whose language one doesn't speak or whose culture one doesn't know is a mistake.

The inability to communicate not only separates us from you but leaves those who have not served unable to comprehend what they are asking

of future service members—future veterans—when they send them into harm's way. You ask your family, your friends, and complete strangers to risk harm and to cause harm, and to live with their own suffering and the suffering they have caused others, on into the future.

Given what you ask your military to do, you owe them at least the opportunity to tell their stories without prejudging or trying to fit their experiences into your own limited perspectives. You may benefit from hearing what they have done for you. They may benefit from the effort to assemble their understanding and transmit it to you—often our own

understanding comes in the telling. And our society will benefit from having a more realistic framework within which to make decisions about the price of war.



JACK MALLORY IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER. HE SERVED IN VIETNAM 69-70 AND JOINED VVAW IN 1970. HE'S ALSO AN ARCHAEOLOGIST, AN EDUCATOR, AND A DAD. LIKE SUPERMAN, FIGHTING FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND HIS OWN VERSION OF THE AMERICAN WAY. HE WON'T CLAIM TO BE WINNING, BUT WTF ELSE CAN HE DO?

Thank You for Your Service

Yes, of course; it's what you say these days. Like genuflecting in a Catholic church. Like saying "bless you" to a sneeze. A superstitious reflex, but, of course, sincere. Or is it just to ease the guilt of sending someone else to do the dirty work? Whatever. I just say, "You're welcome," let it go at that, when what I'd really like to say is, "Thank you for my fucking service in that fucking war I've dragged from day to day for fifty fucking years like a fucking corpse that won't stay dead? That fucking nightmare that my fucking country told me was my fucking patriotic duty to fight? For what, exactly, do you think you're thanking me? Service to my country? You empty-headed idiot. You think I want your thanks for what I did? You shallow, superficial twit. You've no idea what I did, or why, or what it cost a people who had never done us any harm nor ever would or could. You can take your thank you for my service, shove it where the sun doesn't shine." But you wouldn't understand. You'd only get insulted if I told you what I'd really like to say. So I just say, "You're welcome." Smile. Walk away.

—W.D. Ehrhart

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The VA Treats Me Well

ALLEN MEECE

Cardiac arrhythmia means the heart can't "keep the beat." The left atrium, an intake chamber at the top of the heart, starts to quiver instead of pulsing smoothly. It's not a heart attack nor is it immediately lethal but it is unsettling and eventually wears out the heart. At the Bruce W. Carter VA Medical Center in Miami, I've had two operations over seven years for this condition, and I feel fine.

I like that hospital. As I step into the lobby, I see other veterans wearing hats with their unit's name or branch of service. I was on a destroyer in the lesser-known Third Tonkin Gulf Incident in 1964, and I wear a ball cap that says USS Edwards, DD 950. The receptionist gives directions to my appointment and says, "Thank you for your service."

I like that appreciation for what I did fifty-five years ago. The Edwards had the dishonorable duty of starting the Vietnam War by threateningly steaming inside North Vietnam's 12-mile offshore limit. The Navy told us we were protecting democracy and preventing the "monolithic communist bloc" from invading the US. We didn't understand imperialism, but our intentions were good. Fifty-eight thousand comrades' deaths later, I know why they started a war. Imperialists hate socialism. But I was young, and I tried to serve my country well. I accept the thanks of the receptionist.

At the Miami VA, there's a feeling of camaraderie amongst the patients, and we say "howya doon?"

to each other in passing. The medical staff gives us a feeling of being respected for our sacrifices as if they realized we gave long hours of work for peanuts, were exposed to danger and confined to remote duty stations. It feels like they're trying to pay us back for protecting them.

I know the VA is better than commercial hospitals. Once I had a "cold" for ten days, and my body collapsed from lack of oxygen; I was treated in my local corporate-chain hospital for double pneumonia. They charged about \$60,000 a week. That hospital's goal, purpose, and vision was to be a commercial profit center. It was run for profit by a management corporation that has 150 other hospitals.

They charged me \$10 for one baby aspirin, \$250 to put a \$20 pulse/oximeter on my fingertip for one minute, five times a day for seven days, for a total of \$2,450 for thirty-five minutes of readings. They charged \$7,000 a week for my breathing oxygen. I looked over their bill for other insane costs, but their form was incomprehensible. Instead of putting the bill in plain English so the customer might understand the charges, like any other business, they used medical jargon, arcane adjectives, and obscure abbreviations to conceal the scams.

It was a medical profit center, and I was the fodder. The manager, Community Health Systems, was sued for overcharging Medicare and wound up paying ninety-eight million dollars in government fines. Those are not

the people I want treating me when my life's in danger or when I have a runny nose. I don't want the VA to go down that route. Keep the VHA intact. Health care is serious.

Years later, the VA paid to send me to a cutting-edge university teaching hospital to have a cardiac operation. I stayed sixteen hours in a ward to recuperate. I saw my nurse once for fifteen seconds during her shift as she popped in and said "howya doon?" and scurried away to attend the more-difficult patients. She was the only nurse on a ward of twenty-five rooms. A medical assistant came in irregularly to "check my vitals" like my pulse, temperature and blood pressure to see if I was alive. They hardly spoke English, and I couldn't get good information about my case.

That is the mindset of commercial profit centers: Keep the service understaffed and underpaid and overworked. Never mind "quality of care." Just buy advertisements and billboards and tell the public that you really do care. Charge them high for low quality. Don't perform real "caring" or you won't be extracting all you can. It's about the revenue stream.

There is a fake "grassroots" organization called Concerned Veterans for America that wants the government to transfer, which means give, the VA hospitals and clinics to an outside corporation with the proposed zany name of VACO, the Veterans Accountable Care Organization.

I'm sure that as soon as VACO is divorced from the government,

it'll use its independence to lease out its buildings and contract their management to health-for-profit corporations. And the CVA's website says that they're putting the veterans in charge of their own health! The biggest lie is the most effective lie, as the saying goes. The CVA is not financed by masses of "concerned veterans" who somehow found twenty million dollars to operate it. Sourcewatch.org says they're a front group for the billionaire Koch brothers' extremely anti-social political manipulations.

One change in the VA that helps access to healthcare is the "Choice Program," which lets veterans obtain care from local doctors if there's not a VA facility with a full-time doctor within forty miles of home. The catch is that most facilities are merely community clinics which don't offer specialist treatment so the veteran still has to spend hours on the road and rent a motel room to see a specialist at a VA hospital while there may be doctors in the home town who could do the same treatment.

That's what happens to me in Key West. The excellent Miami VA is 150 miles away, a tough drive that I break into two days' travel time, and a \$130 motel stay, to have a comfortable trip. There should be a rule change to allow me to use the Choice Program if there is not a VA hospital within forty, or even eighty, miles.

When I finish my examination or treatment at the Carter Center, I drop by the in-house pharmacy and pick up my prescription that the speedy pharmacy staff fills as fast as any commercial drug store even though hundreds of veterans may receive medicines that morning. They will only charge me \$26 a month for my dabigatran blood thinner, not \$426 like the civilians have to pay.

"Thanks for the quick service!" I say to the druggist behind the pick-up window.

"Thanks for your service," he replies.

The VA can still improve, but it's pretty damn good for something as big as it is.



ALLEN MEECE WAS IN THE NAVY FROM 1962 - 66. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF TIN CAN, A FICTIONAL NOVEL ABOUT A TONKIN GULF INCIDENT AND IS AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM.



Me and the VA

LEON WENGRZYN

True Story.

1982. Deep in the jungles of Central America. I was sick. No energy to work the homestead. I walked to the road, caught a bus to the capital. A nurse did some tests. Told me I was severely low of blood. Hemoglobin 5. I needed transfusions right away. No blood bank in this country. I begged two pints from volunteers. Needed three more. No hay. Got on a plane to the States. Had time to think. I'm a Vietnam vet. I need help. Bingo. Go to the VA for the first time. What would they say? You were in the war we lost? We only help recent war vets? Go die somewhere else?

Local bus got me to the door of the VA hospital in Milwaukee at midnight. Hallelujah, they let me in.

Stayed a month. They saved my life.

Sure it was a mystery where my

blood went. I found the hazmat suits they wore on rounds pretty funny. Maybe I am contagious. They did tests. Then more tests and more of them. I didn't like the tube up my nose into my stomach but then it was necessary for the diagnosis. Bleeding hemorrhoids. Consider it the cost of shitting in an outhouse.

Hallelujah, the hazmat suits come off. People are friendly. I get two surgeries. I'm treated like a human being. I have nothing but good to say about the Veterans Administration. It is the way America should be.

Postscript: I went back to the homestead much happier and with my shit together.



LEON WENGRZYN WAS AN E3 IN DONG HA. HE NOW LIVES IN BELIZE.

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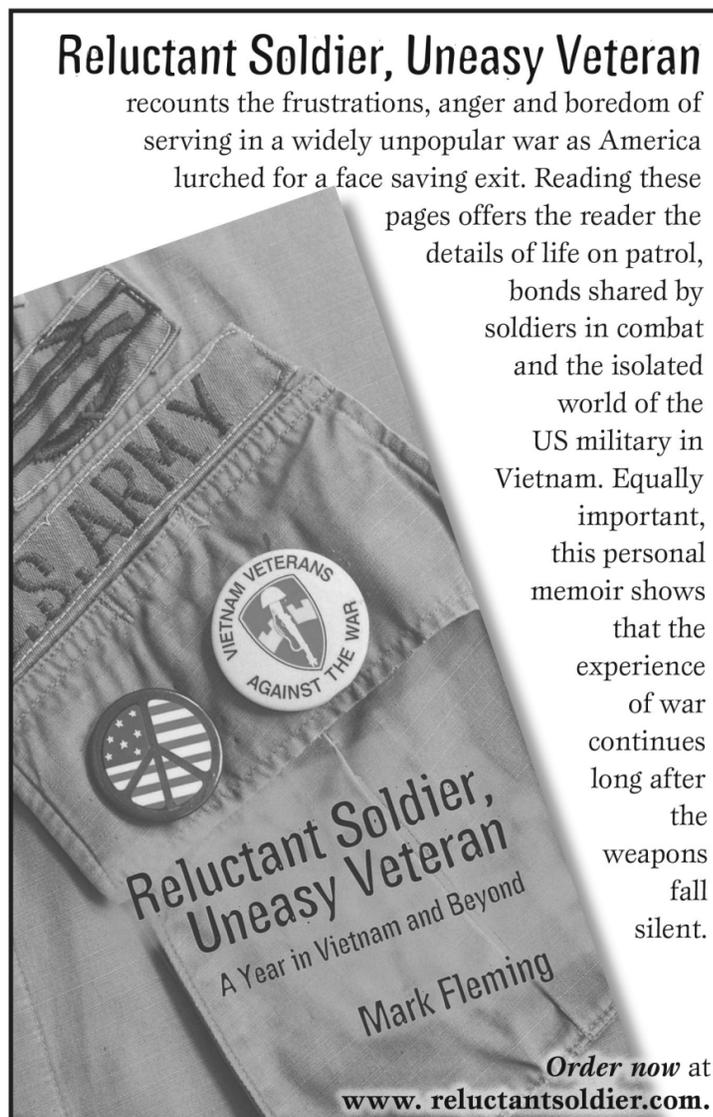
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Students Thank VVAW for Classroom Visit

Barry Romo of VVAW and Army Stieber of VFP visited Dave Stieber's Global Issues class at Kenwood Academy High School in March 2019. Below are reflections and thank yous from some of the students.

"Thank you for meeting with us on Tuesday both Barry and Army. I would like to thank you both for your time in service and your willingness to stand up and protest after you have seen the wrong that the country has done to both you and other countries. You have both shown strong bravery for your actions something that most don't even dare to join. I thank y'all for also coming to our class in order to teach the youth where we see and hear about your experiences that we

dread to be in the same situation." "Thank you Barry and Army for coming to our Global Issues class to talk to us about your war experience. Hearing what happened in the war from your experience, helps me better understand how the war went and how some of the soldiers were impacted by the war. After hearing both of you talk, the war wasn't easy and after it was over, it still continued in your mind. Thank you for taking time out of your day." "Thank you for coming to our class today and sharing your story. I'm grateful that we were able to be a therapy to you. I'm sorry for the things you had to endure but I hope that you know it was only for the purpose of where you are today. I hope you find

peace in yourselves at all points in life." "I appreciate how you shared some shameful information to us even though you could have kept it to yourself. I've learned so much about the war and what the soldiers have to go through due to your visit, and we be able to connect and empathize more with my cousin who is in the war." "Thank you to Barry and Army for taking time out of your day yesterday to come in and talk to our class. It's nice that you both are survivors of the Vietnam War. I liked that you two were both opposite from each other. But you guys agreed about peace. Thanks for your service!" "Thank you Barry and Army for sharing your experiences and letting

us get a first hand look at what war can do and how it can change people." "Thank you for being brave enough to share your experience to inform the youth of the devastating things that occurred during the war. Thank you for standing up against the injustice that occurred and for joining the peace movement so that we can benefit from what you have learned." "Thank you so much Barry and Army for sharing your stories with us. I think it's extremely courageous to talk about those experiences even though it's really hard and has affected your life in more ways than one. I really enjoyed listening and appreciate it so much."



National Veterans Art Museum (NVAM) Holds First Ever Triennial

KEVIN BASL

On May 3, 2018, veterans from around the country came to Chicago to share art, poetry, performances, and ideas. The Veteran Art Summit, the opening event of On War & Survival: National Veterans Art Museum Triennial, happened at three venues across the city: National Veterans Art Museum, Chicago Cultural Center, and DePaul Art Museum.

With a focus on the visual, literary, performative, and creative practices of veterans, the ongoing

NVAM Triennial explores the past century of war and survival, while challenging the perception that war is something only those who have served in the military can comprehend. Throughout history, art has provided a frame to create meaning out of the complicated experience of war, seek justice, and imagine reconciliation. The NVAM Triennial draws on this history to connect today's veteran artists with the history of veteran creative practices and their impact on

society over the past century. Funded in part by a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, five veteran curatorial fellows (Amber Hoy, Yvette Pino, Carlos Sirah, Edgar Gonzalez-Baeza, and myself), along with organizer Aaron Hughes and graduate students from the Museum and Exhibition Studies Program at the University of Illinois at Chicago, worked for over a year to make the Triennial and Summit happen. The Triennial continues until July

29, 2019. Visit the National Veterans Art Museum and the Chicago Cultural Center to see several galleries of veteran artwork. For more information, including a list of participating artists, visit: www.nvam.org/triennial.



KEVIN BASL IS A WRITER AND MUSICIAN LIVING NEAR ITHACA, NY. HE IS A MEMBER OF ABOUT FACE (IVAW) AND VETERANS FOR PEACE.



NVAM Triennial Promotional Collage. Top row, left to right: Rodney Ewing, Otto Dix, Jacob Lawrence. Bottom row, left to right: Jim Leedy, Jessica Putnam-Phillips, Ehren Tool.





Celebrating the Life of Terry J. DuBose, A Leader of VVAW in Texas

ALICE EMBREE AND RENEE DUBOSE

Terry J. DuBose passed away on October 29, 2018, at the age of 74. He was raised in the cotton country of Brownfield, Texas. He graduated from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas, knowing very little about the American War in Vietnam. Despite good grades and a senior year as student body president, he was told in job interviews to "come back with a draft deferment." In *Celebrating The Rag: Austin's Iconic Underground Newspaper*, Terry describes his journey to Vietnam and back:

"In August, 1966, I enlisted in the Army, and was brainwashed into volunteering for combat in Vietnam. [He deployed as a First Lieutenant.] After Vietnam and being discharged from the Army I moved to Austin, Texas, because if I still could not find a job, I could at least enroll at UT Austin under the GI Bill... I did get a job [at the] Texas Comptroller's office, in 1969. After the Kent State Massacre [in 1970], I left my desk and joined the protest march from the UT campus to downtown. Later I quit my job and hitchhiked to the West Coast, but by September 1970 I returned to UT... There was no 'spitting' at me, only concerned students wanting to understand my experience and the war."

Among those students who befriended Terry was Steve Russell. He had served in the Air Force as an enlisted man from 1964 to 1968 and took up the anti-war cause immediately upon being honorably discharged. Steve, who was in law school, was part of the vibrant circle of support Terry found in Austin. Here is his memory of Terry:

"The Vietnam War was an ugly operation, beginning to end, and the foolishness of stepping into the shoes of colonial masters just evicted is

crazy-making. Because it was so ugly, a lot of the public debate was as well. Terry DuBose conducted opposition politics on a whole other level, and by his example demonstrated his opponents were barbarians without using the term."

Terry first helped set up a draft-counseling center at the Methodist Student Center in Austin. The Methodists provided a mimeograph machine, and the University of Texas student government provided access to supplies. His first action, at the urging of a young airman, was anti-war leafletting at Bergstrom Air Force Base. Terry went on to become a very effective state-wide coordinator of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) between 1970 and 1972. He also served on the VVAW state-wide coordinating committee. Terry spent a lot of time talking to veterans across Texas and active-duty GIs at the Oleo Strut, the GI coffeehouse in Killeen, Texas, near Fort Hood.

In 1971 Terry learned from Randy Floyd at UT Arlington about a protest being planned in Washington, DC. In *Celebrating The Rag*, Terry describes working with Randy Floyd:

"Randy was a former US Air Force pilot who had testified at the Paris Peace Talks. He had contact with the VVAW, and a Unitarian Church in Arlington had loaned an old school bus to get all the veterans we could get to go to Washington for VVAW's Dewey Canyon III. When we returned to Texas, Randy moved to Austin, we formed the Texas VVAW. Larry Waterhouse and I were named co-Coordiators."

Texas VVAW worked with the staff and GIs at the Oleo Strut to silk-screen t-shirts and posters. When Jane Fonda, Donald Sutherland, and The FTA Show staged a benefit in Austin



Alan Pogue and Terry DuBose, October 13, 2017.

for the Oleo Strut, VVAW served as security, and then bartenders at a fundraising party.

After the April veterans' demonstration in Washington, DC in 1971, Terry returned to Texas to be on the front lines of a May anti-war demonstration at the LBJ Library dedication in Austin and traveled to Killeen later that month when Pete Seeger showed up to entertain GIs near Fort Hood.

Later in the fall of 1971, veterans staged a VVAW RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal) campaign. Terry also tells that story in *Celebrating The Rag*:

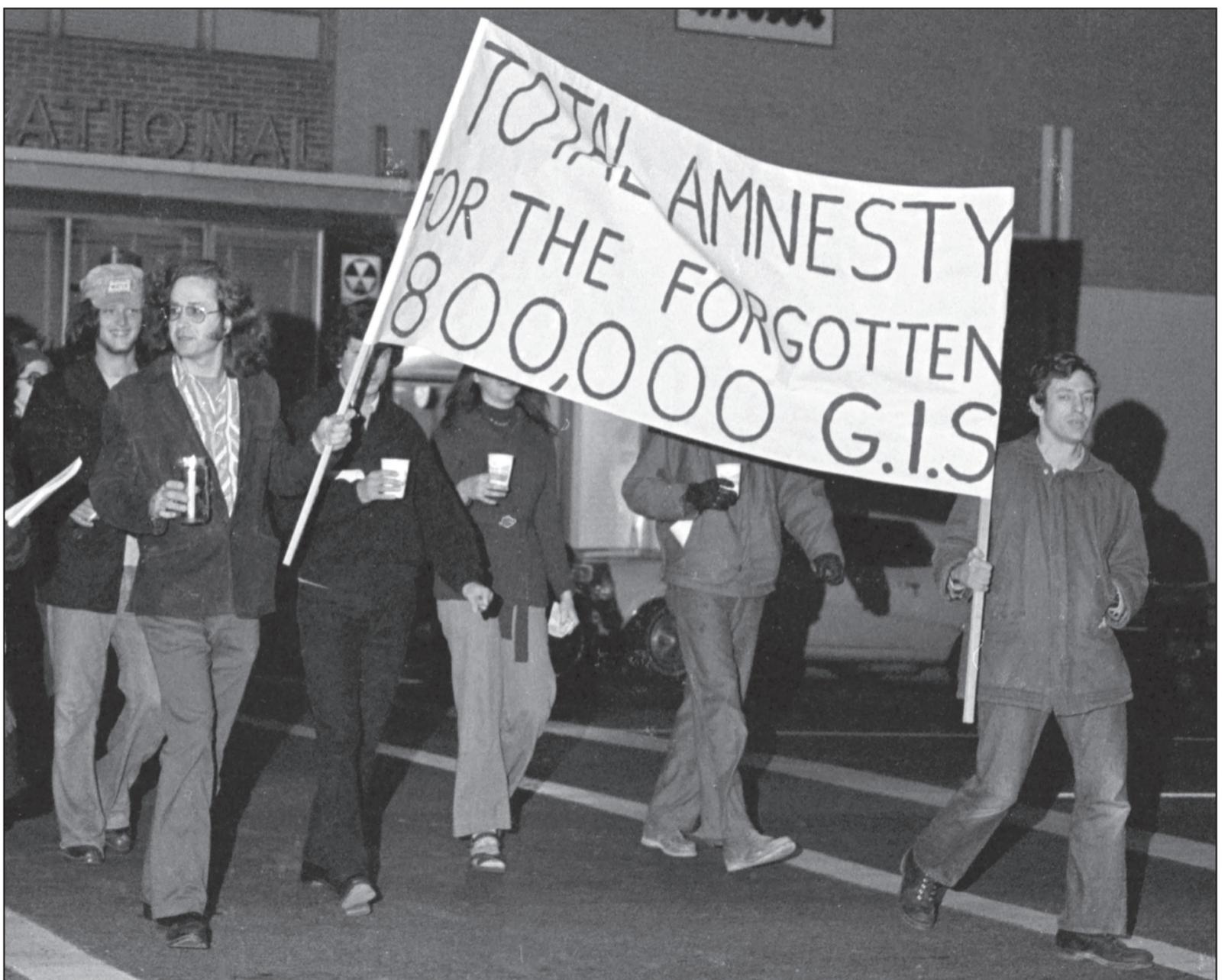
"The RAW march from Ft. Worth to Dallas, was fashioned after the original VVAW RAW march which was from Morristown, NJ, to Valley Forge in Pennsylvania in Sept. 1770. The Texas VVAW RAW march was guerrilla theater along the route from Ft. Worth through Arlington, Grand Prairie, into Dallas. VVAW and volunteers conducted 'Search and Destroy' operations with dramatic

questioning, screaming, and torture in parks, malls, and public places along the way; with a bivouac (campout) halfway through the route in a public park south of Arlington."

In 1972, Terry resigned his VVAW position. John Kniffin became the Texas VVAW Coordinator, leading VVAW until the end of that war. John and Bill Patterson of El Paso were both tried as part of the "Gainesville Eight," VVAW falsely accused of conspiracy to violently disrupt the 1972 Republican Convention in Miami. They were successfully defended by an Austin law collective, Simons, Cunningham, and Coleman. Both John and Bill died of Agent Orange-related liver cancer.

Terry J. DuBose helped organize the UT shuttle bus drivers into Amalgamated Transit Union 1549 before he began his studies in health science. He always said he was recouping his Karma. He must have

continued on page 11



Terry DuBose on left, holding banner and beer can.

Fred Wallace, RIP

MURIEL HOGAN

On February 22, 2018, my beloved partner Alfred Loren Wallace walked on. He had been sleeping for several days and peacefully slipped away. But while he was awake, he recognized me and other friends. He smiled when I played his favorite music: Django Reinhardt, Doc Watson, Whistlin' Alex Moore, the Band, and the Grateful Dead. The last thing Fred said to me was "I love you."

Fred grew up in Fresno in the San Joaquin Valley of California, the first child of Marvin and Edith Wallace. He and his siblings Marva, David, and Mary Sue enjoyed living on their family farm, where they grew raisins, and later pecans.

Fred went to Stanford University as a National Merit Scholar and earned a master's degree in German Language

and Literature. While working on his PhD, he taught at the University of Illinois Circle Campus in Chicago. But like many of our generation, our lives were disrupted by the war in Vietnam. Fred became a draft resister, writing to his draft board:

"Gentlemen: I will not report for induction today nor at any other time. Sincerely, Alfred L. Wallace."

He and other draft resisters started Omega Graphics, a print shop that produced anti-war and anti-draft materials for organizations including the Chicago Area Military Project and Chicago Area Draft Resisters. Fred's own federal case went through appeals and was rejected by the US Supreme Court, which decided it was "non cert." Fred won his case because his draft board wanted to punish him for his anti-war activities. Justice William O. Douglas said that this action impugned the good reputation of the Selective Service.

Fred moved from Chicago to Milwaukee in 1972, when he and I fell in love. From that first day right up to a few years ago, Fred and I had one long conversation. It would start as soon as we woke up, making jokes, talking politics, looking up birds, and arguing about anything we read in *The New York Times*. I will miss that conversation.

In the late 1970s, we got interested in computers through the Whole Earth Catalog and bought our first computer in 1983. We would sit at the keyboard side by side and take turns driving it. We performed for some years with Redwing, singing songs of labor unions and anti-war movements. We

enjoyed being members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War even though Fred had been a draft resister and I was an ex-Air Force brat. We helped VVAW research the health effects of Agent Orange. Later, we spent several years volunteering as patient escorts as part of the Milwaukee Clinic Defense Coalition, facing down vicious anti-abortion protesters.

Fred was never entirely healthy after his battle with viral encephalitis in 2006, but we had several good years before his dementia set in. Our last big trip was to Santa Fe, visiting wonderful museums, eating Mexican-style food, and driving through the mountains. We had good adventures closer to home, going to the Sheboygan art museum, walking around the Madison farmers market, and cooking large amounts

of enchiladas and pinto beans. We visited my sister Priscilla and her family often and became honorary grandparents to Payton, Dan, Sam, Tanner, and Tyler. Fred got so much joy from being "Papa Fred."

We made so many good friends over the years that Fred even enjoyed Milwaukee's snow and ice, although he'd grown up in the desert. In our lives together, we made our own sunshine. I will greatly miss Fred, but we shared 47 beautiful years, and I'll always love him madly.



MURIEL HOGAN IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER AND PART OF THE MILWAUKEE CHAPTER.



Fred and Muriel.



Fred at VVAW event, 1980.



Fred and Muriel at the VVAW Dewey Canyon IV Demonstration in Washington, DC, May 12, 1982.



Fred and Muriel (center) with the Milwaukee Chapter of VVAW at a Milwaukee campout.

Dan "Oakbear" Moeller (1951-2018)

JOHN ZUTZ

Dan "Oakbear" Moeller, a lifetime member of the Milwaukee Chapter of VVAW, died July 9, 2018, in Tomah, Wisconsin after a long illness. Born Daniel William Moeller in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on September 23, 1951, he was drafted into the Army. He told the Army he was a Conscientious Objector and served as a combat medic in Vietnam. After completing his military service, he went into nursing as a career, getting an LPN and later an RN.

Dan participated in many actions of the Milwaukee Chapter. He helped take over the VA Regional Office, he was a member of the flying squad that trashed recruiting billboards, and he traveled to Kent State to help protest the draft. Later, he provided the "Blessing of the Bock" to open the Milwaukee Beer Festival.

He embraced Paganism, taking the name "Oakbear," and married Sandy, also known as Morgan, in Milwaukee. As he became more active, he was affiliated with a variety of Pagan organizations. He became

a Pagan teacher, Wiccan priest, and Druid.

His gravestone is one of the first issued by the US Department of Veterans Affairs to be inscribed with an Awen, a Druid symbol.



JOHN ZUTZ IS A MILWAUKEE VVAW MEMBER.



The Extraordinarily Reverend Dan Moeller using a golden sickle to bless the beer at the 2006 Milwaukee Beer Festival.

Trauma

Suspended before time,
before primal,
in a realm before life,

I rise out of a dark deeper
than the absence of light,
colder than outer space.

Vaguely coming to
consciousness,
scarcely understanding
substance, light and heat,
I slowly remember body,
recollection rekindling
comprehension:

I AM ALIVE.

I open my eyes.
The void illuminates.
My skin feels heat.
I am cold and dark within,
a residue of my encounter
with death but,
alive.

—Gregory Ross

1967

The dudes ran all the way
from Harlem, chanting
"Hell no. We won't go!"
In Central Park
the white girls in white
blouses, no makeup, no earrings,
as instructed, stood
politely.

From a distant stage
the voice of protest
filled the sweet Spring air:
Immoral war
imperialist aggression
must be stopped. The crowd,
restless, raised
clenched fists.

In the end, the black boys
from Harlem were drafted:
the white girls, married,
live in fine houses.

—Christine Hague

For Those Not With Us

Time passes,
Friends fade.
Whatever the case is,
Love doesn't degrade.

Wearing dark glasses,
Standing in the shade.
Feelings surpasses,
Yet, here I stayed.

Know that I miss you,
Every single one.
Eyes wet not with dew,
Pain not undone.

Matters not what I do,
There's no place to run.
I can't change the view,
Love can't be undone.

—David Sandgrund

Celebrating the Life of Terry J. DuBose

continued from previous page

recouped it in spades before his death in October 2018. He was a pioneer in the field of diagnostic sonography, training at Harvard, Yale, Baylor, and the University of California, teaching at Austin's Seton Hospital, and then joining the faculty at the University of Arkansas.

When Terry retired from teaching, he resettled in Austin to be near his Austin family. In 2012, he traveled up to Killeen again to join soldiers from Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) as they marched in a Veterans Day event to advocate for the right to heal.

Terry also spent time with soldiers at Under the Hood, a GI coffeehouse in the tradition of the Vietnam-era Oleo Strut.

Steve Russell, the veteran turned judge and then law professor summed up Terry's character this way:

"Terry conducted himself with a quiet dignity I always envied. He was the antithesis of Trumpian politics, in both substance and style. He demonstrated that courage need not announce itself. He was the only man I ever knew who I could describe with the worn phrase 'an officer and a



gentleman' without irony."

Terry was an extraordinary husband, father, grandfather, brother, son, and human. His passion encompassed many things, but he was most proud of his involvement in VVAW.

Terry is survived by his sister, Betty, his wife, Lucy, his daughter, Renee, and his two grandchildren. A celebration of his life was held in

Austin on December 1, 2018. The Terry J. DuBose Scholarship Fund was established in his honor at the University of Arkansas for Medical Science.



RENEE DUBOSE IS TERRY'S DAUGHTER. ALICE EMBREE IS A LONG-TIME FRIEND AND DOES A LOT OF RAG RADIO STUFF.

Another Agent Orange Victim: In Memory of Norman (Bill) F. Williams Jr.

BEVERLY WILLIAMS

Norman F. Williams Jr., known to family, friends and anyone who met him as Bill, was born on July 17th, 1944 in Jackson, MS. When he was six weeks old, his family moved to Norman, OK and then at six years old, moved to Little Rock, AR. He grew up there and lived there until he joined the Marine Corps.

He was greatly influenced by both his parents. His mother was Cherokee Indian, and Bill spent a lot of time with her family growing up. Many of his beliefs were formed by those early years. His spirituality, sense of honor and obligation, and love of nature and all things natural were bred and ingrained in him from birth. His father was Welsh and a geologist. He served as State Geologist of Arkansas for almost 50 years. But more than that, he was a Lt. Colonel in the Army Reserve after a stint in the Army during WWII. His love of this country as well as his sense of duty and service were passed on to his son. While as most veterans he never spoke of the horrors, fears, and nightmares of wartime service, he did tell tales of the funny things, the adventures, and his pride in his service. Bill grew up knowing he owed his country his service.

As he was finishing high school, Vietnam was just heating up, and he expected to be drafted. Since he knew he would probably end up in the war, he decided to join the Marine Corps. His reasoning was if he was going, he might as well receive the best

training and survival skills available. He became a real Marine and was one until the day he died. Every Corps birthday, we raised a glass of whiskey to the Corps.

Since he had already had a job as a newspaper photographer, he received specialist training as a Corps photographer. Then he was sent to Cherry Point. For the next two years, he begged to be sent to Vietnam. He always maintained that he was no good as a stateside Marine. Finally, he was sent to Chu Lai. During his time there, he flew with the Korean Marines, flew missions with helicopter crews, traveled the jungles with the Chaplin and all the time, he was being exposed to Agent Orange. Although Vietnam signed his death warrant, he lived to tell his tales. However, the toll of his friends and fellow soldiers who didn't make it home and the many who've died since then from the effects of exposure to Agent Orange weighed heavy on him. He carried them in his heart and nightmares.

After his tour, he came home and left the Corps. He married and had 3 sons. He went back to newspaper photography and from there into TV. However, reporting on crime and bad situations didn't satisfy his need to find a reason for why he survived. He decided to become a policeman, which allowed him to take action, feel the adrenaline rushes, carry a sidearm, and be of service. But never being politically correct, he left the Force



after trying to arrest the father-in-law of the Chief of Police for racketeering. He eventually went into the computer business and worked for himself for almost 30 years, during which he was married and divorced twice. In 1991, he married his third wife, Beverly, who was with him through the rest of his life.

By the time of the Iraq invasion, Bill had become a passionate voice of peace. He knew personally the cost of wars being waged for profit, greed, egos, and power. He spoke out anywhere someone asked him to do so. His Marine Corps boots from Vietnam traveled with the Friends "Eyes Wide Open" exhibit. He joined and was active with VVAW and many other groups who opposed war. He was unapologetic for his stance against "corporate" wars and the loss of young lives for no good reason.

But Vietnam was always with him. In 2010, it caught up with him, and he was unable to function normally. Flashbacks, nightmares, paranoia, and guilt flooded him. With a lot of effort, he finally went to the VA, and they began helping him. With the diagnosis of PTSD, the VA got him counseling, medication, and health care. Then they found prostate cancer which is known as an Agent Orange disease, and he received disability for it and PTSD. A year later they found IPF (Interstitial Pulmonary Fibrosis), but it wasn't on the approved Agent Orange list at that time. He went to work to prove it was because other

Vietnam vets were turning up with it and it is now being considered as an Agent Orange killer on a case by case basis. All the time, the Fayetteville, AR VA was doing all they could to take care of him including getting the latest and best medications for him. Then in 2018, they discovered he had Stage 4 lung cancer, which is on the list of Agent Orange effects. Two months later, Bill died on June 26th, 2018, of lung cancer. Agent Orange claimed another victim and my husband that day.

If you weren't there, you can't understand it.

The fear. The loneliness. The sadness.

If you weren't there, you can't understand it.

The pain. The lives. Wasted. Gone.

Old wounds close but never heal. They bleed again and again with thoughts

Of young men going.

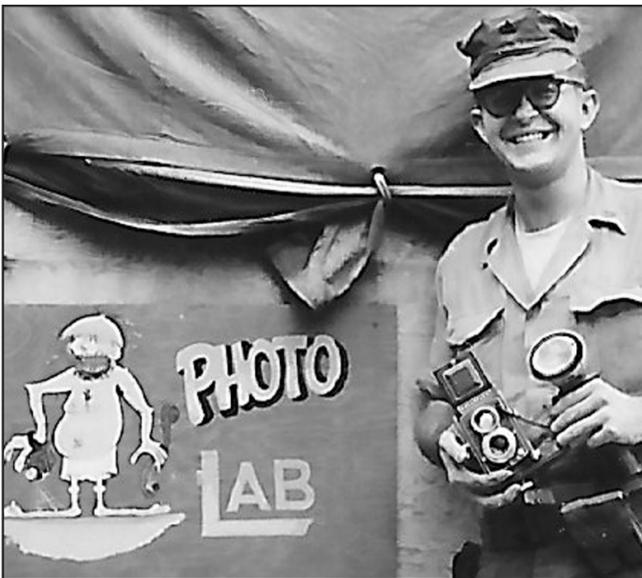
These wounds-

They never go away.

—Norman F. (Bill) Williams Jr.
Corporal, US Marine Corps



BEVERLY WILLIAMS WAS BILL'S WIFE. SHE RUNS THE INN AT BELLA VISTA IN ARKANSAS, WHERE SHE IS A GOLF PROFESSIONAL AND INSTRUCTOR AT THE B. WILLIAMS GOLF SCHOOL.



VA - Fayetteville 2012

Here is what your dollars bought,
Here is what your New World Order caught
In its snare of grandiose dreams,
The only tangible result it seems.

Come look, we have it all for you,
Come see the men with metal arms,
See the man with just one shoe
The other leg gone for glory's chorus.

Watch them shuffle wearing their caps
From World War Two, Korea, Vietnam,
Iraq, Afghanistan, these are your heroes,
The broken points of your conquering spears.

These are your brave young men and women,
Spent in the name of your greedy wars.
Not yet dead enough to bury,
Whose hearts died with their youthful dreams.

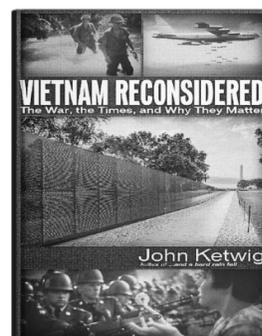
Come look, I dare you, if you can
See what you've bought with your dollars.
Feel proud of your bumper stickers-
This is America, love it or leave it
Or maybe fix it.

—Norman (Bill) F Williams Jr
Corporal, US Marine Corps

34 years and 27 Printings Later, John Ketwig is at it Again!

From the acclaimed author of *...and a hard rain fell*,
announcing:

Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times, and Why They Matter



"A thoughtful, timely, and beautifully written book that every American should read if we are to ever learn from the disaster of Vietnam." Ron Kovic, author of Born on the Fourth of July

"Reading this book, I got angry all over again. The only thing we learn from history is that we don't learn from history. Even those who fought in Vietnam will learn much." Bobby Muller, founder of Vietnam Veterans of America and cofounder of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

Available about April 1st from Amazon, Barnes & Noble, or your favorite bookstore.

Autumn's Story

AUTUMN W.

When I was a little girl I would stay a couple weeks out of the summer with my grandparents. I always enjoyed this because my grandparents had a nice plot of land, a garden and a little stream that ran through their backyard. I could act like a wild child, run around the yard naked and no one would care. I also enjoyed going through my grandparents photo albums and my grandmothers sentimental items. I came across my grandfathers Vietnam yearbooks, as I like to call them. It was a book of photos from everyone in his unit just like a high school yearbook. He would sit me on his lap and tell me stories about about everyone in those books. His stories were full of heroism and bravery. All of the men in my family served in the military, most were all combat veterans. I had no idea what war truly was at this time.

I told my grandfather, one day I'm going to be a pilot in the Air Force. He said no you're not! He said you need to do something else with your life, enough of our family has served this country. I always assumed my grandfather tried to deter from joining the military because I was a female. As I grew older my grandmother would take me on post with her to shop at the commissary and on the way I'd watch the men do their PT. I told my grandma, I can't wait to grow up and marry a man just like those men. She said, NO, no you're not. I couldn't understand why she wouldn't want me to marry a man that was strong, brave, good looking and intelligent. The last summer I stayed with my grandparents I found a trash bag full of letters in my grandma's closet. They were letters from my grandfather while he was in Vietnam. They were letters full of fear but also full of love. The letters were from a man I didn't recognize.

It would be years later before I'd truly understand these letters. Fast forward to 2003. I got heavily involved in politics. I was campaigning and volunteering for Senator John Kerry's presidential run. During this time I started reading a lot about Vietnam, because I needed to know everything I could about this man I was volunteering for. I had finally

brushed the surface for the reasoning behind my grandfathers wishes that I didn't join the military.

Fast forward to 2006. Through a mutual friend I met a man that was being deployed to Balad, Iraq. He wanted a pen pal. I was completely against the war with Iraq and I had already lost a friend due to suicide who had been deployed to Iraq. I wasn't sure that at the time I was up for this pen pal relationship because at the time I was managing two businesses and raising my daughter Rheanna on my own. Mike got a hold of my phone number and he called me from Balad. We talked for 3 hours that night. He was vulgar, loud, obnoxious but in his own way he was also charming. He would call me a few times a week and sometimes everyday. We started to fall in love via emails and phone calls. I actually felt like this was the perfect beginning to a relationship because all we could do was have long conversations. This went on for 9 months. As the 10th month approached, his best friend Eric Smallwood was killed by an IED blast in front of him and everything changed. His personality became darker and he was afraid. I finally started to understand those letters my grandfather had written to my grandma.

When death is breathing down your back it brings out a lot of emotions invoked by fear. Mike came home in August of 2007 for 2 weeks R&R. Those two weeks were some of the best experiences of my life to date. We made a lot of plans and I had finally found that man I told my grandmother I was going to marry. I looked up to Mike with the utmost respect, he was funny, strong, protective and handsome. I couldn't wait for his time in Iraq to end. In September 2007 he came home, his time in the military would be up in just a couple months so we didn't have to worry about him being redeployed and I thought that he could focus on getting mental and physical help, something I told him he would need after the experience he had just been through. The first couple of months

our relationship was close to perfect. I thought back on those conversations with my grandmother and couldn't even dream of the reasonings behind her earlier warnings. I was genuinely happy for the first time in my life. The only thing that worried me is that Mike had not signed up for help. He kept telling me he wanted to live and have fun and that he would get the help he needed he just needed time to live a little first. I was pregnant, we were getting married, life was in full swing.

On November 2nd 2007 Mike sat me down the day before our wedding and told me he had re-enlisted before he left Iraq and that there were rumors that he would be deployed to Afghanistan. I was so upset, he lied to me. On this day we had our first fight and he strangled me with a telephone cord. I was in shock, I couldn't believe what he had done to me. Was this really the man I was about to marry? He begged me to forgive him and told me he would get help and that he was just suffering from the traumas of war. I married him on November 3, 2008. On that day, I think I signed my own death certificate. Mike's PTSD and TBI would consume him and our relationship began to deteriorate. For months the abuse escalated, he refused to get help and his family ignored everything that was going on. They pretended as if everything was ok until the day he tried to cut my throat and beat me with a baseball bat, the fight would result in the early birth of our daughter. That fight was my fault, I had apparently provoked him and I needed to be more understanding.... This according to his family.

After Jayden was born I assumed life would be different but it wasn't. It was so much worse. I told almost no one what had been going on for the last 9 months but I knew I couldn't raise my kids in that environment so I ran away in the middle of the night. I had hoped if I left that I could get him some forced help from afar. I remember sitting at my mom's dining table talking to his CO who was apologetic but his advice to me was to run and hide with my children and they would take care of their soldier.

They sent him deployment papers instead. My marriage had become my worst nightmare but to the military Mike had become the ideal soldier. Before they could ship him off he was medically discharged due to TBI and PTSD.

The next 3 years would be a rollercoaster of threats and violence even though I filed for protection orders and against my own heart's advice, I filed for divorce. The day the order of protection expired he called me, for months we talked and I actually considered going back to him and there was a 3 month calm before the storm until I made him angry one day and he threatened to kill my entire family. One month later Mike ended his own life on June 20, 2011, just 10 days after his 26th birthday. After all of the shit that we had been through it wasn't until I was sitting across from his casket that I finally realized why my grandmother had warned me.

In my family abuse was a common occurrence, but it was something people in my family didn't talk about and it took me living through it myself to understand that it's ok to talk about abuse, it's ok to seek help. It's been said that I shouldn't stain his memory, but that's not what I'm doing. Unless we all speak out and hold the government accountable for the effects of war on our families, nothing will change. My story is just one of thousands more just like it. So please, if someone shares with you their story don't mistake it for some sort of disrespect against a veteran, listen to them and encourage them to be honest and to seek help.



AUTUMN W. IS THE FORMER WIFE OF ARMY SPC. MIKE WILLFOND FROM THE 875TH EN BN OUT OF PARAGOULD AR. SHE'S ALSO THE DAUGHTER, SISTER, NIECE AND GRANDDAUGHTER OF OTHER COMBAT VETERANS. SHE ENJOYS WRITING, THERAPEUTIC ART, AND VOLUNTEERING FOR ANTI-RECRUITMENT.



STUCK

GREGORY ROSS

I AM STUCK IN HELL.

On occasion I escape to Purgatory. On rare occasions I slip into Heaven. I made it out of Limbo when I was Baptized. Later the Catholic Church decommissioned Limbo. Seems fair. Why punish unbaptized babies and righteous people born before Jesus?

And why locate Limbo on the outskirts of Hell, on the edge of damnation? I could see putting Purgatory there, since it is where those who die in the Grace of God go to expiate their sins by suffering. My definition of Purgatory: life on this Physical Plane. That does not

work with the die part of the official definition but, I long ago let go of caring about official.

A visit to Heaven is when the woman I love, loved me back enough to marry me and when our son was born and again when our grandson was born and again when our other grandson was born.

It is a hearty laugh, a beautiful sunny day with a cooling breeze, butterflies and bees in an explosion of flowers in our yard, a soaking rain during a drought, writing a piece that pleases, a well executed meal made for family and friends, a good night's sleep, then rising with minimal back

pain, waking, reaching out to my wife and hearing her sigh.

Hell is War and the aftermath of that experience: homelessness, incarceration, anger, isolation, alienation, nightmares, waking fears, physical wounds, psychic wounds, moral wounds, destruction of normalcy, military sexual trauma, depleted uranium poisoning, Agent Orange poisoning, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, brain trauma injury, survivors guilt, startle response, suicide and worst of all, a profound loss of the ability to hold joy.

Our grandsons are an intense source of delight but, when away from them my levels of fear for their safety,

their future, abound. All of which I still feel for their father, our son.

HELL IS WAR STUCK INSIDE MY SOUL.



GREGORY ROSS WAS IN THE NAVY, SERVING IN MOROCCO, SIX DAY WAR (1967), PHILIPPINES (1968), AND VIETNAM, 7TH FLEET, GUN LINE (1969). PUBLISHED IN ANTHOLOGY: "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE," EDITED BY MAXINE HONG KINGSTON.

The Positive Power of Dissent

PAUL NICHOLS

The front cover feature article of the May/June 2006 Disabled American Veteran (DAV) magazine began with the following quote: "In October 1929 the stock market crashed, 40 percent of the paper values of common stock crashed with it, and the nation was soon plunged into its greatest economic depression." Banks failed, businesses shuttered, farmers' crop prices fell, homes were foreclosed on, unemployment spread, and suicide rates mounted. The American people grew destitute as the economy plummeted.

The Great Depression wasn't the main focus of the DAV piece. However, it provided the impetus for bringing to light *The March of the Bonus Army*, a moving 30-minute PBS documentary chronicling thousands of World War I veterans who demonstrated in Washington, DC. The film, partially funded by the

DAV, first aired on TV around Memorial Day 2006. It contains archival photographs and newsreel footage, music of the period, and powerful interviews. The documentary is still available, and I urge anyone interested in this relatively unrevealed saga in our country's history to check it out.

Like so many US citizens, veterans and their families were impoverished. Desperate times acted as the catalyst for World War I veterans, including thousands who had been drafted, to actively seek the compensation Congress had authorized in 1924 for economic losses incurred while they were in the military. The bill Congress approved stipulated that such bonuses would not be redeemed until 1945. "Bonus" was the derogatory term used by opponents of the legislation. This ridiculous redemption limitation meant that many veterans would be dead by that

time. It was referred to by vets as the "Tombstone Bonus."

In the spring of 1932, a few hundred veterans marched to Washington hoping to initiate the timely issuance of the promised bonuses. This group was known as the Bonus Expeditionary Force, a takeoff from the formation of troops sent to fight in France designated as the American Expeditionary Force. By that summer nearly 45,000 men women and children had descended on Washington, setting up camps near the US Capitol Building. Some politicians viewed the growing mass as an unruly mob, an invasion that would incite social disorder—maybe even a revolutionary threat.

Republican President Herbert Hoover argued that a communist takeover was in play. He ordered Army Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur to raze the massive encampment (known as "Hooverville") and disperse the vets and their families. To no avail, Major Dwight Eisenhower advised MacArthur not to attack the vets. In late July 1932, Major George Patton led the effort, sending hundreds of infantrymen, some on horseback, armed with bayoneted rifles, machineguns and gas grenades. Six tanks entered the fray to support the cavalry.

A violent assault ensued as Patton's troops and the police attacked the peaceful inhabitants' camp, while Hoover watched from a White House window. Military forces threw gas grenades, set fires and opened fire with rifles. Over 100 demonstrators were injured, several were jailed, two were killed, and their makeshift shelters were destroyed during the intervention.

Public sentiment was highly supportive toward the tent city demonstrators. The Veterans of Foreign Wars organization urged early federal payment of the money owed to the veterans. Franklin D. Roosevelt won the 1932 presidential election by a landslide. FDR helped thousands of war veterans find jobs through the popular Civilian Conservation Corps work program enacted early in 1933

under his New Deal initiatives.

During 1936, four million World War I veterans received their long-awaited bonuses. This led to the eventual enactment of the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the GI Bill.

This story brings to mind the myriad demonstrations during my lifetime, many of which have brought about positive change. Included are those connected to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, opposition to President Reagan's Nicaraguan Contra war in the 1980s, the massive anti-war marches of the 1960s to early 1970s during the Johnson and Nixon administrations, and both Bush wars against Iraq to name a few. Key to the necessity to protest has been fear, racism, arrogance, and lies promoted by those in seats of power.

Peaceful expression of opposition has never been more vital than since the 2016 election of President Tweet. All of the reasons I've mentioned to reject the current president's actions stare us starkly in the face. Hatred, insensitivity, selfishness, and others can be added.

Two recent monumental demonstrations have taken place in Washington, DC, and across our nation: the 2017 Women's March and this year's March for Our Lives. Smaller ones erupt regularly due to valid concerns.

The president's alarmist pronouncements against those who question or disagree with him are subjected to his wrath. Similar to Hoover, expressions of "mob" and "invasion" are cast on a daily basis. The commander-in-tweet hurls the words "socialists," "fake news" and "witch hunt" as his followers swoon with approval.

Protest was how the United States began and, with elections, are essential agents for change.



PAUL NICHOLS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN AND LIFE MEMBER OF THE DISABLED AMERICAN VETERAN (DAV).



Veterans encampment known as "Hooverville".



Body Count is the Wrong Statistic

AL WELLMAN

Many of us remember the emphasis on enemy body counts as the primary measure of military success during the Vietnam War. Body count of US soldiers or citizens seems to be the most widely used basis for comparing our nation's losses during historical conflicts, although economists may correlate the rise in national debt to periods of warfare. Economists have been willing to integrate consideration of economic benefits of victory to obtain a more balanced perspective. Perhaps we should similarly consider a broader view of human resources.

Infantry firefights begin with the entire team focused on damaging the enemy; but as soon as members of the team are hit, team focus is distracted by efforts to assist the wounded. The mathematics of team effective

strength are minus one for each team member with immediately fatal injuries, and minus two or more for each team member with temporarily disabling wounds requiring medical assistance and transport or protection from enemy fire.

The human resources focus of strategic warfare is similar. Each person killed represents the loss of one effective member of a nation's workforce, while each person disabled is similarly removed from the workforce with the removal of additional members of the workforce from other occupations to assist the disabled. While each death represents a loss through the anticipated productive years until retirement, the requirement for assistance (including care of those with emotional disabilities arising

from combat or from the death or disabilities of loved ones) often lasts significantly longer than the duration of hostilities and may extend past retirement through old age. Aside from ignoring perceived responsibility for the collateral damage to civilians on our foreign battlefields, those who advocate overseas warfare to avoid battlefield damage within our borders fail to appreciate the cost-effectiveness of our enemies' strategic objective of sending wounded soldiers home.

Does military emphasis on body armor increase our strategic losses to reduce citizen objections to overseas warfare? Unprotected extremities remain vulnerable while soldiers wear helmets and chest armor. In addition to projectile damage, improvised explosive devices (IEDs)

generate shock wave accelerations capable of detaching extremities or inflicting brain injury even when acceleration doesn't sever the spine. What are the long-term consequences of converting battlefield deaths to battlefield survivors with amputated limbs and/or brain injuries?

Most Americans without wounded family members will see and understand less than half of the picture so long as military briefings and news reports focus on death statistics and forget or ignore the rest of the story.



AL WELLMAN IS A VIETNAM COMBAT VETERAN WHOSE NEPHEW AND COUSIN HAVE SERVICE RELATED DISABILITIES.

Thank You for Your Service: Now Get Lost

SALLY-ALICE THOMPSON

A young man who has lived throughout his childhood in the US and has no memory of life in any other country, is approached by a Marine recruiter. He is given to understand that if he signs up for military service, he will become a real American. Wishing to leave behind the stigma of being undocumented, he signs on the dotted line, takes an oath to protect the Constitution, and after a few months training, is deployed to Afghanistan. He takes some shrapnel when a bomb explodes near his encampment. His tour of duty over, he returns home and attempts to resume civilian life,

fighting the demons of PTSD. He marries and fathers a son. After an evening of drinking, he becomes embroiled in a fight. Falling back on his violence training in the military, he physically attacks his opponent. The police arrive, he's taken into custody and charged with assault and battery. Given ten minutes with a public defender, he is found to be guilty. ICE somehow hears of his conviction, comes and takes him into custody. He is shocked and profoundly disappointed when he hears that NO, he is not a citizen, and NO, his military combat service and his purple heart do

not make him a US citizen. Leaving his weeping wife standing on the floor of the courtroom, he is escorted, in shackles, to the airport, to be sent to the country of his birth.

Variations of the above scenario have actually happened, over, and over. Undocumented young people are recruited (coerced?) into fighting in our War on Terror, place their bodies in harm's way, spending valuable years of their young lives, and risking even the end of life. Then, if they make a poor choice, as many young people do, they are thanked for their service by deportation. Former

American military service members are languishing in many countries, where they may not have any family or other connections. A large number of them are in Central America and Mexico.



SALLY-ALICE THOMPSON AND HER HUSBAND DON THOMPSON (DECEASED) FOUNDED THE VETERANS FOR PEACE CHAPTER 63 IN ALBUQUERQUE, NM. SALLY-ALICE IS A WWII NAVY VETERAN. SHE AND DON ARE LONG-TIME ACTIVISTS FIGHTING FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE. SALLY REMAINS ACTIVE AND COMMITTED AT AGE 95.

We Have to Speak the Truth

PATRICK FINNEGAN

I read a piece in *The New York Times* the other day. It was a piece about a guy looking into his grandfather's stories about the Korean war. His grandfather claimed to be in a major tank battle on Okinawa in the spring of 1945. There was blood, guts, entrails, death, and defecation everywhere and there was Gran-Pop right in the middle of everything, killing zips and pulling grenade pins with his teeth. Gran-Pop was a miserable son-of-a-bitch and nobody missed him when he died.

He use to get drunk and beat Gramma and anyone else he had control over on a regular basis. Besides Gramp's tales of unequalled heroism, usually from him, all this guy heard was what a mean bastard gramps was and it was all because of the shit he went thru in the "Big One." This guy decided to look into his Gramp's war and found a whole different story. Turns out Gramps was assigned to the Army tank battalion that suffered horrific losses one murderous day on Okinawa in 1945. The problem as far as his stories go is that Gramps got assigned to the battalion a month after that terrible day. Gramps heard stories and adopted the story's reality as his own. He went off to the war as a prick and came back the same.

Many years ago in the spring of 1980, I went to a local American Legion Post that was hosting a DAV presentation about the problems and possible solutions to the just emerging Agent Orange problems. I met a vet there that claimed to be old VVAW and also a paratrooper grunt, same as myself. He told me about the forming meetings that were happening for a new Vietnam Veterans organization—Vietnam Veterans of America. He mentioned Bobby Mueller as the founder of VVA. I had pushed Bobby up Collins Blvd. back in August of 1972, so I figured I'd check out this

VVA. I go to the meetings and become one of the 8 founders of one of VVA's most powerful chapters. That's a whole separate story.

Turns out the vet I ran into at the DVA Agent Orange session was a wife beater. He'd get drunk, beat his wife, and terrorize his two young children. As a chapter we demanded DD214's from all the chapter officers. This wife beater kept coming up with lame reasons why he couldn't produce a DD 214. He got really plastered. Beat his wife and hung himself in his low ceilinged basement. I had to go retrieve chapter paperwork from his house. We'd just buried him and his wife was still showing bruises from his final beating of her. She told me that he was doctoring his DD 214 because he was embarrassed by all his valorous awards.

One of my values to the newly formed VVA chapter was my Army trained clerical ability to decipher Military paperwork. If the wife beater was what he said he was, his DD 214 would give some indications to back up his story. If you are an airborne grunt, your DD214 should somewhere have your MOS as an 11B p series. Your rank would fill in the blank before the p that designated your parachute qualified status. Either a 1,2,3,4, etc. My MOS's started as an 11B10. Anyway, I knew paperwork. The DD 214 I got from the self-claimed jumping grunt showed that he was a non-jumping wheeled vehicle mechanic with no valorous awards. He wasn't a bad guy, but he wasn't a good guy. He obviously was troubled.

If nothing else, we as Vietnam Veterans have to be honest about what we did in the war. If you spent your year getting a tan and humping Saigon bar girls. Stand up and claim it. Let America know that Vietnam wasn't a land filled with suicidal 5 year olds

with grenade laden shoe-shine boxes. I did both. I humped 40 lbs of canned belted M-60 ammo up and down the Central Highlands. I also spent 2-3 hours a day pushing papers from one desk to another and the rest of my day playing basketball, swimming, smoking dope and eating very cheap, very tasty hamburgers at the An Khe snack shack. It was two opposite ends of a confusing universe.

You come back home and people want to know what it was like. They have their preconceived ideas and your reality doesn't ring true. You can tell them what they want to hear. You can drop the issue. Or else you tell them some Ia Drang level of shit that they definitely ain't ready to hear and you don't know how to tell.

My oldest son had a high school class on Lt. Calley's trial and sentence. Mike, my son, came home with the idea that Calley spent 20 years at hard labor in a federal prison. That's where his high school history wrapped up the Calley My Lai episode. I told him that the fable of 20 years at hard labor was Calley's sentence. Calley didn't spend a day at hard labor anywhere. The bottom line is he spent 3 years at house arrest in a two bedroom officer house at Fort Benning, Georgia. A base that held parades in his honor while he was serving his Hard Labor sentence after being convicted of the premeditated first degree murders of 22 unarmed Vietnamese civilians. Calley ran down a Vietnamese toddler who crawled out of a pile of dead and dying friends, relatives and neighbors and tried to escape back to the non-existent safety of his thatched home. He ran the kid down. Grabbed the kid, brought the child back to the heap of death, threw the kid on the pile and put a burst into him. This was all testified to by many people in open court. Calley spent not a day in prison. That's not my America.

We have to speak the truth. Painful as it may be. The truth is the truth. Whether people want to hear it or not. America lied to us. It used and abused us. We were chumps. The powers that be took our good intentions and used them for not good reasons. Sad but so very, very true. Vietnam Veteran suicide rates are off the charts and I believe that a major factor contributing to that reality is the lack of truth that has been spoken about Our War. No matter how far to the right you go, you know that war was wrong. How can the most technologically advanced nation our planet has ever seen fight a war against a people living for the most part in homes made out of local vegetation and live in communities around a hand drawn communal well, and say this war is a just war.

The dust settles, you're home for awhile. No one is speaking the truth and the demons are running amok in your head. All of a sudden a single round, a rope tied, a jump from a chair seems like a quick solution. I had the opportunity back in the early 80's to hand over my own hand written apology to Nyugen Co Thach, a senior official of the United Vietnamese Government. My older brother Dennis was killed on the last day of his 4th tour, 10/31/72. I never blamed the Vietnamese and told them so in my letter. My family at that time had come around to not blaming the Vietnamese for Dennis's death. I recommend a personal apology to any vet still troubled by the war. It may not cure everything but I guarantee that just the fact of writing an apology will quiet some of the demons.



PATRICK FINNEGAN, 3RD PLATOON, D COMPANY 1/503RD 173 RD ABN BDE., USA 8/1/66-10/4/68.

Commander-in-Chief Shares War Stories With the Troops

BONE SPURS TO THE RIGHT, BONE SPURS TO THE LEFT,



Dec 27 2018 (8988)

DANZIGER
The Rutland Herald
Washington Post Writers Group

Remembering Jeff Sharlet and Vietnam GI

MARC LEVY

Jeff Sharlet (1942–1969), a Vietnam veteran, was a leader of the GI resistance movement during the Vietnam War and the founding editor of *Vietnam GI*, considered the most influential early anti-war paper, distributed to tens of thousands of GIs, many in Vietnam.

In 1961, Sharlet enlisted in the Army and requested training at the Army Security Agency (ASA), a communications intelligence outfit. However at the Army Language School, he was bumped into the Vietnamese language course, and in 1963 Sharlet was sent to the Philippines as a Vietnamese translator/interpreter monitoring Vietnam People's Army radio traffic.

Through an FOIA request, I obtained two pages from Sharlet's Official Military Personnel File. One page is partially redacted. It's likely that much in his record is classified.

In Vietnam, Sharlet was part of a secret team which monitored signals related to the US-backed South Vietnamese Army coup against Ngo Dinh Diem. These intercepts and other sensitive intel were analyzed by the

NSA. During this time, Sharlet began to doubt the US mission in Vietnam.

Sharlet later provided communications support for commando ops in North Vietnam and was assigned to a Marine intel unit for LLRP patrols. By the time his tour ended, Sharlet had seen enough political corruption and ARVN incompetence, often compounded by US military advisors, to become thoroughly disillusioned with US involvement in what he considered a Vietnamese civil war.

In 1964, Sharlet returned to Indiana University to study Political Science. In 1965, as the war escalated, Sharlet joined Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and helped organize demonstrations against campus visits from Richard Nixon, General Maxwell Taylor, General Lewis Blaine Hershey, and President Lyndon Baines Johnson, among others.

At IU, Sharlet sought a broad outlet for the anti-war sentiment held by many GIs in Vietnam. In 1967, he joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) and sacrificed his graduate studies to launch the first GI-run anti-war paper addressed to the active military. He named it *Vietnam GI*.

The broadside quickly became a success among servicemen stateside, and in Vietnam, soldiers and sympathetic unit mail clerks helped circulate the free paper surreptitiously. Overseas demand for *Vietnam GI* soared to 30,000 copies by fall 1968. Letters-to-the-editor indicated that single copies passed through many hands. In August, a separate "stateside" edition was launched.

While working on *Vietnam GI*, to support it, Sharlet traveled the country,



seeking donations from wealthy individuals sympathetic to his cause.

The success of *Vietnam GI* and the growing GI anti-war movement led to national TV coverage for Sharlet; the paper was featured in *Esquire*, *The New York Times*, *AP* and *NEA* newswire services, and on *NBC Nightly News*.

In early 1969, a medical problem first experienced in Vietnam resurfaced, and Sharlet underwent surgery for kidney cancer. He died on June 16, 1969, at age 27.

A number of scholars of the Vietnam anti-war movement have written about Jeff Sharlet and *Vietnam GI*, including Andrew E. Hunt, *The Turning: A History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (1999); David Cortright, *Soldiers in Revolt: GI Resistance During the Vietnam War* (reissued 2005); Bob Ostertag, *People's Movements/People's Press* (2006); and a new middle school text, *The American Journey: Modern Times* (2009).

Most recently, in 2012, the Jeff Sharlet Memorial Award, the first

literary prize for military veterans, was inaugurated at the University of Iowa.

The most dramatic tribute has been the award-winning documentary, *Sir! No Sir!* (2005), on the Vietnam GI anti-war movement. The film has been screened nationwide and was shown on the *Sundance Channel*, where it was co-dedicated to Sharlet, as the director David Zeiger put it, "for starting it all."

Sources for this article: Wikipedia, <http://jeffsharlet-and-vietnamgi.com.yolasite.com/>, *Vietnam GI* (June 1970) *Wisconsin Historical Society*, and the *Monthly Review: Vietnam and the Soldier's Revolt*.



MARC LEVY WAS AN INFANTRY MEDIC WITH DELTA 1-7 FIRST CAVALRY, VIETNAM/CAMBODIA IN 1970. HIS WEBSITE IS MUSICIN THE GREEN TIME.COM. HIS BOOKS INCLUDE *HOW STEVIE NEARLY LOST THE WAR AND OTHER POSTWAR STORIES*; *DREAMS, VIETNAM; AND OTHER DREAMS*.



VVAW in the New York Veterans Day Parade, November 11, 2018.



VVAW & IVAW Chicago Veterans Day event, November 11, 2018.



A Review of Earth Songs II: Poems of Love, Loss and Life

W. D. EHRHART (REVIEWER)

Earth Songs II: Poems of Love, Loss and Life
by Jan Barry
(lulu.com, 2018)

If Vietnam Veterans Against the War were reconstituted as Vietnam Veteran Poets Against the War, Jan Barry would be its hereditary king, prime minister by acclamation, and president for life. Just consider the titles of the anthologies he has edited or co-edited: *Winning Hearts and Minds*, *Demilitarized Zones*, *Peace Is Our Profession*, and most recently *Sound Off*. His own collections include *War Baby*, *Veterans Day*, *Earth Songs*, and *Life After War & Other Poems*. And now comes *Earth Songs II*, a compilation of new work written in the past fifteen years.

I readily admit that I am not exactly an impartial critic. I've known Barry for 47 years, and he has been one of the major influences in my life. We first met when he was editing *Winning Hearts and Minds* with Larry Rottmann and Basil Paquet back in 1972. I was trying, without much success, to cope with the flood of emotions coursing through me in the wake of my encounter with the American War in Vietnam. A few years later, he and I co-edited *Demilitarized Zones* together, and it was during those years—1975 and 1976—that Barry showed me how to direct my rage and confusion into constructive channels through poetry and literature.

He believed then in the power of the word, and all these years later he still does. His refusal to give in to despair, his fundamental belief in the goodness of humanity, and his willingness to keep moving forward in spite of the obstacles life throws in his path are nothing short of astounding. And he has once again demonstrated all these qualities in the 105 poems collected in this new volume.

The poems themselves range widely, touching on issues of war and peace, the debilitating impact of combat on the human spirit, aging parents, the devastating loss of his wife of decades, trying to date again, his own advancing age, and the rejuvenating power of nature.

Think about this description of our current hyper-militarized culture the next time you're watching an NFL game, and they cover the whole field with an American flag while the 82nd Airborne Division chorus sings the national anthem:

*Our flag flapping, sword saluting
Sworn to secrecy
Stiff upper lip, suck it up
He-man, iron man military mindset*
("Singing Out")

Or these last few stanzas from "Dummies Guide to Chemical Warfare:"

*Spewing arsenals of chemical weapons—
Chlorine, mustard gas, phosgene,
sarin,
A-bombs, H-bombs, depleted uranium*

*'Til we run out of cutesy mots
And slam into S for suicide—
And that's all she wrote.*

Some of the most heartbreaking poems deal with the loss of his wife, Paula. Just when you think he's going to be okay, the poem "Bad Day Blues" ending:

*Having a bad day—
Then a cat meows,
Wanting a companion—
Ah, come here*

The very next poem, "Death Is Never Done" concludes:

*The cat disappeared
One night—
Like your embrace,
Your face, your light.*

Still, that refusal to give in or give up is captured in "Alone":

*Learning to be alone,
Sleep alone, eat alone,
Dream alone.
On my own.*

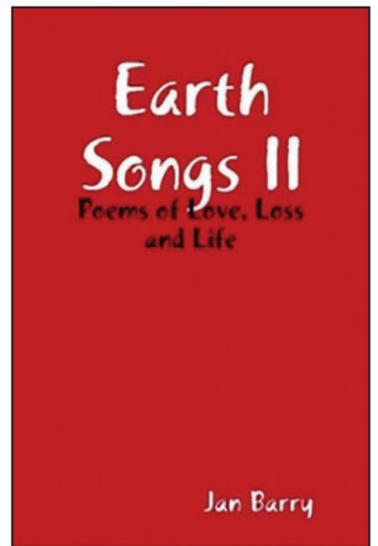
*You're surely gone,
Can't help me carry on.
Have to find
Some other sign.*

Some of the most poignant poems are about his parents, who lived long lives, were married seventy years, and died within a year of each other. Other poems explore an uncle killed in a dive bomber in the World War II Pacific ("the tail gunner jumping / from the rear seat engulfed in fire"), the encroachment of "civilization" on the natural world ("the silence / Of this forty mile lake is shattered / By shore to shore boats, / Door to door cottages, / Year round houses"), and the refusal of nature to give in to that encroachment:

Summer Wildflowers

*Flaming fields of purple loose strife
Flicker along country highways
Beside gleaming epaulets of golden rod
Twirling in stride with fluttering
Scars of Queen Anne's lace
And shimmering sky blue
Clusters of chicory.*

Few poets have so consistently insisted that peace is possible and poetry matters. In "Gold Star Grandson," Barry sums up his life's work in a single stanza:



*So I went off to war
And when I came home
Transformed silences
That replaced the missing
Into poetry
And sought to tell
Stories of fallen sons
Whose voices were stilled.*

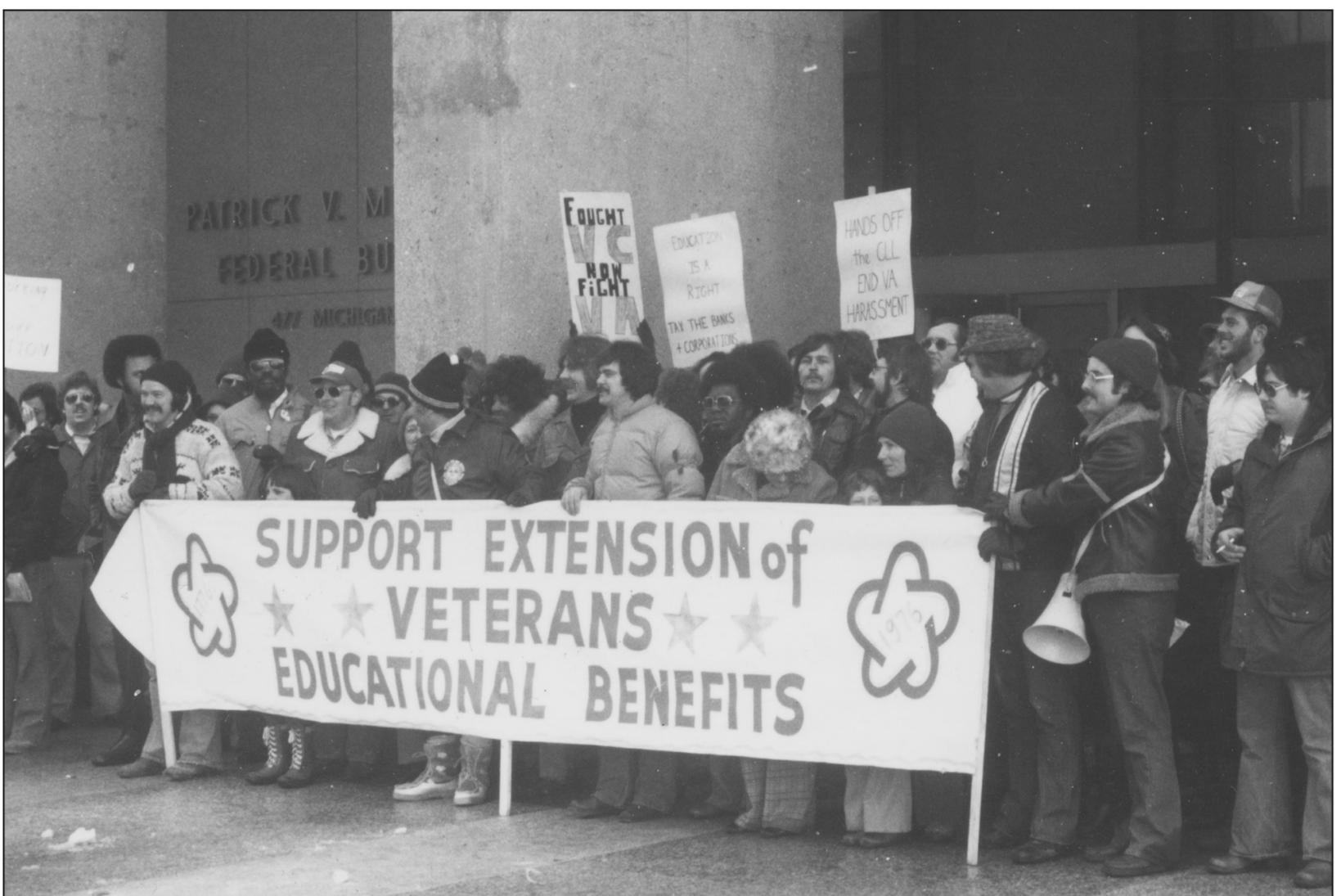
The quiet strength of Barry's voice and the simple decency of his vision are blessings to anyone who cares about the world we live in and the future we will leave to coming generations. Here is "Memorial Highways" in its entirety:

*There's a memorial highway
For veterans of every major war—
Can you imagine
A memorial highway
For peace treaties—
Peace served
And died, too.*

You can order *Earth Songs II* at www.janbarry.net.



BILL EHRHART IS A MARINE VETERAN OF THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM AND A LIFE MEMBER OF VVAW.



Don't Thank Me for My Service

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Don't Thank Me for My Service: My Vietnam Awakening to the Long History of US Lies
by S. Brian Willson
(Clarity Press, Inc., 2018)

Brian Willson is a friend. Not a close friend, as we live on opposite sides of the country and I haven't seen him in years, but a GOOD friend. We are from the same area of western New York, we are both Vietnam vets, and we have both spoken out against American militarism and a foreign policy based upon conquer or kill. That said, I am stunned and delighted by Brian's new book!

Don't Thank Me for My Service is a landmark book. It is a history textbook, a moving memoir, a thought-provoking statement about the essence of our country's foreign policy since the first settlers came ashore, and it is an inspiration to any and all of us who are opposed to war and war-making as a way of life. This book defines America's obsession with seizing control of the known world throughout history, and it counts the cost. I wish every high school and college student and every registered voter would read this book.

This is America as people around the globe see us, and Brian Willson skillfully dares the reader to do something about it. For the few who might not be familiar with Brian, he is a Vietnam veteran, a lawyer, and a committed activist. "By the time I made it into the courtroom," he writes in a chapter titled My Story, "I had apparently become far too sensitized — or perhaps radicalized — to obey the protocol of the court. I found I had a very strong visceral resistance to automatically standing up for the judge as he/she entered the courtroom." It is precisely that kind of questioning of authority and "exceptionalism" that permeates *Don't Thank Me for My Service*, as if the book has been soaked in a brine of cynicism, skepticism, and genuine humanism for months prior to being lined up on bookstore shelves.

In the late summer of 1986, my father passed away after a dreadful battle with cancer. A few days after the funeral I flew to Las Vegas to attend my employer's annual new model introduction ceremony. Having seen my dad withering away, fed by tubes, I found it difficult to look upon a ten-foot table laden with a pile of lobster tails four feet deep surrounded by sequined models and voracious car dealers. On the last morning of that trip, I was eating breakfast with my staff at the edge of the casino while a long train of carts pulled by a lawn tractor carried hundreds of buckets of coins extracted from the slot machines while armed guards kept an eye on the crowd of morning gamblers. Someone passed around the morning's *USA Today*, and I saw a front-page story of the Veterans Fast For Life on the steps of the Capitol. My acquaintance Brian Willson was gambling his life, starving himself to protest against America's activities in Central America. As soon as I got home to Maryland, I took the family to the Capitol and met the four brave fasters. I credit Duncan Murphy, George Mizo, Charlie Litkey, and Brian Willson for making America aware and preventing a US invasion of Nicaragua. One year later we were appalled to learn that Brian had been run over by a train carrying munitions to the Contras in Central America! He lost both legs and suffered a terrible wound to his skull, but the rear cover of *Don't Thank Me for My Service* features a photo of Brian dancing on his prostheses.

In the introduction to the book, Brian refers to the Pentagon's "50th Anniversary Vietnam War Commemoration," a \$65 million revision and recruiting extravaganza that has produced a blizzard of educational paraphernalia and propaganda for high school students and teachers, and "high quality educational content for classroom use based on best practices of pedagogy." The Commemoration "doesn't deal with" issues like chemical warfare

(Agent Orange), PTSD and moral damage, or the effects of the peace movement. A recent exhibition at an area school featured more pamphlets and buttons than any presidential campaign event. *Don't Thank Me for My Service* simply states: "Celebrating the heroics of past war in a contextual vacuum is part of grooming yet another generation of heroes to step up for our nation's future wars." Precisely! Unlike previous wars, the Vietnam-era draft targeted eighteen-year-olds, because we were impressionable. The Commemoration would have you believe that that strategy worked out well, even as it targets our grandchildren. Today's "War on Terror" is focused on Iran, North Korea, or Venezuela, and the all-volunteer military needs cannon fodder. Well, *Don't Thank Me for My Service* provides a wealth of historical context to any high school or college student who might read it. It is, by the way, very readable, well-organized and devoid of glitzy, unintelligible words. This is straightforward communication to the masses, a lawyer's summing-up to a jury.

What did Brian Willson learn in Vietnam, and what does he think you need to know? His chapter titles offer clues:

Historical Context
Cold War Hysteria
Criminal Intent
Chronicle of Barbarism
Chemical Warfare
Upheaval and Resistance at Home
Upheaval and Resistance Among Active Duty Military
The Lasting Toll of War
My Story

Like so many of us, Brian Willson went to Vietnam anticipating that he would be serving his country, helping the Vietnamese resist creeping communism, and make the world a better place. Drawing his "historical context" from World War II movies and Memorial Day ceremonies in

the village square, he ran head-on into a culture and environment of unconscionable barbarism in Vietnam, and he has been reacting to what he has seen ever since. As veteran suicides continue to mount, moral damage from war has finally emerged as a stark reality among the psychiatric community, and Brian Willson is a poster child. He has little to show for his courage and patriotism but a clear conscience, and for Brian, that's enough. He asks nothing, but his warnings and protests are loud and clear.

America's fascination with war, its ravenous appetite for conquest, and the misinformation it employs to justify its excesses to its public all contribute to a history and a culture that has gone mostly unchallenged for centuries. Vietnam, and the social turmoil it ignited here at home, signaled the end of the public's blind acceptance of the propaganda. Brian Willson is an inspiration, a new breed of patriot who bases his arguments on truth and respect for all of humanity. His message is amazing, important, timely, and immensely worthwhile. In a time when the daily news keeps track of the vast number of lies our President tweets to his unthinking base, Brian Willson's reading of history rings like the peeling of the Liberty Bell. I haven't seen Brian in a long time, but he hasn't changed. I urge every reader of *The Veteran* to read this book. Buy two copies, and give one to a teenager near you. I would rate *Don't Thank Me for My Service* as highly, highly, highly recommended!



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF ... AND A HARD RAIN FELL, AND A NEW BOOK TO BE PUBLISHED IN MAY OR JUNE OF THIS YEAR, VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

Imprisoned at Alcatraz – for Opposing War

ELAINE ELINSON

When Robert Simmons, an African American man from Savannah, Georgia, was brought to the foggy, windswept island of Alcatraz in the winter of 1918, he was thrown into the "hole," a pitch-dark dungeon — below the main cell block — with slimy walls, crawling with rats. He was held there for 14 days.

His crime?

Simmons was a Conscientious Objector who opposed war and refused to fight on the battlefields of World War I.

When the war began in Europe in July 1914, a great debate unfolded in the United States as to whether the US should enter the war. President Woodrow Wilson finally decided to declare war on April 6, 1917 — but the country was still divided. Many political, labor, and religious organizations opposed the war and urged their members not to fight. In response, the government passed laws that criminalized dissent, forced conscription and jailed many who took anti-war positions.

There was great unrest in the African American community at the time of Wilson's declaration of war. Jim Crow laws condemned Blacks to the poorest conditions in cities and rural areas alike. The US Supreme Court ruled that segregation was the law of the land. President Wilson showed *The Birth of a Nation* in the White House, a film the newly-formed NAACP tried to ban because of its glorification of the Ku Klux Klan. The rise of the KKK and other white

vigilante groups terrorized Black communities, burning churches and homes and lynching thousands.

While some Black leaders encouraged men to join the military to prove their patriotism, others urged them not to fight abroad when there was no democracy or justice for Blacks at home. As one African American newspaper wrote: "The Negro may be choosing being burnt by Tennessee, Georgia or Texas mobs or being shot by Germans in Belgium."

Although 290,000 Blacks were conscripted, military units were completely segregated. Some trains carrying Black troops were fired on when they passed through southern towns.

Perhaps all of this was on Robert Simmons' mind when he was conscripted and sent to fight in France. When he refused, declaring himself a Conscientious Objector, he was subjected to a military court-martial and sentenced to prison.

At Alcatraz, then a military prison, Simmons was one of 30 COs — both political and religious. Simmons was one of a dozen "absolutists," COs who refused to obey any military order — whether putting on a uniform or joining a work gang. Every time they refused to comply, their sentences were extended. When they were released from the dungeon, they were placed in "iron cages," cells where they were forced to stand, chained to the cell door, unable to sit or even turn around, for eight hours a day.

Their protests brought outside

investigators to Alcatraz from church groups and the ACLU who documented the brutal conditions and complained to the federal government. The dungeons were not abandoned until the ACLU forced a high-level military inspection of the prison.

Though the Armistice was signed on November 11, 1918, the COs endured harsh imprisonment long after the fighting ended. Robert Simmons was not released from Alcatraz until February 27, 1920, more than a year after the end of the war.

Though Simmons may have felt completely isolated in the dungeons of Alcatraz during World War I, his legacy has endured.

During World War II, Bayard Rustin, James Farmer, and George Houser were Conscientious Objectors. A decade later they were leaders in the Civil Rights Movement bravely facing violence at the hands of Southern law enforcement and white vigilantes to fight for racial equality.

Probably the most famous Conscientious Objector in our lifetime

is boxing champion Muhammad Ali, an African American Muslim who refused to fight in Vietnam. He stated, "My conscience won't let me go shoot my brother, or some darker people, or some poor hungry people in the mud for big powerful America. And shoot them for what? They never lynched me, they didn't put no dogs on me, they didn't rob me of my nationality, rape and kill my mother and father... Just take me to jail."

Rustin, Farmer, Houser, and Ali may not have known about Simmons's stance decades earlier, but their courageous actions were cut from the same cloth.

On the centennial of the end of World War I, we should also remember those who stood up for the right to dissent — and paid a heavy price.



ELAINE ELINSON IS THE COAUTHOR OF "WHEREVER THERE'S A FIGHT," AND A RESEARCHER ON CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY FOR THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE.



Aaron Hughes at Chicago Veterans Day event, November 11, 2018.

Caverns of the Soul

DONALD MCNAMARA (REVIEWER)

Caverns of the Soul

by Charles F. Harrienger, Jr.
(lulu.com, 2018)

Trying to deal with the psychological wounds of war can be tricky, because it isn't possible to be absolutely sure that the treatment, or its results, won't be worse than the affliction.

In his book *Caverns of the Soul*, a collection of twenty-one poems, Charles F. (Rick) Harrienger, who served in Vietnam with the 173rd Airborne in 1968 and 1969, presents thoughts about what is not often easily transferable to words: the experience of being in combat. He offers a preface in which he implies that writing these pieces came about because medical attempts to treat his PTSD (although he does not use that term) proved inadequate by themselves. Further, he notes that he employed rhyme, rather than free verse, in order to entertain himself.

Writing even one poem that rhymes can be difficult (try it some time), and writing as many as Harrienger did can be especially challenging, even more so when dealing with deep-seated emotions, or demons.

Rhyme is one means of

emphasizing the ideas or sentiments that the writer wishes to express—very often someone who reads or hears a poem will remember at least part of it because certain rhymes resonated in the mind or in the heart.

Many of Harrienger's rhyming verses do resonate in ways that will be familiar to those who are combat veterans, possibly even as well as to those who are not. If they do, however, the resonance will originate in the thoughts he is expressing, thoughts that derive extra force by similar sounds.

Some of the rhymes are discordant, but that's alright because the sounds of war feature their own rhyme—a rhyme that can be called discordant, to put it mildly. The point of this book isn't the poetic craft; it's the way a combat veteran who has struggled with the demons of his war experience has brought insights that might have eluded many, veteran and non-veteran alike. It would be difficult not to be moved by the closing stanza of "Ballad of the Bastard":

*I know not of my destiny
but only where I've been.
Alive remains the rest of me.
Alive: begin again.*

In "The Vietnam Memorial," Harrienger borrows the meter of Walt Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!":

*O president, my president
Your sons are falling still
Another row would tell you do,
If Westy won't... I will*

In "Charlie!," Harrienger muses on the fact that the name traditionally given to the enemy is taken from his name. He uses that fact as an analogy to the lingering effects of the wounds of war, which will stay with him long after he has returned home.

"Dear Darling Doctor", which comes about a third of the way into the book, is especially devastating. The lines are longer than in most of the other poems, and the rhyme scheme (if it can be called that) is all over the place. If the title of the poem is an indication, then this poem is a recreation of Harrienger's efforts to relate to one of the medical professionals treating him for his memory of the killing of a Vietnamese girl by several of his comrades who had brought her inside their bunker to have sex with her. It's difficult to tell for certain how much of the narrative in the poem is literally true, but any

part of it would be traumatizing.

The last poem in the book, "Againanam," makes allusions to the USA's ventures in Iraq with terms like IEDs and nation building, and that gives the title of the poem, which seems baffling at first, a clear if disheartening meaning: It's happening all over again, with after-effects that will all too tragically familiar for many years to come.

In dealing with his own anguish, Charles F. Harrienger has written a thought-provoking book that has the potential to enlighten, disturb, enrich, sadden, gladden, infuriate anyone who reads it. It should be read slowly, digested gradually rather than gobbled all in one sitting.

It is worth the effort.



DONALD MCNAMARA WAS A GROUND TROOP IN VIETNAM WITH THE 1ST INFANTRY DIVISION FROM JANUARY OF 1967 TO JANUARY OF 1968. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF WHICH THE DAYS NEVER KNOW: A YEAR IN VIETNAM BY THE NUMBERS, (ELEPHANT'S BOOKSHELF PRESS, 2017).

Middle Blue

DANIEL C. LAVERY (REVIEWER)

Middle Blue

by Jim Richardson
(2018)

I am the lucky Vietnam Vet who reviewed Jim Richardson's marvelous fictional book on the Vietnam genocidal conflict where he served from 1970-71. Although Jim only ordered 200 copies and some may still be available from the author, he seems satisfied with the project which he admits has gone viral.

No wonder, Jim brings to the page the skills of a college graduate, artist, writer, photographer, expert sailing enthusiast, and athlete, whose metaphors jump off the page and place the reader in every intense or resplendent scene enhanced by his exquisite artistry. Surprisingly, Jim says in one of his brief articles about the book he didn't believe he could write a memoir, so he made up fictional characters based on the people he came to interact with intimately on his riveting journey in the Army. His first draft was so long he whittled it down to half the original giving us 280 pages that capture the struggles of soldiers in the jungle, in sand dunes, on liberty reveling with buddies, or even in Cambodia when Nixon caused a major uproar invading a neutral country that caused widespread protests back home.

His first assignment is in Chu Lai

with the Americal Division reporting to the Information Office, 23rd Infantry Division, filling the seat of the information officer who photographed the victims of the infamous My Lai massacre that resulted in more than 500 unarmed Vietnamese villagers killed at close range by machine guns cutting down men, women, children and babies. Not surprisingly then, one of his leaders immediately informed them their main job was to "kill gooks!"

His main three characters, among a host of others, form extremely close bonds as college grads who determined early on to spend the least amount of time in Vietnam with engineering, history, and artistic or writing backgrounds. Fortunately, each kept as close contact with each other as possible even though they were often separated by assignments.

Lost in his first battle experience due to boils on his feet preventing him from starting with the group on an early mission, he panicked when he noticed two trails, not knowing which one his unit had taken. When he recovered control in the steamy jungle, he was soon attacked by mosquitoes, and jungle critters, always afraid of hitting a land mine. We feel the extreme frustration, and fear Holt (the fictitious character closest to resembling the writer) and his comrades (McGregor, and Petrini)

felt as the reader is carefully led into each scene. Soon numerous body bags contain many dead combatants after a large Viet Cong attack killed them the day after he played volleyball. Eventually, a fragging of an obnoxious officer reveals the hatred some men felt for a supposed leader who exposed them to unnecessary lethal harm.

Learning Petrini was dealing in a lucrative black market, drugs, whores, or enjoying rock and roll bands drunk and stoned was a daunting surprise. Soon we find numerous Black soldiers who refused to fight against what they called their yellow brothers and avoided combat playing cards while waiting to be court-martialed, got drunk, and stoned on grass or heavier drugs. Ford, a soldier in the new office Holt worked with, offered him a marijuana cigar laced with heroin that caused extreme incapacity in a war zone that could easily have injured him seriously, or killed him. Luckily he escaped from the horrendous scene. All these and many others bring a harsh reality to many deadly threats and even extreme racial tensions that were exacerbated by this unpopular war.

He even noticed helicopter operators shoot Vietnamese fishermen or other civilians in free fire zones, unknown to the victims, while others in his group torched entire villages forcing the poor inhabitants to seek shelter elsewhere or be hurried into

holding cells.

Soon he purchased a Nikon 35mm camera, rolls of color film he strapped over his shoulder, and placed his sketchbook and pens in the outsides of his pant legs, as he recorded his surroundings with film or his sketchbook. Later he would use these sketches noting the required color: meridian blue for the ocean, cyan for the sky, and red ochre for the earth in watercolors.

Like my father in WWII and many others in battles, although not religious, Holt recited the Twenty-Third Psalm there after considering his plight and felt connected to something larger than himself as he lit a stick of incense and remembered a fallen friend. He and his buddies made a plan to take a two-week vacation to Australia, but that required agreeing to an extension Holt feared.

On one journey he wandered to an abandoned little shrine on a cliff for a place of solace that contained a brass urn. There he met an eleven-year-old Vietnamese boy, Quang, who loved drawing and wanted to become an artist. Not far away Holt saw a beautiful sailboat, Middle Blue, whose owner is a soldier soon to leave Vietnam but not until Holt showed him what a sailing lover Holt was and how well they maneuvered that craft through the water as a team!

This extraordinary story has many more adventures I promise will astound the reader that make it by far the best book this reviewer has read on Vietnam since becoming a member of VVAW in 1969, thanks to Jim Richardson.

Jim Richardson's novel, *Middle Blue*, can be purchased for \$18.00 by contacting the author at designs@atlanticbb.net.



DAN GRADUATED ANNAPOLIS, NAVIGATED A NAVY JET, WAS CARRIER QUALIFIED, AND EARNED NAO WINGS IN FLORIDA, AND THEN A SHIP TO VIETNAM. HE RESIGNED, TURNED PEACE ACTIVIST, JOINED VVAW, AND BECAME A CIVIL RIGHTS LAWYER. HIS MEMOIR, ALL THE DIFFERENCE, DESCRIBES HIS CHANGE FROM A PAWN IN THE MILITARY TO A CRUSADER FOR JUSTICE. [HTTP://WWW.DANIELCLAVERY.COM](http://www.danielclavery.com)



Enduring Vietnam: An American Generation and Its War

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Enduring Vietnam: An American Generation and Its War

by James Wright

(Thomas Dunne Books, St. Martin's Press, 2017)

I approached *Enduring Vietnam* with some trepidation after seeing that Ken Burns has endorsed the book on the front cover, and James "Mad Dog" Mattis has offered the top endorsement on the rear cover. Looking a bit further, I found that Karl Marlantes, Peter Prichard (Chairman of the Newseum), Christian Appy, and Bernard Edelman, all highly respected for their work on Vietnam, had also praised this book, so it had to be worthwhile. It is always available in quantity on bookstore shelves, in hardcover, so I went with the reality that "Mad Dog" had left the Trump administration abruptly, and went ahead and purchased *Enduring Vietnam*.

Author Wright is Professor of History Emeritus at Dartmouth College, and very active in various veterans assistance organizations. He is not a Vietnam veteran, but he seems to be sincerely attuned to Vietnam vets and their concerns. That said, *Enduring Vietnam* is a strange book. It attempts to offer a compact semi-history lesson, but it is also a vivid examination of the traumatic experiences, memories, challenges, and the psychological residue that so many veterans have lived with every day for years. It tends to jump around a lot, but always with the year 1969 as the key moment in the author's telling of the history of the war.

Author Wright says, on page 131, that he interviewed 86 veterans, with 56 who had enlisted and 30 who had been drafted. He devotes approximately two dozen pages to brief histories of many of them, all volunteers or draftees who accepted their fate. "Most draftees," he writes, "recalled being willing, if not eager, to serve." Where did he find them? In my experience, at least ninety percent of my peers did everything possible to avoid the draft and despised being in the (Army) military. I entered the service at the very end of 1966, visited Vietnam from September of 1967 to

1968, and then transferred to Thailand for the remainder of my "obligation," a desperate effort to avoid the strict discipline and pointless harassment of stateside duty. When I came home in September of '69, I was discharged. Wright does not mention the many little acts of resistance, obstruction, even sabotage that were constant signs of the contempt we felt for our oppressors. In fact, he writes that everything changed in 1969, about a year after the Tet offensive, as if there had been no discord until after the battle of Hamburger Hill made all GIs mysteriously thoughtful, disrespectful, and unwilling. A large number of the guys he interviewed "mentioned some variant of duty, patriotism, fighting communism, or family tradition as an explanation of their willingness to serve." Nowhere in the book's 445 pages did I find a single expression of a draftee's anger at being torn away from his life and family. There is no mention of draft counseling.

"Beginning in 1965," Wright tells us, "anti-war demonstrations challenged the war and the assumptions that underlay it. It took a few years for these arguments to persuade a majority of Americans. They more rapidly seemed to persuade young Americans, the boomer generation. Their decade, the '60s, would take on an altogether different and even revolutionary form." In January of 1967, Wright tells us, student leaders from one hundred colleges and universities sent a letter to LBJ that politely "questioned the conduct, rationale, and very aims of the war in Vietnam." Wright acknowledges Barry McGuire's 1965 hit record "Eve of Destruction," various artists' versions of "Where Have All the Flowers Gone?," and Phil Ochs' 1965 "I Ain't Marching Anymore." He begins the book with a description of Memorial Day in 1969, and mentions the Beatles' song "Get Back," and, many pages later, tells us that "The Ballad of the Green Berets" was America's number one song in 1966, "ranking ahead of any of the Beatles' or other pop group songs."

On page 242 he relates that a soldier hitching a ride on a Huey

found it "surreal" to hear AFVN Radio and a Beatles song through the door gunner's helmet. At no point in his book does Wright acknowledge the impact and importance of the Beatles on our generation. Bob Dylan is never mentioned. There's plenty about Operation Rolling Thunder, but no mention of the Rolling Stones. Again, jumping to 1969, Wright mentions a few of the performers or bands that would play at Woodstock. "It was a music festival rather than an anti-war gathering, but obviously it represented a substantial part of American culture that was increasingly hostile to the war in Vietnam." Ya think? Our generation had grown up on Chuck Berry, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Little Richard. We were Beatlemania in 1964, and four years later when the Tet offensive made it clear we could never win the war, our culture was long established and flourishing. Yep, Jimi Hendrix, Country Joe McDonald, Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead, Creedence Clearwater, Joan Baez, and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young were putting out messages of truth and hope in great contrast to anything coming from the White House or the Pentagon.

James Wright did a lot of research, and only he can say how he missed so many of the Woodstock generation when he was interviewing Vietnam vets and dipping his toe into the stream of sixties history. He is, sadly, The Establishment, and while his compassion for Vietnam veterans is sincere, he fails completely to offer any real understanding of what went wrong, both in Vietnam and here at home. Perhaps worse, he fails to offer anything new. As a Professor Emeritus of History, he missed by a long shot on this endeavor. It is not an invalid book, but it offers no new revelation or explanation of what happened. Today, in 2019, as we see a very similar debacle taking place in Afghanistan after 17 years and 17 commanding generals, after another American intervention under the same old theories, rules, and regulations. It seems that any examination of the debacle that was Vietnam should acknowledge the concepts, strategies,

tactics, and yes, the mistakes that resulted in such tragedy and travesty. What were the lessons of Vietnam? And, what light do they shed upon today's protracted debacles? James Wright doesn't ask, so I will: What the hell are they teaching at West Point?

Enduring Vietnam devotes a few pages to VVAW, a few more to My Lai, and a few paragraphs to the *Pentagon Papers*. I suppose every book about Vietnam has to touch those buttons. But while author Wright interviewed 86 veterans, there is no evidence that he interviewed anyone associated with VVAW. All he had to do was Google us, but he didn't. There's no indication he interviewed Daniel Ellsberg or anyone who was at My Lai. Or, for that matter, Seymour Hersh, who broke the story. Wright offers amazing statistics about what he calls "mess" clubs, including the curious fact that the army's clubs generated over \$177 million in revenue in 1969 and over \$22 million in profit. The "Khaki Mafia" scandal is never mentioned! Clearly, James Wright harbors a great deal of "proper respect" for the military lifers who were corrupt, pompous, incompetent, and who directed and profited from the unprecedented destruction and death that rained upon Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia while they lined their OD green pockets! He cannot neglect the terrible effects of the war upon its veterans, but he finds little fault. In the end, *Enduring Vietnam* is just one more of an endless chain of books about Vietnam that relate a long list of facts, but fail to describe the tragedy of it all, the vast extent of the harm done, or to assess blame. This book will do nothing to prevent it from happening again. Ken Burns and "Mad Dog" Mattis may be comfortable with that, but I am not!



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF ... AND A HARD RAIN FELL, AND A NEW BOOK TO BE PUBLISHED IN MAY OR JUNE OF THIS YEAR, VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

My Path Through Paralysis

DALE HOEFER (REVIEWER)

My Path Through Paralysis

by Bruce Dunn

(Touchstone Communications, 2017)

In this short volume, Bruce Dunn lays it out there, telling us about the pain and growth to be experienced through a spinal cord injury. I wanted to review the book because I also had a spinal cord injury and have walked away from a spot that is permanent for so many. I had it easy compared to Mr. Dunn's travails.

He tells his story in such a readable, regular guy narrative style that it was finished in just two sessions and I felt like driving over and having a Sunday afternoon beer with the author.

He only mentions in passing that

this is what it took for him to come home from the war in a full sense. One is left with the feeling that the scars of the war and PTSD combined with the way it was handled in America and in Vietnam all make up the back drop that lead Dunn down a country road with too much beer in the belly to his fateful encounter. The Vietnam connection could have been explored more, but it would have changed the central healing theme of the book.

His story is at times depressing, funny and shallow, and yet it conveys real life experience and soul growth of a depth that few ever have to probe. And despite the harrowing trials, he knows and the reader knows just how lucky he is. I am the luckiest spinal

cord injury survivor still, but he is the second luckiest. In my case when I went to the VA Spinal Cord Injuries and Disorder Center in Palo Alto, CA. I was a kind of miracle. The walking quad, they called me.

I was still on active duty, but the Neurosurgeon at Oakland Naval Hospital pulled some strings to get me out of his hospital while they waited on my medical board review. It had the side benefit of getting me the rehabilitation specialists and equipment that I needed. Like Dunn says, every time you think you have it bad, there is always someone next to you who has it worse, so self-pity is not really an option.

I digress from the book review to my story to highlight my good experience in this VA Center. I don't like to think about what would have happened had I been thrust into just the Naval Hospital. This VA center is set up to deal with the special needs of veterans and service related injuries. I often wonder how my paraplegic buddies from those days are doing? The quadriplegic patients did not like me much. Like Dunn, most spinal cord injury patients come in either saying, "I'm going to walk out of here," or they have resigned early to a life of total dependency. Some do walk out. I walked in and they insisted that I be wheeled out. Such are the rules, but at least we got two beers a day since

it is good for the urinary system of spinal cord injury patients.

I don't know what VA privatization looks like, but my experience and my father's experience was positive and should be there for all vets when it is needed.

In Dunn's case he was caught up in the insurance limits and practical issues that in effect become life and death. Had he been able to receive all of the care that he needed, his total recovery may have been shortened and possibly more complete. That is the nature of the spinal cord injury—time is of the essence, even if body time is somewhat slow. What happens in the first days, weeks, months is critical and recovery comes in ever decreasing increments, until one day you realize, this is all I'm going to get. What's more there is a certain sense of gratitude for what you have that others may not fully understand or appreciate.

It was well worth the read and may even give others an appreciation for what we do have. It renewed my thankfulness for a nearly complete recovery and a full life in the years since. Welcome home, Bruce Dunn.



DALE HOEFER IS A VIETNAM ERA VET, JOINED THE NAVY WHEN IT WAS SAFE AND HE WAS 18. DISCHARGED IN 1976 DUE TO SPINAL CORD INJURY SUFFERED WHILE DIVING INTO AND IRRIGATION CANAL.



The Great Alone

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

The Great Alone
by Kristin Hannah
(St. Martin's Press, 2018)

Kristin Hannah is a #1 *New York Times* best-selling author with more than twenty novels to her credit. I read mostly nonfiction, but I was intrigued by this book which is a fictitious story about a family's struggle with a Vietnam veteran's PTSD. I thought I would give it a try despite the fact that it is primarily "one of those" books written for a female audience, and I immediately became engrossed in a fast-moving story superbly told. This is one of those books you can't put down, and I have become a Kristin Hannah fan.

Ernt Allbright is a former POW, and since coming home from Vietnam, he has lost numerous jobs and moved his family to a variety of locations. The story is told from the perspective of his daughter, Leni, short for Lenora. The wonderful father who went off to Vietnam has come home moody, angry, and distant. It is 1974, and the

news is all about Patricia Hearst and the Symbionese Liberation Army. Times are hard, but Dad comes home with the news that his best friend from the prison in Vietnam had left him forty acres with a cabin that needs fixing... in rural Alaska. "A hardworking man can live off the land up here," the letter says, "away from the crazies and the hippies and the mess in the Lower Forty-eight." Ernt is ecstatic. This is his chance to live far off the grid, away from outsiders. Ernt believes the world is rushing toward a nuclear inferno, and he needs to prepare so his family might survive. He is obsessed, recklessly leery of the few neighbors who go out of their way to welcome the newcomers and offer advice about how they might prepare for the oncoming winter.

Poor Leni and her mother are close, although Momma sends her daughter away when Ernt repeatedly beats her, then apologizes and promises it will never happen again. Leni believes he truly loves them, but his wild and violent outbursts frighten

her, and she does not understand why her mother sticks with him. Leni grows to love Alaska, and ultimately she falls in love with Matthew, the son of the richest man in the area. When Matthew's father begins to upgrade the town and invite tourists to visit, Ernt goes berserk and begins to fortify his homestead. He cuts all ties to the community, and beats his wife harder and more often. Leni is horrified, but there seems to be no escape.

All of this is masterfully told, with wonderful descriptions of the terrain, the weather, and the wildlife of rural Alaska, the Great Alone of the title. The story builds, keeping the reader up at night as it rushes toward some inevitable climax. This is not a "girly" book. Many facets of Ernt's PTSD are recognizable, even uncomfortably familiar, and it is humbling to see them portrayed from the perspective of his daughter and wife. They try so hard to create a viable family environment and a comfortable home in this unforgiving place, while the dangers build within

the confines of their tiny cabin.

The Great Alone is a story of Alaska, not a story of Vietnam, and not really an especially lifelike description of one family's struggle with PTSD. The author's purpose is not to provide a clinical examination of the devastating condition so familiar to the veterans of modern wars and their families. Perhaps the secret of a good novel is the author's ability to draw scenes and personalities that are bigger than life, but still recognizable. This is a compelling story of living alone, of hardship and resilience, but also of love and the wildness that lives in people as well as nature. It's not a book I would normally buy, but I'm very glad I did. Visit your local library and give it a try. I think you will find it a riveting and entertaining story told by an exceptional writer.



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.

To The Brink Once Again

JOHN CRANDELL (REVIEWER)

Blood in The Water: How The US and Israel Conspired to Ambush The USS Liberty
by Joan Mellen
(Prometheus Books, 2018)

To get the housekeeping out of the way, there are a few date and time miscalculations as well as a whopper regarding the Gulf of Tonkin incident. The publisher has been advised of this for additional printings of this work. *Blood in the Water* is a fascinating exposé regarding a thorny issue which refuses to fade into history. It is well illustrated with photos and drawings distributed throughout the text. One only wishes that the photos were all in higher resolution, on finer paper, in larger format. Mellen's supporting footnotes reflect an astonishing array of primary sources — far beyond the resounding secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

Time will show that amongst her large body of published works, her greatest contribution to history will be the revelation that both the Israeli and American governments, as an avenue to escalating a projected war between Israel and the United Arab Republic (now Egypt), conspired to sacrifice a US Navy vessel and all of its crew in a false flag attempt, both as trigger and rationale — for the US to enter what became the Six Day War and launch nuclear missiles against Cairo. One could assume that readers of *The Veteran* know the outline of death, injury, and deceit wrought by the notorious attack upon the Liberty. What is just as startling is her relating an outlandish degree of extremism extant in Tel Aviv and in the Counterintelligence section at Langley in the spring of 1967.

Enter the names James Angleton and Meir Amit, the former in charge of CIA Counterintelligence, the latter in charge of Mossad, partners in lunacy, all out fanaticism. Lordy, if they'd only have eloped to Puerto Vallarta and stayed there. Yet they somehow managed to corral the top echelon of America's government into a plan that almost killed us all.

Instead of delving into the complexity, the thicket of details would fill years worth of editions of *The Veteran*, I'd much rather discuss the implications of her work. It was she who out-Seymoured Seymour Hersh with her startling revelations of contretemps between Attorney General Robert Kennedy and Otto Otepka, specifically the latter having charge of Security at the State

Department and his knowledge of the former's deep interest in Lee Harvey Oswald beginning in the winter of 1961. As well, she has soundly put the kibosh on the theory that longtime LBJ associate Mac Wallace had had a role on the sixth floor of the School Book Depository a thousand days into the Kennedy administration. A critical examination of Johnson's early malfeasance is integral to her work on Wallace. But for those who seek the truth, her incisive mastery of facts within the final chapters of her new work will live forever. They ought to blow the lid off of the shape-shifting cauldron of inordinate Zionist influence which continues to reign over American foreign policy.

Anticipating this review, wading into the early chapters of the work I tried like hell to keep an objective, balanced attitude. But slightly past the halfway point I gave up and ceased with the litany of note-taking. Nope, no further need to continue to list major iota within the complex maze of high corn of what was clearly an outrageous injustice to Liberty's personnel, to America and our national history. She distills and clarifies essential perfidy and great, unheralded heroism, an effort worthy of a Pulitzer Prize given the continued state of affairs in Washington.

The Liberty incident had occurred three days after the start of the Six Day War. Within those hours, Israeli forces had already committed two war crimes, the sort of crimes which, if Egyptians had committed against Israelis, we would have ever since been continually reminded in book, film, and broadcast special. In the larger crime, eight hundred and fifty Egyptian POWs were slaughtered en masse near El Arish. Each had had to dig his own grave approximately at the same time that Israeli jets and patrol boats attacked Liberty.

The insidious degree of continuing government deception regards the attack is instructive. It brings to mind Trump's decision eighteen months ago ordering that certain, long-hidden JFK assassination files remain in the dark, information so troubling that we're told that the nation must not know, despite the passage of so many years and the passing of those involved. What is it we supposedly cannot know? Suddenly, a light bulb just might illuminate the scene. If said information were to simply pose a deep embarrassment to America's intelligence sector, Trump would only be too happy to see it all be revealed

and parroted on high. The information is likely far more serious and never mind that RFK had been tracking Oswald. A 2005 exposé by Mellen reveals that Jim Garrison had been onto something with his investigation of the later Sixties and therein lies the lightbulb moment.

Final facts: early in the fall of 1964, Angleton had somehow been involved in the execution of Mary Meyer, divorced wife of one of his fellow agents at Langley — the sister in law of (CIA asset) Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee. Ms. Meyer had been JFK's final and most intimate mistress. Her diary, still lost, has become legendary, is alleged to have been included in a trove of materials secretly absconded with from Counter Intelligence quarters after Angleton finally got fired. Author Peter Janney has written that this trove was stolen by the late Vietnam war hero William Corson (another CIA asset). In the days following Meyer's death, Angleton was twice caught red-handed attempting to pilfer her residence. She is said to have become a great influence on Kennedy who very early in his administration had voiced objection to Israel's development of nuclear weapons. Janney's dad was also a CIA agent, described as being Angleton's closest friend.

Like the termination of the Kennedy administration in Dealey Plaza, it seems that there will never be adequate clarification. James Angleton's craven, obsessive joust with the Soviets and with communism may have provided him a suit of armor, a gargantuan distraction in what may possibly have been an outward smokescreen disguising his search for a Soviet mole within the CIA — said mole, in this case, being himself. His having sponsored and been so friendly with double agent Kim Philby and been so wrapped up with himself playing the ultimate double agent in world history could explain the tragic bizarreness of Israel's attempt to annihilate Liberty.

Here follows a rationale: Given as dangerous as Angleton and Amit got, how could they have exerted such leverage as to literally force the movement of the Liberty to a position where a disguised assault would become a pretext for America's destruction of a portion, if not all of Cairo? This respondent can think of only two scenarios to account for such a degree of leverage.

1: That by 1967, Israel had managed to secretly convey an atomic

weapon into the US and hide it at a strategic locale and advise the threat of its existence to powers that be.

Or else —

2: That Israel had gained knowledge that J.J. Angleton was, in fact, THE Soviet mole operating inside America's intelligence establishment.

If true, a public revelation of either postulate would have been too much weight to bear upon the Johnson administration. Hence, Angleton and Amit and company exerted madness over the intelligence sector, the 303 Committee, Cyrus Vance, McNamara, and Johnson.

Soviet Russia had been prepared for the Six Day War, had stationed a sizeable fleet of surface and subsurface vessels in the east Mediterranean. One sub had targeted Jerusalem with a nuclear missile that would have been launched if American planes had attacked Cairo. How could LBJ have been so confident that the Soviets wouldn't retaliate in any degree, triggering a tit-for-tat escalation of violence? American aircraft launched from the USS America had gotten halfway across the Nile Delta, were within sixty-five miles of Cairo before Johnson ordered them to turn back.

Finally, it was Petty Officer 3rd Class Terence Halbardier who during the attack had managed to extend a coaxial cable to the one remaining cold antenna from the ship's sole remaining transmitter. Thereby, the ship's MayDay alert was broadcast. The powers that be were countered and advanced forms of life on this planet still remain. He saved us all.

One recommends that you buy *Blood in the Water!* You'll want to call your representatives, tell them about Joan Mellen's amazing book, and demand that a full Congressional investigation finally be conducted.



JOHN CRANDELL, A II CORPS VETERAN OF '69 WHO RETIRED FROM BEALE AFB IN 2014, HAS PREVIOUSLY WRITTEN FOR THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA QUARTERLY, MAJOR GENERAL, THE LOS ANGELES TIMES AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE MAGAZINE. HE AUTHORED HOMAGE TO DOWNTOWN: IN SEARCH OF PLACE AND MEMORY IN L.A. IN 2010. OTHERWISE, HE GROWS CACTI IN SOUTHEAST SACRAMENTO.

No Thanks

BONNIE CARACCILO (REVIEWER)

No Thanks by rg cantalupo
(2016)

1969 was the year I graduated from high school. It was the year represented by two-thirds of the names on The Wall. It was the year Nixon promised us "peace with honor." This was also the year during which most of the collection of poems was written by rg cantalupo, (the pen name of Vietnam veteran, poet, author, and playwright Ross Canton). Reviewing poems is often an impossible task. Recalling school days in English Lit and being required to interpret the words and thoughts of another was daunting, to say the least. The best I can do is share a couple of the many poems in this powerful collection and try to humbly describe what a woman, a non-veteran was able to glean from them. I can tell you this—I had to set the book down more than once to clear the weight of sorrow from my chest.

The emotional, raw sharing of memories too painful to speak, perhaps, just as difficult to write no doubt. We imagine a young grunt dropped into the vat of roiling hell that was to become his personal nightmare. His buddies disappearing before his eyes— one by one— moved to remember them and their memories, their hopes and dreams. They all had nicknames—as if to remain arm's length with the real flesh and blood human.

From the chapter *The World -*

Want

Baby San wanted horses mostly, Mustangs and Appaloosas, a small ranch outside Tucson with a good woman and a few sons.

Devil wanted his girlfriend to take this morning's letter back, for it to be the way it was that last night when she called out his name-

"Lonnie"- Lonnie, the name he had before he left The World, and wanted to finish school and write about our days here, this day

and the ones before, us simmering Spaghetti C's over heat tabs and drinking our six free beers in the bunker's dusty shade, the crackle of

green bullets igniting the air outside—far away now as we sat and drank and lied and killed the day, each of us wanting what we knew

could not have, till it was time to go and one by one we stood up and stepped through the blinding doorway and disappeared into the light.

Reading these poems feels like stumbling into someone's private lair, a place protected by its foreign feel and yet, torn open like the familiar somehow.

The author carries us from his first days in country to a year or so of his return. The pain growing, then the numbness setting in as he sees his buddies die. He alone—survives.

11/11/69

Devil?

Devil, can you hear me?

Spike? Lonnie? Baby San? Can you hear me Inside your dreams?

Can you see whose eyes hold our faces green shadows?

Can you see whose hands ready to feed us like dark seeds to this valley?—

This is Bravo Alpha Romero to Dragon 2/4, we're red—charging and coming in.

Do you read me Dragon 2/4?

We're red—charging and coming in!

Bravo Alpha Romero to Dragon 2/4?

Bravo Alpha Romero to Dragon 2/4, do you read me?

Come in Dragon 2/4, Come in! Come in!

Fire! Fire! Fire! Blow it! Blow it! Blow it!

Ooh God! Mama!

Ma ma.

Medic! Medic! Damn you!

Leave that one alone And come help me stop Lonnie's bleeding!

MEDIC!

Hold on, Lonnie. Hold on!

You're alright, You're alright Just relax.

Just close your eyes and think about home--

Devil? Spike? Lonnie? Baby San?

Is that you crawling toward me?

Is that your hand, Devil, closing round my heart?

Cantalupo/Canton carries us through the various "rites of passage" as he remembers his last day with his girlfriend lazing on a beach gazing at the passing clouds as if there wasn't a care in the world. Suddenly, like the half million men who were run through the grinder—that was the Vietnam War—their lives float between the real and the surreal.

This collection is a glimpse into the horrors of war and the blessings of camaraderie—desperate for sanity and survival—carrying one another across the rice paddies and through the jungles of a hell that no one should know. Untouchable like the reflection in a mirror. Surely combat veterans who found themselves in the War can relate to these fragile lines and messages. Those of us who were on the outside looking in share the sorrow and loss of a generation forever divided. Welcome home rg cantalupo/Ross Canton.

There is a singular emptiness that drifts in and out of every line. And the question remains:

The rice, the bamboo shoots, the leaves of the rubber trees grow green on our blood, theirs, yet no one asks why.

Why?



BONNIE CARACCILO IS A SUPPORTER OF VVAW AND A LONGTIME THORN IN THE SIDE OF THE EMPIRE. SHE LIVES IN BOSTON, MA.



Don't Thank Me For My Service

LARRY KERSCHNER (REVIEWER)

Don't Thank Me for My Service: My Vietnam Awakening to the Long History of US Lies
by S. Brian Willson
(Clarity Press, Inc., 2018)

I often say that my political education began in the jungles of Vietnam. I'm sure Brian Willson would say something similar. Using his training as a lawyer his new book, *Don't Thank Me For My Service*, reads like a prosecutor building a solid case brick by bloody brick.

Beginning with his vision of "countless human bodies scattered across the ground" Brian dissects what his "service" in Vietnam truly was. Looking back to place this in a historical context, Brian likens the

United States to a spoiled child who has never been held to account for the years of genocide, slavery, and racism both at home and abroad. This child has inevitably grown into the psychopathic American Empire of today.

The United States was designed from the beginning specifically with Empire As Way Of Life. Especially following the second World War, government and corporate media propaganda supported a near-total indoctrination of the public in the unquestioned hysterical belief in the exceptional nature of the American Way. Americans could not recognize "what would be considered criminally insane behavior if carried out by others."

Brian chronicles the criminal and barbaric lengths to which the United States has gone to force our industrial "civilization" on people around the world. Brian explains the extent of corporate collusion in the chemical warfare concentrated especially on the men, women, and children of developing Southeast Asian nations with a desire for self-sovereignty.

Brian illustrates the upheaval and resistance to the American War in Vietnam that developed both among the US public and among those fighting in Vietnam.

Brian states that "our healing as a nation depends on our removing the wool that remains in our eyes— that we seek to understand and grapple with these (deep historical

and psychological) forces, these lies that continually drive us to war and violence. We must strive to unravel the pretend US America— its skewed origin stories, its false mythologies, and its phony sense of "exceptionalism"— in an honest pursuit of "liberty and justice for all."

Reading this book would be a beginning of that journey.



LARRY KERSCHNER IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF BOTH VVAW AND VFP. HE IS IN THE 17TH YEAR OF A WEEKLY PEACE VIGIL INSIDE TRUMP COUNTRY. FIND LARRY ONLINE AT: WWW.LIVEJOURNAL.COM/~LARRYWRITES

Road to Reconcile

NADYA WILLIAMS (REVIEWER)

Road to Reconcile
by Joel Woodman
(TBGM Media, 2018)

If ever there was an antidote to the Ken Burns PBS series on the Vietnam War, it's the gentle, but truthful, new documentary *Road to Reconcile*. Shot in Vietnam over a three year period, it zeros in on four members of a 2017 annual tour to Vietnam, organized by Veterans For Peace (VFP).

The film features three American Vietnam War veterans:

David Clark—former Marine 1966-'70, who now lives full-time in Da Nang and co-lead the tour group.

Chuck Searcy—former Army intelligence 1966-'69, the main VFP tour leader, who has lived full time in Hanoi since 1995, and co-founded Project RENEW, to clear left-over explosives.

Sharon Kufeldt—former Air Force 1969-'71, who lives in Southern California, and joined the tour with a special mission.

And one Vietnamese man:

Mr. Hien Xuan Ngo—principal staff member of Project RENEW's Mine Action Center in Quang Tri Province.

The group of Vietnam War-era Americans also included: two more veterans, four long-time peace activists—two of whom served time in prison for their anti-war actions—and one draft resister who defected to Canada. The in-depth tours are organized by the Hoa Binh (Peace) Chapter 160 of VFP in Vietnam, and each participant is required to bring a minimum of \$1,000 as a donation to Vietnamese victims of our war. Every tour participant, since the 2012 start of the delegations, must bring the donation—with approximately \$250,000 given so far. The 17-day tour starts in the north in the country's capital Ha Noi, but focuses on the middle, Quang Tri Province, the most heavily bombed, sprayed and fought over of the war, and finishes in Ho Chi Minh City, in the south. The itinerary emphasizes the worst legacies of the war: toxic defoliants, mainly Agent Orange, UXOs (unexploded ordnance), and poverty.

Ex-Marine David Edward Clark opens the film in a night market in a small town in Quang Tri Province, his wife "Ushi" Nguyen Thi Thanh Huong, by his side.

"A lot of my friends back in the US don't like this place," says David, who returned to live in Da Nang in

2007. "I don't call it the 'Vietnam War,' I call it the American war in Vietnam. When I'm in the United States, when I lived in the United States, the Vietnam war does haunt me every day. Whenever I'm in Vietnam, you know, the Vietnam war was over 40 years ago."

"I came here as a young man to die for my country. Thank God I didn't die. I made it, physically I made it. But, I may get to die here by my own choice." David is the secretary-treasurer of the Hoa Binh VFP chapter.

Tour leader Charles (Chuck) Mathes Searcy, who is the president of chapter 160, is shown in his Ha Noi home of nearly 25 years, with numerous awards and certificates lining the walls and shelves. He is most proud of his Friendship Medal, the highest award given by Vietnam to foreigners.

"From the time I left Vietnam during the war in 1968 until I came back in 1992, I probably thought about Vietnam every day. Vietnam was ever present. For those of us who have chosen to come back and work here and try to make a contribution, the most tangible outcome that we can see is dealing with the principle war legacies the we left behind, which are unexploded ordnance (bombs and mines) and Agent Orange, which is more difficult and challenging, more controversial. Both of those are clearly American responsibilities. The tours are an introduction to Vietnam, both to the natural beauty and to the dynamics of Vietnam today, as well as the historical links that are most important to Americans."

We meet Sharon Lee Kufeldt as she prepares for a five-month trip to Asia, in the aftermath of the nearly five years that she cared for her father, a Korean War Marine veteran. Deeply attached to her Dad, she shows us a teddy bear made from the fabric of his favorite shirt.

"I served in the Pacific Headquarters of the Air force during the Vietnam War," she explains, "doing top-secret work. My generation was so impacted by this war, and we're still feeling the impact today, as far as I'm concerned." Sharon, who is a former vice president of National Veterans For Peace, has a special mission on the trip, to scatter some of the ashes of a Vietnam War veteran friend, at the request of his wife. "John was a wonderful man," she says. "He had really bad PTSD. I'm going to do something special with his ashes."

Hien Xuan Ngo, of Project RENEW, is a handsome 40-ish man with an intense demeanor. He speaks excellent English. "Personally, my mother fought during wartime," he tells us. "She was Viet Cong, fighting [the Americans] from 1964 until '69. Three times wounded. And now I'm working with American veterans who came back. The first time I met a US veteran, it was Chuck Searcy."

"My mom was a normal woman, an ordinary person. She was born in Quang Tri in '47. But when she was 3-years-old her father was killed by the French, during combat. You know, my grandfather was killed in 1950 when he was commanding a guerrilla platoon. My mom had a very hard childhood. Because of her participation in an anti-war demonstration led by Buddhists in the early '60s, she was arrested by the [US-backed] southern government. They put her into prison for three years—at the age of 16. So when she was released from prison she went and joined the National Liberation Front [Viet Cong] and became a fighter."

Hien Ngo shows the group around the impressive Mine Action Center but delivers the sobering statistic of at least 40,000 killed since the war by UXOs, and another 60,000 seriously injured. The president of the Republic of Ireland was a recent visitor, initiating his government's joining many other countries in the funding of Project RENEW's vital work; however, it is Norwegian People's Aid which provides the lion's share of aid.

But the most heartbreaking of the many legacies of the American war are the young Agent Orange victims. Dioxin, the most toxic substance known to science, was an (unnecessary) contaminant in Agent Orange. Its gene-warping destruction is passed through human and animal DNA; so the cancers, illnesses, and severe birth defects are now being spread to the Fourth Generation of Vietnamese, with an estimated four million affected today, including newborn babies.

We see tour member George Mische, a father of five, holding the hand of a deformed, bedridden child in the special ward of To Do Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. His non-violent Christian peace action in the late 1960s earned him two years in prison. His wife Helene, a retired special-needs children's nurse, was on the tour with him.

"The US actually has still never directly agreed to support the victims of Agent Orange," Chuck Searcy says. "Airport clean up [at Da Nang], yes; technical clean up, yes, but not helping the families who have suffered so much. Because we have a new government in the US with President Trump, the situation is even more uncertain. We really have no idea what he may do in the future." Additional clean-ups of former US bases were promised during the Bush and Obama administrations.

"My mother died because of a heart stroke seven years ago [aged 53]," Hien adds, "but I do believe that she is with me. She supports me in my decision to join working with Project RENEW and working with American veterans like Chuck Searcy and many others who are now coming back to give a hand to help. It took us two nations, two countries, two peoples, four decades to finally become friends. We have been through a very long and hard way, but finally, it happened."

"I feel so privileged and humble," says David Clark, "that I'm able to come here and make personal amends to these people—for me, yes, for me. It was 49 years ago I was here, and I do find peace here."

We meet Ushi, David's wife, a dynamic business woman whose first marriage to a Vietnamese man left her widowed with four adult children. She and David met in Da Nang, fell in love, and married in Vietnam and in the US. Her mother too was Viet Cong but welcomed David with open arms. David and Ushi raise funds for DVAVA (Da Nang Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange) and are also very active with Bicycles for Children of Vietnam, that provides bicycles to minority children in frontier areas that live over 10 km (6 miles) from school and do not have a bicycle. This program has donated over 600 bicycles in the last five years to minority children.

"You know, today I can just walk around and smile," David adds. "Going up and saying a few words in Vietnamese, and they just smile. And that is one of my greatest pleasures today—I put a smile on their faces. And that's my way," he says tearfully, "of making amends for what I did to these people."

The film ends with Sharon Kufeldt completing her friend's request to scatter the ashes. Sharon explains how she accompanied her father upon his return to Korea, and how much healing he got out of that—and she too gained "so much more insight into him, his journey, his life and what happened to us as a family during that wartime and after."

Sharon was asked to scatter the veteran's ashes anywhere in Vietnam but was told that he really liked the Mekong Delta. We see her sitting on a traditional wooden boat floating on a quiet tributary of the river delta, by a little table with flowers, fruit, incense, the envelope of ashes, and the vet's memorial program on it. "He especially loved the children of Vietnam," she reads, "and he spent many hours playing with them when he could. He also told stories of putting hand grenades in the Mekong River, so that the fish would float up to the surface so the people could gather them—an easy way to fish!" She empties the ashes and wishes him Peace.

One scene that is the heart of the film shows David talking to a pipe-smoking Vietnamese man on the street in a small rural city. They discover that they are the same age, 69, so David knows that this man was also in the war. When David tries to depart, the Viet veteran takes his hand to lead him down the street to show him something—Introduce him to the family? Share a meal? We do not know—but a bond of trust and brotherhood is clear.

As an epilogue, this statistic appears on the screen ahead of the credits: "According to the Department of Veterans Affairs, a US military veteran takes their own life every 65 minutes."

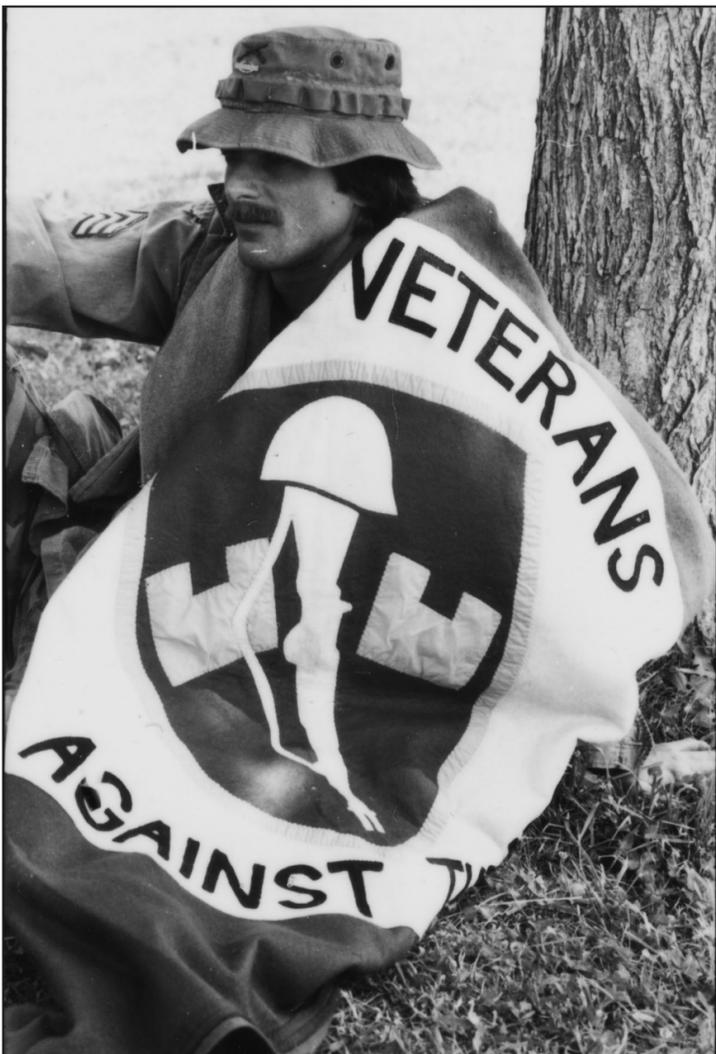
Clearly, the three veterans of the American War in Vietnam who are walking on the road to reconciliation have chosen life.

For information on the September 2019 VFP tour please see: www.vfp160.org

To view the trailer of "Road to Reconcile," go to <https://vimeo.com/250363844>. To purchase the film: www.roadtoreconcile.com



NADYA WILLIAMS HAS BEEN AN ACTIVE ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF SAN FRANCISCO VFP CHAPTER 69 SINCE THE U.S. ATTACK ON IRAQ, MARCH 2003. SHE COORDINATED THE VFP TOURS TO VIET NAM FROM 2012 TO 2017.



Hopes and Promises Lost, Stolen and Betrayed: Interest Payments on the 100-Year-Old Debt

JOE MILLER (REVIEWER)

A Shattered Peace: Versailles 1919 and the Price We Pay Today (Centenary Edition)
by David A. Andelman
(John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2014)

I'm guessing that, for most of us, the Treaty of Versailles is just some item we vaguely recall from high school history class. One of those things we needed to retain for a test that did not really mean anything for our daily lives. Well, for those of us who may have served in Southeast or Southwest Asia, decisions made at that peace conference (January to June 1919) had deep significance. Not to mention the fact that, for our fathers and grandfathers who sacrificed in World War II, the Treaty of Versailles had much to do with that conflict as well.

In November 1919, marking the anniversary of the end to the "war to end all wars." Woodrow Wilson said:

"A year ago today our enemies laid down their arms in accordance with an armistice which rendered them impotent to renew hostilities, and gave to the world an assured opportunity to reconstruct its shattered order and to work out in peace a new and juster set of international relations... Out of this victory there arose new possibilities of political freedom and economic concert. The war showed us the strength of great nations acting together for high purposes, and the victory of arms foretells the enduring conquests which can be made in peace when nations act justly and in furtherance of the common interests of man..."

Some high-sounding

words....'political freedom,' 'high purposes,' 'act justly,' 'common interests of man' ... at the time when the US was already involved, with other major powers, in efforts to overthrow the Bolshevik regime in Russia from 1918-1925. The Allied Powers (UK, France, USA, Italy) ultimately withdrew in 1920, while the Japanese stayed in the Russian Far East until 1922-25, when the Red Army forced them out as well. Then, there were the anti-Bolshevik Palmer raids in the USA, November 1919 to January 1920. Significant challenges to those high-sounding words.

This book, originally published in 2007, was enlarged and updated for this centenary edition in 2014. It is a very detailed inside view of all the machinations and intrigues that were behind the ultimate completion of the treaty on June 29, 1919.

For many of the delegates at the Conference, especially those from the lesser powers and the colonial peoples, there seemed to be some hope in Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points," which included free trade, open agreements, democracy, self-determination, political independence, and territorial integrity. This all proved to be empty talk.

As the author states: "The end of the Great War, which in perfect hindsight we call World War I, changed everything. Certainly the peace imposed at Versailles by the Western powers—Britain, France, Italy, and the United States—on the vanquished, not to mention the weak, the powerless, the orphaned, and the friendless, determined much of what

went wrong for the balance of the century and beyond."

This book is not some leftwing screed. Rather, I see it as an effort by a somewhat liberal veteran foreign correspondent, with many decades experience in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, to explain how we got to this point in international politics.

Why did the so-called "moral values" of Wilson and the USA not dominate the decisions made at Versailles? How was it that the British and French, old colonial powers, managed to work their will, along with Italy and Japan, to carve up the post-war world? With Wilson's acquiescence, of course.

Each of the powers were honing their intelligence operations going into this conference. We meet Allen Dulles, future CIA director, as he cuts his teeth on making sure that the US knew what each of the other powers were thinking and planning. The intrigues that run throughout this book reveal something quite akin to a John Le Carre novel.

Who were the winners? The Great Powers, of course, at least for the time being. Most of the decisions were ultimately made by the British, French, and Americans. Japan was a beneficiary, but only because the Great Powers wanted to have some influence over Japanese imperialist ambitions.

In this connection, China was one of the big losers, with territory that had been controlled by Germany now turned over to Japan. In May 1919, a month before the actual signing of the treaty, Chinese students and others rose up against their own

government in what is known as the May 4th Movement. Militant Chinese nationalism was born and would eventually result in a thirty years' civil war, with World War II, in the middle of that internal conflict.

Colonial peoples, like those of French Indochina, were also losers. Nguyen Tat Thanh [Ho Chi Minh] was totally rebuffed by US representatives at the conference when he appealed to Wilson's "Fourteen Points" as a support for the self-determination of Indochinese people.

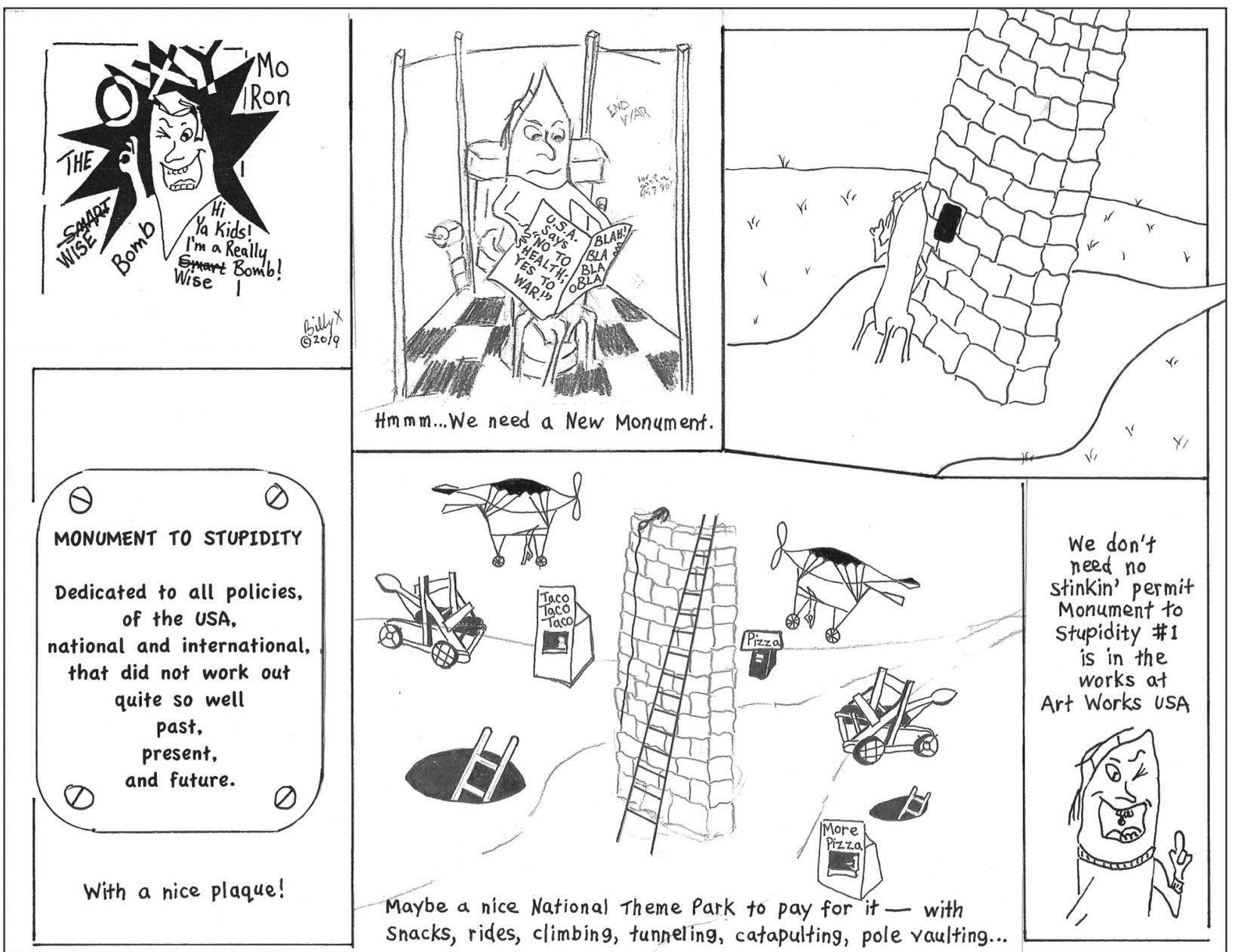
The Middle East was carved up in an attempt to limit the influence of religious differences among the various populations. Divide and conquer was the name of the game here.

The German people were devastated by the demands made by the Great Powers, and, forces for revolution there aside, this helped set the stage for the rise of Nazism.

This book is not a dry academic piece. The personalities almost jump off the pages, The intrigues and backstabbing will have you holding your breath, even though, unfortunately, we all know the end of the story. The "end" of the story is TODAY, the "endless wars."



JOE MILLER IS A NAVY VETERAN, 1961-68. NAVAL SECURITY GROUP, 1961-64. USS TICONDEROGA (CVA14), 1964-66. HELTRARON 8, 1966-68. HE IS A VVAW NATIONAL BOARD MEMBER.



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

Monument to Stupidity #1 Sponsorship opportunity

Sponsorships for The Monument to Stupidity #1 are being accepted. The concrete block wall (approximately 6' x 10') with an identifying plaque is proposed for the grounds of the Witoka Contemporary at Art Works USA. Construction is anticipated during 2019.

The monument is intended as the first in a series of monuments leading up to the much larger scale NATIONAL MONUMENT TO STUPIDITY that should be managed under the umbrella of the US National Park Service.

Contributions in any amount are welcomed, but sponsors donating \$100 or more will be recognized on a didactic panel. Credit or Pay Pal payments: www.billyx.net and click on Store. Snail mail: Monument to Stupidity c/o: Art Works USA - 27979 County Road 17, Winona, MN 55987



Do What You've Got To Do

DAVE CLINE AS TOLD TO RICHARD STACEWICZ

Excerpt from Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War by Richard Stacewicz Pages 56-58

Dave Cline was drafted into the Army in January 1967 and was sent to Vietnam in July of that year. He remained there until December 1967, when he was wounded for the second time and was sent back to the United States.

I was born in Buffalo, New York, grew up there, and then moved to the suburbs outside of Buffalo. I joined the Boy Scouts, church choir, all that stuff. My parents were just regular people, German and Irish background. They went to church - Lutheran church, Evangelical and Reformed.

My father was a World War II veteran. After World War II, they encouraged a lot of people coming home to start their own businesses because they had a lot of these loans. He started a business where they'd take these treadle sewing machines and put them in a box - you know, a carrying case - and make them electric sewing machines. He used to travel all up and down western New York and northern Pennsylvania doing that, and then that went bankrupt. He went back to working in the auto plants and the steel mills. He was involved in organizing the UAW-CIO prior to the war, when he was a machinist in Buffalo. He's always been a unionist.

Prior to going into the military, I didn't pay much attention to politics, [but] I had some awareness of what was going on. There was really not too much talk of politics in my household. The only time I can remember politics being discussed at any time was when Eisenhower ran for president. My father was big on him; I think that had to do with the World War II thing. You know - a lot of guys got behind Eisenhower because he had been the commander in the war.

We used to have arguments a lot with my father around racial issues, because our family had moved from Buffalo to the suburb of Eden. He wasn't a Klansman, but he reflected a lot of the prejudices that a lot of people reflected at that time. The area had been a German area, and it turned to black. A lot of people would say, "Look how the blacks are wrecking

the area" and stuff like that..

I was aware of the civil rights movement and sympathetic to the efforts of the civil rights movement. I never was involved in anything, but I was aware of the activities. They had the freedom summers, and people were going.

What made you sympathetic to the civil rights movement?

When I was a little kid in Buffalo, I had contact with black people. Also, where I lived was near an Indian reservation. I had two girlfriends who were Native American women, and I used to catch a lot of flak from my friends for going out with Indian women. It was not black, but it was prejudice, you know. I used to look at it like this: I got a girlfriend, I'm getting laid, and these guys are fucking sitting home at night. [Laughs.] That's how I looked at it.

So there was that connection, but I think it was the basic appeal to justice that anyone can identify with if you don't have an emotional attachment to racism. There was a positive thrust of fighting for what the ideals of America are supposed to be—you know, freedom and all that good stuff. You've got to remember that in them days, Kennedy and all this stuff is coming up. All of that was putting out a sense of a movement to fulfill ideals or fulfill dreams. There was a sentiment out there, even in Bob Dylan's songs.

When I was sixteen, my brother and I started playing guitar, and through the course of listening to music, I became aware of Bob Dylan's music. I got *Freewheelin' Bob Dylan*. We had our bedroom in the basement. We had the record player there. We put the record on. We're listening to him, and my brother and I say, "This guy sounds like shit, man; he can't sing for nothing." My father was upstairs yelling, "Turn that shit down." Of course, we're fighting with our father - you know, the generation gap - so we cranked it up. After that, we liked Bob Dylan. [Laughs.] Dylan's message was to question things.

Then, in the course of things, I one time had heard Dick Gregory. I think he ran for president, and he had gone around campaigning on the Peace and Freedom ticket, or something like that, and I had gone to hear him speak. He was critical of the war.



Dave Cline, Louie DeBenedette, and Bill Davis at VVAW's 25th Anniversary event in New York City, 1992.

I was out of high school and working. While my parents wanted me to go to college, I really didn't lean in that direction. I really didn't have any direction in my life. I was into partying, girls, rock and roll, drinking beer, and stuff like that.

I turned twenty on January 8th. I got drafted on January 15, 1967. The reason I got drafted when I was twenty was because I got my leg broke when I was eighteen. I got hit by a car, and I had a full-length cast on it for a long time. Up in Buffalo, they were grabbing you at nineteen. I got a six-month deferment because of the broken leg. In fact, I thought the broken leg would stop me from being sent to the war because it healed slightly shorter than the other, but no such luck.

When I got drafted, I was half thinking, hoping, that we are going to Vietnam to help these people fight communist aggression. That's what it was about, fighting for people's freedom, sort of the World War II [idea] - go into France and drive out the foreigners. My father had been a vet. They looked at it as, basically,

you've got to serve the country when you're drafted.

I recall thinking, I know that there's people saying it ain't right and stuff like that, but at the same time, I really didn't think that I was in a position to make that judgment. There's that tradition leaning on the one side [World War II, maleness] and then there was people saying this was fucked up on the other. I guess the tradition was stronger, or at least I deferred the decision. When I went in, I said that I don't know if it's right or wrong, but I'm going to do what you've got to do. I got myself pumped up, though. We were going over to help the people. I'm going to be the good guy. I'm going to be one of the good Americans helping the villagers and shit like that.



Copies of Winter Soldiers can be purchased through Haymarket Books at www.haymarketbooks.org/books/859-winter-soldiers.



Dave Cline at Kent State 20th Anniversary march in May 1990.

The Quiet Time

MARC LEVY

Imagine this: after a blistering hot day marching up and down mud-slicked hills, or tramping wide open fields, or steamy jungle, imagine setting out booby traps on enemy trails, laying in wait, then ever so carefully, breaking them down.

At dusk, after planting trips and claymores round the NDP, after finding a spot for your pack and gear, after eating tinned c-rations of beans and franks, imagine curling up on the cold, wet ground.

Now, fast asleep, being woken twice in the night by a man gently tapping your resting arm. "You're guard," he whispers, for the first of two one-hour shifts.

Leaving that foxhole the second time, grenades, machine gun, claymore detonators all in place, imagine two hours sleep, rising at dawn, shrugging off bugs and wet bamboo, rubbing rheumy eyes, brushing sticky teeth.

Before the grueling day begins, there is the welcoming taste of GI coffee. Here is how to make it:

Seated crossed legged, take a chunk of C4 the size of a thumbnail, shape it into a ball, set it carefully down.

Tear open the packet of instant coffee saved from last night's c-ration meal. Pour it into a canteen cup half filled with water.

Tap the brown powder over the cup, stir with a c-ration white plastic spoon.

Strike a GI match and light the C4. Do not breathe in the white smoke;

the fumes, it is said, are harmful.

Hold the canteen cup over the burning explosive until the water boils, about thirty seconds.

Remove the cup from the bright yellow flames. Let the C4 burn itself out. Those who step on it risk losing a foot.

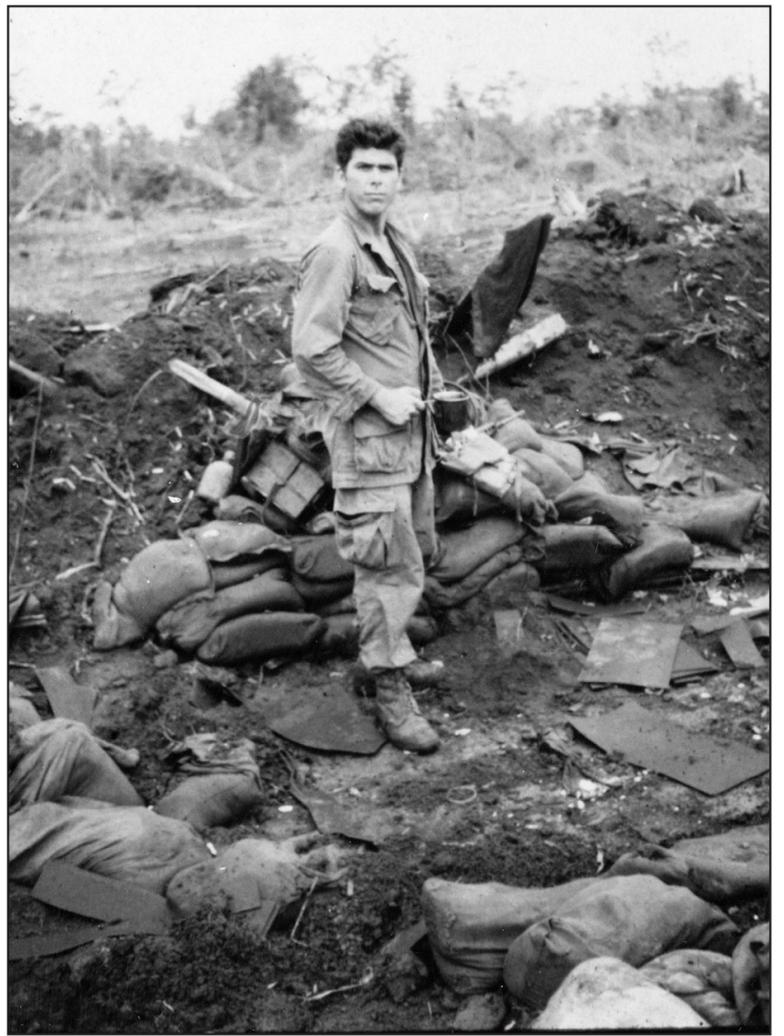
Tear open and pour in one or two packets of non-dairy creamer. Repeat with sugar. Use the white plastic spoon to mix and stir. With eyes closed, inhale the savory vapors; cup to your lips, feel the hot inky brew flood your mouth, scourge your tongue, roll down your willing gullet. The taste is awful, but it will do.

Grunts savor this quiet time, before every inch of our bodies are salty with sweat. This quiet time before seething mosquitoes, snapping ants, creeping leeches bite or sting or drink our blood.

This quiet time before sudden shots fill us with dread that is always new. This quiet time before the shrieking air sings of the wounded, smells of the dead.

It is the all too fleeting quiet time, which ends with the softly echoed 'zero two,' followed by the dim rustling of one hundred packs, helmets, weapons reluctantly lifted, slung, shifted to place.

See how the flock of helmeted cranes slouch against their rifles, feel how the sweat drips down narrow cheeks, collects at the chin, free falls, forming small dark spots on half-bent knees.



Sgt. Biggen on LZ Green with his morning canteen cup of coffee, Tay Ninh, 1970.

Listen, as moments after the hushed command, one hundred grudging soldiers, one by one, reluctantly trudge forward, into the grim unwinnable jaws of Vietnam.



MARC LEVY WAS AN INFANTRY MEDIC WITH DELTA I-7 FIRST CAVALRY, VIETNAM/CAMBODIA IN 1970. HIS WEBSITE IS MEDIC IN THE GREEN TIME. COM. HIS BOOKS INCLUDE HOW STEVIE NEARLY LOST THE WAR AND OTHER POSTWAR STORIES; DREAMS, VIETNAM; AND OTHER DREAMS.

Adventures of a Buffer Technician

GREGORY ROSS

Let me start by saying this is a piece about my first months in the military and my experiences with two marines. Very quickly and over the rest of my four-year enlistment, I learned to respect marines, especially those I met on board ship on the "Gun Line" a mile off the coast of Vietnam. There were those who had pulled sea duty like me and those who were helicoptered to the ship from "in-country" for a few days of R and R (See article "Rest and Relaxation" in the Fall 2014 issue of *The Veteran*).

"Squids are for kids" shouted the diminutive "Gyrine." He was about five feet two inches and maybe 120 pounds, but surrounded by more stereotypical "Leathernecks" of muscle bulk and height. This was the first time I had heard this fish and child-based insult.

It was January 1967, the first day of Communications Technician School. Because I had taken typing in High School and could do more than "hunt and peck," I was being sent to the CTR [Radio Surveillance] division of the Naval Communications Training Center in Pensacola, Florida.

It was suggested that because of my scores on aptitude tests taken during boot camp I could be transferred to Fort Ord in Monterey, California and enrolled in language school to become a CTI: Communications Technician Interpreter. But, I was not willing to sign up for the extra two years of duty even though it would be served in California. There were two jobs I kept turning down: Medic and Interpreter. Interpreter might not have been so bad, but the only languages offered were Vietnamese, Korean and Chinese, in that order of import and any one of those languages would have put me in a combat zone. Worse, seventy-five to eighty percent of medics pulled combat duty.

The beginning weeks of "R" branch school involved learning Morse Code. First, I was part of a room full of men [if you could call an average age of 19, men] yelling

out the Morse Code alphabet from "Dit Dah/Alpha to Dah Dah Dit Dit/Zulu." A few weeks later, when we could do that from memory, random slides flashed on a screen of either the "Dit Dah" combination, to which we would yell out the "letter word" or the other way around. After we got that down we were set in front of a typewriter with headphones, known

**Finally, he yelled out, "Shut the #uck up, that is good enough for government work."
"Good enough for government work" became our catchphrase.**

as "cans" and the code, blocks of five characters made up of upper and lower case letters and numbers, came across at increasing speeds. (Example of code block: wU7mZ)

Most of the day was spent with "cans" building up your speed and accuracy, punctuated with a few classes about encoding, decoding, calibrating radios and math associated with the job. That last one led to a humorous event. A salty old Chief taught a section on how to use a mathematical formula to determine time zones in relationship to Greenwich Mean Time [in "real Navy life," you looked on a chart]. The Chief kept making basic math mistakes. A few students would correct him. Finally, he yelled out, "Shut the #uck up, that is good enough for government work." "Good enough for government work" became our catchphrase.

I was about a month from "R" branch school graduation, when my scores plummeted. At first, the Brass accused me of malingering. I was made to take code for twelve hours a day, six days a week for two weeks before I was sent to sickbay for an ear exam. It was discovered I had an eardrum defect that kept me from hearing all of one frequency. The "Dits" had disappeared.

I was reassigned to the "O" branch [Operator] school, which involved taking the info collected by the "R" and "I" branches and transcribing it onto paper tape on a Korean War era teletype. This was called "poking" because the teletype literally poked holes, representing "Dits" and "Dahs" into the paper tape. The tapes were then transferred to the

classroom where we were learning to send, receive and transcribe messages. To graduate the class you had to "poke" 70 words a minute with eighty percent accuracy. Four years later, upon discharge, I could "poke" 100-120 words per minute with 97-100% accuracy. Working 48 hours in four days in a schedule that included two 16-hour days in a row, sandwiched between 2 days of 8 hours gave you plenty of time to up your speed and accuracy. Ship duty was scheduled as 12 hours on / 12 hours off, even when in port. War is a 24/7 proposition.

The "O" Branch school had already begun, so until the next cycle, I was with other Seaman Apprentice students on cleaning duty (also known as "sh!t detail"). After a short amount of time, we became friends and referred to ourselves as "Buffer Technicians."

Our days were spent cleaning classrooms, heads, hallways, and policing the grinders. Hallway floors were a major portion of our job. We would take turns being all aspects of a crew: first, there were the "Swab Jockeys," those that stripped the floor of wax and dirt, then laid down a new coat of wax. When that dried the "buffer techs" would use a polishing pad to bring the floor up to a sheen.

Due to the high volume of foot traffic, the hallways had to be buffed twice daily. The wax was usually good for about three days before it had to be stripped again. Every day at 7am and again at 1pm, the "buffer techs" would begin polishing the floors. I liked being a "buffer tech," and some people did not. I traded and got to polish a lot.

In the evenings and on weekends the "Floor Techs" hung out. One of my friends was an excellent singer/guitarist and made up a blues-inspired song that went roughly like this: "If I was a NavCad baby, would you be my NavCadette; if I was a NavCad baby would you be my little NavCorrine or you one of those women goes out with those fucking marines?" He played it at an open mic in a club in Pensacola. It almost started a riot.

There was a jarhead who thought it funny to scuff his shoes along the floor as we were buffing. I politely asked him to stop; he less politely told me "Go Fuck Yourself." The next day I suggested he could mature and stop being an "asswipe." He again suggested I could engage in intercourse with myself. The third day, as he came down the hall, scuffing and smiling, I smiled back and "lost control" of the buffer. It landed on his spit-shined shoes and took everything off down to the bare leather. I apologized and remarked that I hoped he had another pair of spit-shined shoes because those were ruined. I thought the tough guy might cry. He never again came down a hallway we were working.

I did not get the shit beat out of me. The only thing I could think was the other jarheads also viewed him as a jerk.



GREGORY ROSS WAS IN THE NAVY, SERVING IN MOROCCO, SIX DAY WAR (1967), PHILIPPINES (1968), AND VIETNAM, 7TH FLEET, GUN LINE (1969). PUBLISHED IN ANTHOLOGY: "VETERANS OF WAR, VETERANS OF PEACE" EDITED BY MAXINE HONG KINGSTON.

In A Yokohama Hospital On My Way Back Home, 1969

RG CANTALUPO

Excerpt from Kill Today, So Tomorrow Will Not Come (New World Publishers, 2018)

I'm done with half-truths.

I'm done with being told I'm going to get better when I don't know who I am, or who I was.

I need to see my face.

I need to see the I hidden under the gauze bandage that's covered my head for the past two months.

I swivel out of bed, lift myself into my wheelchair, and roll into the bathroom reeking of antiseptic and piss.

The harsh fluorescent light kills my eyes.

I peel the bandage back from my skull, grip the sink, and pull myself up from the wheelchair.

A sharp stab shoots through the open wound on my left arm.

I grip tighter to stand, but my good hand can't hold me.

I fall back, almost topple over, rest to catch my breath.

Sweat slides over the wire sutures running along my jugular vein and across my skull. I wipe the beads off with the fingers of my right hand, scratch at the prickly stitches on my head.

What are the wire sutures for?

To keep my brain from falling out?

If I bend my head down, will the gray entrails of my brain spill out, my life dangle from the wire sutures like thick worms?

My fingers search for a hole in my frontal lobe, but there's only a depression where the shrapnel pierced my skull.

I want to give up, roll back to the Head Ward and sit in front of the window, gaze absently at the snow-capped mountain rising from the distant horizon.

I want to, but I can't.

I roll a few inches closer, grip the sink with my good hand, lift, stand, hold.

As I rise to stand, my hand weakens, and starts to slip off the edge.

I thrust my left arm out to stop

my fall.

A red-hot knife pierces my arm and shoots up to my brain.

I've stretched too far.

The four-inch by three-inch gash along my left forearm tears open and starts to bleed.

The raw flesh, jagged and torn like the frayed belly of a salmon, trickles a thin, red stream.

The gauze bandage turns pink.

Fuck it.

I bite back the pain, grip the sink, and lift my head to the mirror.

Tiny wire stitches run from one side of my skull to the other where the cranial flap was pulled back for the neurosurgeon's saw.

There's a dent about the size of a matchbook where the shrapnel smashed into my right forehead, pierced the skull, and lodged inside my frontal lobe.

This is not my face.

No, the eyes are wrong, the cheeks stretched too tight against the bone.

I want to kill this face.

I want to break it into a million mirrored shards.

I raise my right hand, ball it up, reach back to shatter its reflection with my fist. Halfway through the punch, I pull back, press my bare knuckles against the glass.

I open my hand, touch my face, walk my fingers over the cheeks, lips, and eyes, wonder what name I can put on this pain I feel throbbing in my mind.

But there is no name, not for this.

Absence maybe, but absence stained with grief.

The heartache of something taken, of something lost; the grief of a body tagged with no name.

I am nineteen.

I am in a hospital in Yokohama, Japan.

My future stares back with dead eyes.

* * *

Darkness bleeds to dim light.

Beside me, a man moans.

He moans like an animal, like a dog run over by a car lying along the side of a road.

Two enormous purple-black eyes punctuate his face.

But there are no bandages on his body, no bloody gauze wrapped around his head like mine.

Probably a percussion wound, a high-intensity explosion too close to his head. Brain trauma. Air particles propelled so fast and hard they shot through his skull and jellied his brain.

A 122-millimeter rocket exploding on his bunker as he slept, maybe.

Or a five hundred pound bomb—a 155 short-rounder—a misplaced dot on a grid—some fuck up somewhere.

Nothing worse than to get wasted by your own bad intentions.

Probably never knew it was coming.

Probably never even woke from the percussive shock, and doesn't know he's here.

Aces and eights, man. That's all this war deals—Aces and eights every hand.

I wonder if he'll ever wake, or if his brain is too filled with holes.

Luck. Dumb fucking bad luck.

And something else, something that I saw yesterday when they were turning him from one position to the other.

A small wound, maybe a half an inch long, at the base of his neck.

One tiny piece of shrapnel—that's all it took to sever his spine, to paralyze his body from the neck down.

Aces and eights, man. Nothing but aces and eights all the way down the line.

He moans and moans.

He wants to scratch out his eyes, to dig into his eye sockets and tear out the pain throbbing in his head.

But he can't.

His arms are bound, strapped to the bed.

Every two hours someone comes to rotate him 180 degrees.

Each time someone comes, his moans rise to a crescendo.

Each time they leave, his moans

die out to a dull bay like a wounded water buffalo.

I call him Panda.

In the Head Ward's black night, when I hear the shuffling feet of the somnambulant moving through the ward, his moans give content and context to my terror dreams.

I see Panda's purple-black eyes wide open, blank, empty as bullet holes in the night ward's dusk—eyes that haunt me like the eyes of the undead—a ghost's eyes gazing into a tomorrow that will never come.

Panda's enormous purple-splotched eyes are ethereal in the waking ward.

I wonder if that's what his brain looks like—bruised, purplish, blotched like a too-ripe fig inside his skull?

Is that why his eyes are purple as if his bloody brain were squished out his eye sockets leaving purple-black splotches?

His mouth opens, and a long "Ooooooooooooooh!!!" thunders over the sleepless ward.

"Nurse!" I call. "NURSE!!!"

But no one comes.

No one ever comes.

Not now anyway.

Later, maybe.

Later, someone will come, turn him upside down, turn his dark eyes toward the night ward's starless floor.

His "Oooooohs" will rise then, crescendo, sound like a chanting prayer: "oooh, oooh, oooh, oooh."

I shut my eyes.



RG CANTALUPO, (ROSS CANTON), IS A POET, PLAYWRIGHT, FILMMAKER, NOVELIST, AND DIRECTOR. HIS WORK HAS BEEN PUBLISHED WIDELY IN LITERARY JOURNALS IN THE UNITED STATES, ENGLAND, AND AUSTRALIA. HE SERVED IN THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION AS AN RTO FOR AN INFANTRY COMPANY FROM 1968-69 AND RECEIVED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V FOR VALOR UNDER FIRE.

The Stolen Story

TOM GERY

One good turn deserves another, or does it?

It was the evening of the final day in my aviation unit. I had orders. DEROS: 7 Sep 69 EDCSA: (To USARV Rtn Det): 6 Sep 69 (To next unit): 9 Sep 69. I was elated and being in a celebratory mood found myself on the flight line by the Scout Platoon hooch getting high. I was introduced to pot in Vietnam, liked it, and thought little of it being a part of saying goodbye with some of the guys.

Smoking on the flight line at night was no big deal except when a jeep rolls up, and the first sergeant jumps out. He could smell the pungent odor of cannabis; I could smell fear, busted. Sarge said he knew all along the who, what, where, when of our little group and to get into the jeep. Needless to say, it was a long, fretful night for me. I saw my ticket home being given to somebody else and me being held up for some kind of Article 15 proceeding. It was worse than being shot out of the sky by a guy with an AK.

About four months earlier I was shot out of the sky by a guy with an AK. As Aeroscouts, our mission that day was to look for the enemy around Kien Long. I was the observer in the lead LOH (low observation helicopter) when we came upon a good size unit of "bad guys" who were quick on the draw putting a lot of rounds into our little Hughes aircraft. Oil pressure

disappeared, my pilot was coolly advising the C&C ship that he was going to put the LOH down some distance away from where we took fire.

The memories to this day, a few weeks short of fifty years, remain vivid, like a piece of film on a movie reel that can be rewound and run through the projector at any given moment, over and over again.

It turned out ok, the cobras kept rolling in with suppression fire on a nearby tree line, our wingman flared in for us, we pulled the radios out of the ship, we were unscathed. The A/C (aircraft) sustained an inordinate amount of damage while still looking like a Hughes "bumblebee." It was sling-loaded back to Maintenance the next day. Many, many, many holes, with a prominent one, not more than 6 inches from where my 20-year-old helmeted head was bobbing around the day before.

The last little bit of information to pull this story together involves me and the platoon's First Sergeant meeting up a couple of years ago. I learned that he lived somewhere near where I was going to be spending some time. I left a short message on his voicemail mentioning I wanted to say thanks for not busting me that night on the flight line. The morning after the busted flight line goodbye party went as ordered. I grabbed some chow, my gear, a ride to the flight line and a seat on an outbound Huey. My

trip back to the world had begun with no Article 15 in sight.

Fast forward to a few years ago when I arrived at the retired First Sergeant's house. He didn't look a whole lot different except for the passage of almost fifty years. We sat down, talked a bit, mostly about our respective life histories, drank some tea, and I said what I'd come to say. "Thanks, Sarge for not busting me that night many years ago. It could have set me on a totally different life course." I truly meant it because I could've gotten really screwed by the system. Instead, it was homeward bound. I had been through training in the States, a year, in "The 'Nam," and back home "on the block" in less than 20 months. To this day I am deeply grateful for my wonderful good luck through that time in the US Army.

During the visit, the host showed his wall of memories and commemorations. It was high and wide with many framed documents, plaques, pictures, military memorabilia. A rather accomplished career achieved over many decades, through war and peace. Hats off to the warrior!

One of the pieces on the wall involved some pictures of a shot up LOH, a paragraph quoting the pilot describing the number of holes in the aircraft and the fact that he and his observer had avoided any injury. Then I see another write-up, this one a summary of the First

Sergeant's military career. A part of that biography told the story of flying in a LOH, getting shot down, receiving wounds from shrapnel and machine gun fire, the ship receiving 170 holes, plexiglass bursting. I thought wow, then looked at the date of the action, double wow, June 26, 1969, and the area Kien Long, "Oh my god that's just like my experience," mumbling to a very confused self.

I knew the truth especially because of the medal the Army awarded me for actions taken when the LOH was shot down on that 26th of June 1969. But hey, the guy did not flag me from jumping on that outbound Huey. One good turn deserves another. After all, I got my lucky course in life, and the First Sergeant got a story.

Note: I wrote this up not do harm to anyone but rather to share a very unusual story which was revealed after many years. I left out identifying information on purpose. If there is a question as to the veracity of this information I can provide documentation on a confidential basis.



TOM GERY SERVED IN THE US ARMY AND WAS OVERSEAS IN VIETNAM FROM 1968-1969. HE IS A RETIRED SOCIAL WORKER AND PROUD PARENT AND GRANDPARENT FROM READING, PA.

The Betrayal

PAUL J. GIANNONE

Excerpts from the Chapter: Betrayal on the Street Without Joy from the memoir A Life in Dark Places by Paul J. Giannone (Torchflame Books, 2019)

Mike O'Neal and I were helping move refugees from their camp back to their original homes in Quang Dien District. A continuous parade of five- and ten-ton military trucks rumbled by our vehicle, heading north, hauling refugees and whatever meager possessions they could carry.

War hates civilians, because civilians get in the way. We had tried to eliminate that problem in Vietnam by creating "free fire zones" in which any living thing was considered an enemy combatant. The "good" civilians living in these areas had to be moved in order to be "saved," and, more importantly, to allow the army to get at the enemy. In Quang Nam, the province to the south where I had previously served, this philosophy had created between 60,000 and 80,000 refugees.

I had seen the glossy reports on the positive impact of American aid, but I had also witnessed the reality behind these reports. The refugee camps were often horrific places of disease, starvation and death. I remembered counting five babies that died of malnutrition in one morning in a refugee camp outside of Da Nang.

Indeed, this was one of the great contradictions of the war—avoiding civilian death was America's rationale for free-fire zones and refugee camps, yet both actually killed civilians. In my work the thought kept rattling in my head, "weren't these the people we came to save?"

Of course, having large numbers of refugees in every province in Vietnam meant that the enemy controlled the land outside the major cities. One indicator of a war being lost is the inability to control territory, and by 1970 our government was fighting a deteriorating battle in Southeast Asia.

Yet the Pentagon was trying (and sometimes succeeding) to convince Congress and the American people that the US was actually winning the conflict. The huge number of refugees were rarely mentioned. In fact, the medical and food aid designated for these people was often sold on the black market by corrupt South Vietnamese officials. Often, this material then ended up in the hands of our enemy.

Music blared from one of the trucks, "People Are Strange" by the Doors, a song that described what a typical GI experienced in Vietnam on a daily basis. "People are strange, when you're a stranger. Faces look ugly when you're alone. Women seem wicked when you're unwanted. Streets are

uneven when you're down." That song had become part of the soundtrack for the war, the lyrics reflecting our feelings. We were rocking to the Doors while the government was marching to John Philip Sousa.

It had all seemed so easy and logical at first. I was to assist Mike in relocating 8,000 refugees back to their homes using transportation support from Camp Evans, an artillery fire base about ten miles to the west. Taking people home looked good in print.

Nevertheless, this became a point of conflict between Mike and our Commanding Officer (CO). Mike wanted to keep the refugees where they were for safety reasons. The CO had orders from above to move them to their original home sites. I doubted whether the CO cared if we kept the refugees where they were or resettled them on quicksand. But he had his orders.

About two weeks into our assignment, I saw Mike and CO standing close together near the CO's jeep, engaged in a heated dispute. The CO was almost standing on his tiptoes, yelling in Mike's face. Veins were popping out on his shaved head. Spittle burst from his mouth. He was screaming, "Move them! Move these fucking bastards up that goddamned road! You're behind schedule and the PSA has been on my ass. I don't want any more arguments. And I don't want you going to province headquarters to try and go over my head! I can easily have you transferred to the infantry!"

In reality, the CO had the power on his side. The threat came from the PSA for this province, Colonel Chism.

The flawed, highly political logic behind the refugee movement in Quang Dien District was to show that people could live safely and return to their home villages, protected by the Thieu regime. At the tactical or field level, however, it was obvious that the South Vietnamese military was not truly in control of the relocation sites. The VC owned the land at night, and anyone there after dark who did not support Ho Chi Minh would pay an extreme price.

This was Mike's nightmare.

"Pablo," he told me, "We're killing these people, you know that, don't you? We may not be pulling the trigger but we are sure as hell killing these people."

Still, I replied "It don't mean nothing," which translated into "there's nothing you can do" in the standard GI jargon of the day.

We used vehicles from a transport company at Camp Evans. Our day began at 7:00 A.M. when the trucks would rendezvous in front of our little district MAC/V compound.

The refugees were to be dropped off along this road near their old home sites. The logistics of the move had been simplified by Mike. He had divided each of the refugee camps into sections. Each section was to amount to one day's work. At the end of each working day Mike informed the village elders and designated section chiefs as to which section would be focused on the next day. It was expected that the designated section would be ready to move when we arrived at 8:00 AM.

Meanwhile, the question of security was always on our minds. There were Viet Cong units operating in the area and there was always potential for ambush. The threat of hitting a landmine was also extremely high. Road 597 was a road in name only: most of its surface was rutted sand and thick mud. Yet this was the only route.

The only protection we had from mines was to sit on our flak jackets and pray that if we drove over one, the explosion would not remove our most precious organs. I had seen a ten-ton truck hit a landmine, and the rescue party was only able to find a piece of the driver's skull. We were driving a three-quarter-ton truck.

We did take the normal precautions against ambush and sniper fire. All of us carried weapons, bandoleers of extra ammunition and grenades. We wore flak jackets whenever we were not sitting on them.

The Viet Cong were cleverer than we imagined. The ambush was never sprung. Mines were never laid. We should have foreseen what that meant. There were clear signs of what was to come even on the very first day of resettling refugees. The Vietnamese officials from the provincial and district governments were conspicuously absent during the official opening ceremonies for the refugee move.

The villagers refused at first to start packing, or packed haphazardly. Cold, angry stares greeted us each morning. My main function was to provide medical support to the refugees, as well as to back up Mike in case of an ambush. I now had a new responsibility—guarding his back in case the refugees turned on him. We, not the Viet Cong, had become the enemy. Each day it took an increasing amount of coercion and force to get the people to pack up and move out.

For years, these people had cultivated the land near their refugee camps. The rice fields near these camps needed to be constantly tended and irrigated, and now we were moving them away from their food source. Who would feed them now? The South

Vietnamese government? That would never happen. The Communists? Not a chance. We were moving these people into an area where they faced either a quick death at the hands of the Viet Cong or a slow death from starvation.

To add salt to the wound, I heard rumors that the absentee landlords of the lands the refugees had fled expected seven years' back rent from them. The refugees also were still paying rent for the land they tilled at the refugee sites. The line between liberator and enemy became increasingly muddy.

About a week after we deposited the first refugees at the relocation site, the Viet Cong began skillfully applying the pressure. Every few evenings, sometimes late into the night, they dropped mortar rounds in or near the relocated villages. I heard of no deaths or wounded. But killing was not necessary. The crack of the mortar shells hitting the ground was enough. Like the howl of a beast breaking the silence of the deadly night, each explosion said to these people, "We are out here, waiting."

The villagers asked a local Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) unit for help. The ARVN did nothing. On his days off, Mike drove back to Hue City to try and stop this insanity. He discussed, pleaded and begged—all to no avail. CO wanted it. Colonel Chism wanted it. And President Nixon and our government wanted it. And so the move was completed.

On September 20, 1970 *Stars and Stripes Pacific* ran a two-page photo story on the refugee move in northern Thua Thien Province. The title was "New Security Brings Life to Street Without Joy." Conspicuously missing from this glowing, apocryphal article were the facts—the suffering, the terror, the likely cost in human lives.

This operation was a part of my informal education in US foreign policy. It reminded me that our government too often operates on lies. I continued to work with Mike until he was discharged from the service. He was never the same. That operation had taken some of the intensity from his blue eyes. He no longer walked with a bounce and urgency to his step.



PAUL J. GIANNONE IS A 40+ YEAR CAREER PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY RESPONDER, PLANNER, DIRECTOR AND AUTHOR. HIS PUBLIC HEALTH CAREER BEGAN "UNDER FIRE" AS A TWO TOUR (1969–1971) PUBLIC HEALTH ADVISOR WITH THE 29TH CIVIL AFFAIRS COMPANY IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM (BRONZE STAR, ARMY COMMENDATION MEDAL, AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE PUBLIC HEALTH MEDAL).



First they came for the journalists.

We don't know what happened after that.



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DANZIGER

The Rutland Herald
Washington Post Writers Group

Coming Out of The Footlocker As A Military Dependent

HERB MINTZ

As a son of an NCO who served more than 20 years in the Armed Forces, I was a military dependent for almost sixteen years.

A military dependent is the spouse or child of active duty and/or retired military personnel who serve or have served in the Armed Forces. Dependents occupy the home front, the perimeter inside the perimeter.

My Dad received a notice for military service after the end of WWII during a peacetime draft. On July 1, 1948, he joined the Air Force. After boot camp, he was assigned to Offutt AFB in Bellevue, Nebraska, the Headquarters of the Strategic Air Command.

When my Dad's initial enlistment was about to end in 1951, he had a chance to exit the Air Force honorably, but, due to the Korean War, he "was frozen" (his words) in the Air Force for an additional twelve month extension of his first three year enlistment and another full re-enlistment of three years beginning in 1952.

In 1953, I was born into a military family, inside a military installation, Offutt AFB, as a military dependent. I didn't know it but I was born into larger history of military dependency, The Camp Follower (see photo).

Camp Followers were, for the most part, the children and wives of male soldiers. From camp to camp, they provided multiple services for their male soldiers engaged in military service.

The Air Force, during my years as a dependent, no longer required many of the historical services to be provided solely by a family member for my father-soldier, but for the most part, we did follow my Dad from base to base.

My Dad's served as an airman from July 1948 to October 1968.

His tours of duty, without my military family, included, Yokota AFB, Japan (1956-57), Osan AFB, South Korea (1960-62) and Tan Son Nhut AFB, Saigon, South Vietnam (1967-68). He was "in country" during the January 1968 Tet Offensive.

After Vietnam, I preferred to call my Dad a soldier.

I followed my Dad's path between and inside his stateside duty stations: Offutt AFB (1953-56); Lackland-Kelly AFB, San Antonio, Texas (1956-59); Donaldson AFB, Greenville, SC (1960-62); Truax AFB, Madison, WI (1962-64); Ent AFB, Colorado Springs, CO (1964-67); and Wilmington, NC, while my Dad was stationed at Tan Son Nhut AFB, South Vietnam (1967-68) and until he terminated his active service at Seymour Johnson AFB, in Goldsboro, NC, in 1968.

A common experience of the dependent is the transfer every two to three years to a new duty station for the career soldier and the absentee

parent-soldier.

My Dad's first transfer occurred in March 1956. He was sent to Japan. My dependent family did not follow him there since my Mom's parents were both ill. This was the first time that my Dad was absent from the home front for more than a year.

In 1957, my Dad-soldier, returned to Offutt AFB from Yokota AFB in Japan and received his new orders for Lackland-Kelly AFB in San Antonio. With any duty transfer, housing is paramount. My military family moved into NCO housing at 40 Venus Street, Lackland-Kelly Homes. Our unit was built in 1940 and was located on the periphery of the base.

I first experienced the concept of TDY while my Dad was stationed at Lackland-Kelly. He received his orders one day and was gone the next but only for short periods of time.

In 1959, my Dad-soldier, received his new orders for Donaldson AFB in Greenville, SC. Mom told me that there would be military housing for us. There wasn't. After many days in a motel, my military family moved into a small house in an established civilian neighborhood and then into an isolated cinder block house in the countryside near Piedmont, SC.

In 1960, my Dad was transferred to Osan AFB in South Korea.

Another aspect of the military dependent experience is that the vast majority of the time there are no family relatives living nearby. The only relative, according to my Dad, who resided nearby, was my Uncle Sam. On occasions when my Dad-soldier was absent, my military family could have use a little help from my Uncle Sam but it never materialized.

Another defining feature of the military dependent is the changing of schools after moving. In 15.5 years, up to the eighth grade, I attended eleven different schools.

Dad returned to Donaldson in early 1962 and shortly thereafter, he received new orders to transfer to Truax AFB in Madison, Wisconsin by March 1962. This would also be the first time I left school before the term ended.

There was no military housing for us. My Dad rented a small house just outside of the base on the very eastern edge of the Madison city limits.

In late 1962, my military family of six did move to 926 Mitchell Street, a one-story, two bedroom, one bath duplex in the new Capehart Military Housing on the western edge of Sun Prairie, WI. We shared one half of a rectangular building with another NCO military family whom I never spoke to or got to know. There were two doors into our unit and a small asphalt slab where a car could be parked. For a long time, there was no grass or weeds just dirt that surrounded the duplex. After the first good rain,



Tent life of the 31st Pennsylvania Infantry at Queen's farm, vicinity of Fort Slocum, Washington, District of Columbia. (1861 - American Civil War) A "camp follower" military family.

water leaked into the basement.

My first experience of class in the military happened there. Through our backyard and across a street and up a slight hill was a small cluster of Officer's houses. Each unit came with an attached single car garage and a large lot. Separated by less than 150 feet, the distance in terms of my place in the military hierarchy was clear. The NCO dependent was at the bottom of the military hierarchy.

During our stay in Capehart, my Mom began to work outside of the home. I learned from her that my Dad's income wasn't enough to support our military family.

Another feature; in my 5th grade class, the label "military brat" was directed at me.

Hearing that for the first time caught me off-guard. No meaning associated with that label described my meager and marginal existence in the Nation's internal perimeter. The attitude embodied in that label confirmed just how little the civilian sphere knew about my diminutive and marginal social status as a military dependent.

Later, when I was much older, I could see how the label "military brat" might have an important public relations use. The label disguised the reality of the lower-class status of the NCO dependent. As a gross overvaluation of the status of a dependent, "bratdom" acted as a deterrent to the serious questions that might be raised if the military dependent situation was seriously scrutinized in social, psychological or economic terms.

My last friendship with another male dependent occurred in Capehart. My Dad received his orders in 1964 to transfer to Ent AFB in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Rodney, on his bicycle, followed our car out of Capehart, waving one of his arms upward, yelling to me in the car, "Don't go, don't go." I still remember how our car slowly pulled away from him as he furiously pedaled after us.

Military housing wasn't available when we arrived at Ent. Since Ent was a small downtown AFB, the only available site with housing was an Army post, Fort Carson, located about 10 miles south of the city. And that was temporary housing only.

I attended Stratton Elementary School. The school cafeteria lunch program served food from containers labeled, government surplus. My military family shopped exclusively for food at the base commissary as it was what we could afford. I didn't understand why civilians would chose to eat a similar kind of food.

After living in several rentals for about a year, Mom and Dad, without any notice, bought a home in a civilian neighborhood in Colorado Springs in late 1964.

Access to this level of the civilian life came with a price. As soon as we moved into our first home, Mom and I

both began to work for wages outside the home. I was in the seventh grade. There was no choice. There was no overtime or extra work available to NCOs and my military family needed the money. Three incomes helped to hold it together financially in our new role in the consumer society.

The discipline I experienced as a military dependent wasn't altered during my integration into this civilian sphere. I still had to shine my shoes, look neat and tidy, get a haircut every week, scrub my head and body clean, conduct my official duties at home without a fuss, listen to every word my Dad said and of course, show deference to Uncle Sam, our only local relative I never met. My experience did include obedience to authority, conformity to military norms and a slow baked-in underdeveloped awareness of civil liberties, civil rights and citizen activism as a result of our separate lifestyle.

In my Dad's house, as far as I can remember, there was no possibility of dissent, acting or speaking out on any issue of the day. What did my Dad and my military family talk about together? The safe stuff, religion, sports, our tasks, our duties and the goodness of work. No politics, no popular culture or TV shows, no policy issues, no political parties or no current events. We didn't even talk about the Air Force! You never knew who was listening or what subject matter might get you into trouble with the military authorities.

And that lead to the great fear of my military family—the Black Mark in the personnel file of my Dad, the soldier. A Black Mark was a sign of shameful behavior or behavior subject to discipline or punishment and meant a possible loss of income or opportunities to advance in rank. In the past, our housing was substandard and my Dad's income was already low and so there was much to lose.

In early 1967, after almost two years in a civilian sphere, my Dad received orders to report to Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base in Saigon, South Vietnam.

At first, to me and my military family soon to be without my Dad-soldier, well, we knew another transfer was coming, sooner or later. My immediate thought was how will we manage.

My Mom informed me that my Dad thought he would be killed in South Vietnam and that we'd better off if we lived near his relatives in North Carolina. Uncle Sam, my silent relative, wasn't going to cut it while my Dad was in South Vietnam.

As usual, on a given date, we packed up our things, let movers take some of those things away and then got into the car and left for Wilmington, NC. That would be the last transfer of my military family and the last site for the last 17 months of my tenure as

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Herb outside the Family perimeter, Piedmont, South Carolina, 1961, 3.6 miles from Donaldson Air Force Base.

Soft Targets - Part Two

JOSEPH GIANNINI

Quang Tri Combat Base
Feb. 3, 1968
0600 hours

Delta Company is OpCon to the First Air Cav. Why? beats. me. Means we'll get to use their Army artillery and choppers. New Hueys, we call them Slicks. Most important, hot chow in the field. And we'll be leaving the Quang Tri Combat Base. A welcome hus from the incessant rocket and mortar attacks.

Delta's first mission, assigned to the Cav, will be a Search and Destroy through the foothills west of the Base. The mission: to push the VC and NVA beyond their rocket and mortar range.

Dark, just before dawn. Delta Company boards the 10 Slicks lined up on the airstrip. Onboard, I face forward. Brace my back against a bulkhead. Hang my right leg out the open hatch. The Slicks lift off. Cool air rushes over me. The sun rises behind us as our formation flies west into a sea of foothills. Beyond them, dark green mountains shrouded in grey clouds, and the Khe Sanh Combat Base, where 5,000 Marines and ARVN Rangers are fighting off 20,000 NVA.

We chopper into a cold LZ. Jump off the hovering Slicks. Fan out to establish a perimeter. Still no enemy fire. We move out in a V formation heading west: Delta One and Delta Three abreast followed by Delta Two and the Headquarters Group.

Shortly after I joined Delta Company, several Marines took me aside. They knew of my rep. Trusted me. Were giving me a heads up. They planned to kill their Company Commander, Captain Hendricks. They were just waiting for the right moment.

I knew that Hendricks, who was known as Mad Dog, had been relieved of his first company command after one of his platoons made an unauthorized water run in the DMZ, or Dead Marine Zone. They were ambushed by the NVA while refilling their canteens. Seventeen Marines were killed. The platoon leader was also relieved of duty and Court Martialed. Captain Hendricks was given a second chance with Delta Company. He was unpredictable. Lacked command presence. Would get upset over nothing. Go off at the mouth. Couldn't make decisions. Blood in the air as Grunts circled, waiting.

As acting XO, second in command, I'm able to get Hendricks aside, give him a warning.

"Captain, stay in the center of

the Company with the Headquarters Group. I'll move around, check the lines at night, report back."

He looks at me for a few seconds before responding. "O.K. Lieutenant."

Delta humps through hills covered with low scrub. Mid-afternoon, my platoon finds a hidden cache of 60mm mortar rounds. Our Combat Engineers blow the rounds in place. As the sun starts to set on the mountains to our west, Delta moves onto high ground to set up and dig in. The night passes without any enemy activity. But our own Harassment and Interdiction fire keeps us awake most of the night.

The next morning is overcast. Grey mist hugs the earth. Delta moves northwest through a steady drizzle. We're in a combat column. Delta One is point. I follow with Delta Three. Captain Hendricks is with Delta Two. In the rear, out of sight.

Mid-morning, the drizzle stops. Delta One moves onto the crest of a small hill. There is a village across a large stream to our left. I'm just starting up the hill with my platoon. Boom! Boom! I duck. Freeze. A large piece of gray shrapnel spins by to my left. I follow its flight. See several villagers running. Guilty knowledge taking flight: Delta One has hit two land mines.

From the crest of the hill, "Corpsman up! Corpsman up!"

I yell down the line to my Marines, "Stay in place. Face outboard. This could be an ambush."

I can't see the crest. Won't move up to take a look. Can't risk setting off other mines. My R.O. says Delta Six wants to speak to me. I take the radio handset.

"Delta Six, Delta Three Actual. Over."

"Lieutenant, move up to Delta One immediately. Give me a situation report. Out."

"Yes Sir, Out."

Fuck. Why can't Delta One Actual give Six a situation report?

I tell my R.O. to stay put. I'll use Delta One's radio. I start to ascend. Looking for hidden wires. Also for rocks or broken branches arranged in unnatural patterns. Then looking down at each step I take.

I slowly move up. Reach the crest. The situation: to my right, seven Marines down. Serious shrapnel wounds, mostly to the lower body. Delta One Actual is standing off to my left. Facing away. I approach.

"Rob." No response. He continues to face away.

"Rob." Still no response. I

reach with my left hand. Grab his left shoulder. He turns to me. Tears streaking his soiled face.

"Joe, I can't do this anymore. I won't take them one more step."

He falls to his knees. Wraps his arms around my legs. Rests his head against my stomach. I put my left hand on his right shoulder. Hold him firmly. Bow my head. Tears crease my own dirty face. His R.O. approaches to my right.

"Delta Six wants to speak to Lieutenant Giannini." I raise Rob to his feet. Release my grip. Take the handset.

"Delta Six this is Delta Three Actual. Over."

"Lieutenant, what's going on up there? Over."

"We're in a minefield. Seven priorities. Over."

"Lieutenant, what do you suggest? Over."

"We can't go forward. Get Slicks to lift us out of here. Over."

"I can't get Slicks. Over."

"Then we'll have to retrace our steps. We might be walking into an ambush. Over."

"Two Medevacs are on the way. Let me know when the wounded are on board. Six out."

"Yes, sir. Out."

"Rob, get your men ready to load the wounded onto Medevacs. We're moving off this hill. Your platoon will be tail-end Charlie."

He nods. Walks slowly into the midst of his downed Marines. I turn and move cautiously to the nearest one. He's lying prone on his poncho. On a slight incline, his head downhill. Tilted back. He's calm. The morphine has kicked in. I kneel down beside his right shoulder. Face his lower body. His jungle trousers have been mostly blown away. Each leg a color abstract. Torn slabs of white gristle. Torn slabs of red muscle. Broken, protruding bones.

I say to myself, "This isn't real. It's plastic and rubber." An attempt to suppress my emotions. Control getting sick.

"Marine, you'll be off this hill shortly. On your way back to The World.

"Sir, can I have some water?"

I look him over. Make sure he doesn't have any stomach or belly wounds. Then remove my canteen from my web belt and unscrew the top. He remains calm. His head still tilted back. I slowly pour water through his slightly parted lips.

"What's your name, Marine?"

"Bell Sir, Corporal Bell."

"Where you from, Bell?"

"Ocean City, Maryland, Sir."

Whomping to our east. I look up. Two Medevacs approaching fast.

"Bell, the Medevacs are coming in. Hold tight. We'll be moving you, O.K.?"

"O.K. Sir."

The first Medevac swoops down to the hill. Hovers about three feet off the ground. Trying not to set off other mines. I suppress my fear. We have to move. Bell is the furthest from the chopper. He'll be the last one out. Four men carry, then lift each wounded Marine onto the hovering chopper. The first one takes on board four. Then rises fast.

The second chopper comes in. Hovers in the same spot. Two more wounded are carried over. Then lifted aboard. We pick up Bell. His head is still back. He's still calm. We run with him toward the Medevac. Lift to put him aboard. His head goes forward. Then falls back. His eyes now locked wide open. Blood draining from his face. He's turning white. Saw his mangled legs. Going into shock. The chopper rises, and he's gone in a swirl of dust.

Fearing each moment, fearing each movement, we cautiously backtrack off the hill. The village, now to our right, is deserted. The villagers think we'll be coming for revenge. We call it Payback.

We make it out of the area without setting off any other mines or booby traps. Move west five clicks. Set up our Company perimeter. Dig in for the night. It passes without enemy activity. Next day Delta moves west six clicks without incident.

That evening we chopper back to Quang Tri Combat Base. We're setting into our Company Area when Battalion radios down. They give me a new mission. Tomorrow I'll go back out with my platoon and a section of 81mm mortars to establish a Combat Base in Indian Territory. Battalion intends to use the 81s as counter fire against enemy rocket and mortar attacks. I'm hoping we're not bait.



JOSEPH GIANNINI SERVED IN 'NAM, WITH FIRST BATTALION THIRD MARINES, 1967-1968. VICTIM OF AGENT ORANGE. WRITING A BOOK OF SHORT, NON-FICTION STORIES ABOUT FATE, SURFING, AND WAR.

Coming Out of The Footlocker

continued from page 29

a dependent.

We stayed at his family's farm until Dad and Mom found an older rental home near a protestant church that my Dad's brother's family attended. We moved in and one day in the near future, my Dad unceremoniously departed for duty in South Vietnam.

Air Force office personnel generally do not experience combat as it has been and is today portrayed in the combat film or war movie. Although my Dad's service records suggest that the vast majority of his work for the Air Force was inside a office building, during my Dad's tour in Vietnam, according to his Department of Defense military records, he acquired counterinsurgency experience.

My memories of what I learned or heard about my Dad while he served in South Vietnam is limited since my Dad communicated solely with my Mom. In general, my family minus my Dad-soldier adopted a sort of business as usual attitude. That was the case early on since my family had experienced

my Dad's numerous departures in the past and didn't think too much about this one. My Dad wrote every now and then. From Mom, I learned that he contracted a foot fungus, that the heat and humidity were unbearable, that he didn't like the base cafeteria food and was saving money in a special account that earned 10% interest.

Since my military family didn't watch the TV or listen to the radio for news updates, Mom was the only source of information that came straight from my Dad during the January 1968 Tet Offensive. One day, he called to say he was OK and that was that.

1969 was the first year of my life as a civilian.

In 1971, I was required by law to register with the Selective Service System. I was classified 1-A shortly thereafter. By that time, most people I knew, even in conservative Wilmington had doubts about the US involvement in the Vietnam war.

When I entered the university in September 1971 voting rights,

civil rights, women's rights, gay and lesbian rights, black liberation and in particular, the question of the Nation's involvement in the Vietnam War were front and center. I encountered those social movements and social experiences not only as an ex-military dependent but as someone who was willing to struggle to comprehend the issues of the day. There were many soldiers returning from Vietnam that were more than willing to talk about their experiences than my Dad.

While attending university, I learned that the Federal government and the Pentagon had been untruthful about the role of the United States Armed Forces in the Vietnam war. Most importantly, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the basis for US intervention into Vietnam, was a fiction. Furthermore, the government in South Vietnam was not an aspiring democratic government in need of the Nation's support but a military dictatorship, representing only a small fraction of the citizens of the country. I learned the United States had secretly

supported the French government's effort to re-establish its colonial territory in Vietnam and later refused to hold elections in South Vietnam which would have resulted in a victory for Nationalists and Communists.

But that was just my first lesson in the real history of the United States military.

I eventually opposed the war in Vietnam and attended rallies, protests, teach-ins and sit-ins.

My silence about my past life as a dependent of nearly 16 years began when I had to face the fact that the single most important feature of my experience was that the government that paid for me, my siblings, my Mom, and my Dad, had lied to us so shamelessly and violated our trust.



HERB MINTZ DRIFTED ABOUT, GETTING INVOLVED WITH COMMUNITY, MEDIA AND LABOR ORGANIZATIONS UNTIL HE RETIRED. HE MARRIED AND NOW LIVES IN SAN FRANCISCO.

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

Beware of VVAW-AI

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

SUPPORT VVAW!

DONATE OR JOIN TODAY!

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

Membership Application

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

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

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

Signature _____
 Date _____
 Total Amount Enclosed _____

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



RECOLLECTIONS

Returning to the Delta

DAN NEW

The tropical sun has long since set. We trundle aboard a long narrow vessel, passing a young Vietnamese who steers our passage across the black flowing river's murk. Hanging my hand over the gunwale, water glides through my fingers and memory through my mind. The explosion of an RPG and the heat of its detonation reemerge. I sit stoically awaiting the dock on the other side of the river. The conversation and excitement of my fellow travelers fills the boat. For me, the rapid fire of .50 and .60 caliber machine guns rattle in a distant memory. I hear the panicked voice of our Warrant Officer as our tug circles midriver. The blood of the dead, the heat of that day, the smell of the smoke of our weapons and the dank river fill my senses.

Struggling to remain present and to not let my panic be known, I practice centering breaths. Nausea and cold sweat mix with the day's long travel. Looming with emotion, I hide in plain sight with no wish to be discovered, supported, soothed. Soon the boat bumps to the shoreline. We manage our packs to the solid earth in the pitch-black.

A receiving line greets us as

we trudge the pathway on uneven stones, past the overgrown foliage that brushes against our skin. The cicadas sing their welcome and avoid their own predators. I can barely see the outline of the person in front of me. Our line stops and starts with each greeting like wedding guests entering a reception. Vietnamese language filling the air out in front of me. The cadence seems sharp and foreboding in the dark. It's time to lock and load but I have no weapon. When it's my turn, there are no introductions only the embraces of three Vietnamese.

First, a stout short man with dark pajamas then a woman, ancient and bent, and finally a thin tiny fellow.

We gather in an open area to hear our room assignments and the introductions of our hosts, two Viet Cong and a North Vietnamese Army Major. They fought many years against the Americans but now welcome us.

Our conversations are translated by Song, a former South Vietnamese air force pilot. He spent years after the war hiding only to be imprisoned for three years and then re-educated for another four. His re-education consisted of crawling on his hands and knees between rows of rubber trees on

plantations in the highlands. He was one of the few to survive. Yet now he embraces his captors, introducing them with grace and dignity.

Tan Tien is the lord of this land, a few acres on an island in the Mekong, the reward for his service. His welcoming speech includes the raising of his shirttail to bare a wound's remnant inflicted by his enemy that almost took his life. He introduces his wife who cannot stand as she suffers from the effects of Agent Orange. Then the tiny man welcomes us. A North Vietnamese major who had walked the thousand-mile Ho Chi Minh Trail.

They feed us a feast and sing their poems to us. It's a welcome so foreign and unexpected by and to me, my emotions mix with an embarrassment of their vulnerabilities and a softening at these former enemies. We introduce ourselves one by one. I listen more intently. Tan Tien was a teacher whose school house was demolished by US bombing in the early years of the war. He felt he had no choice but to join the resistance and defend his country. He never taught again hindered by his injuries. His sadness is worn dearly on his aging face. Yet there is no malice in his voice. I am drawn to him.

We sit in the circle lit mainly by candles. It is my turn to speak. I tell of my time on the river and the friends that I have lost. As I speak, Tan Tien moves to a seat next to me. His hand reaches out to touch my thigh and he pats me gently. I turn to look at him. His face bloated with emotion. When I finish, he embraces me, holding tightly, speaking in a sorrowful tone, words that I cannot understand. When our hug ends, he keeps his arm around my shoulder and his hand embracing mine. Tears stain his cheek. He teaches me the lesson of peace all these long years later. He comforts and welcomes and offers compassion to his onetime enemy. I am overwhelmed by this man's capacity to love, I retreat from his advances as a rose's thorn from pricking my skin, his touch pierces my heart, my fingers tighten gently to return and acknowledge his kindness, all in a moment, an unforgettable moment.



DAN NEW IS A VIETNAM VETERAN HAVING SERVED IN THE US ARMY IN COUNTRY 4/67-4/68. HE IS RETIRED, LIVES IN UPSTATE, NY AND LOVES TO WRITE.



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