

THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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Stand Up For Your Rights

BILL BRANSON

From the VVAW National Office

As we approach another Veterans Day and as many of us are in our seventh decade of living, we have much to be concerned about. The war in Ukraine still continues, our hard won freedoms are under attack, and the fascist hordes are at the gates. We feel like we have fought these battles before. No matter how sick and tired of this we are, we need to stand-up (or sit up) and fight for our rights. Whatever form that takes. We need to fight for ourselves and those younger than us. We cannot let those who want to strip away our rights win.

We had hoped by now the war in Ukraine would have been over and the Russian troops would have retreated, with a peace treaty in place. Unfortunately, that is not the case. We are heartened by the recent Ukrainian offensive and the recapturing of some of their territory. It's clear Putin is feeling the heat, since he has plans to call up the reserves and maybe even start up a draft. Resistance from within Russian society is increasing, as is the expected brutal crackdown. The Ukrainian government is calling on Russian troops to resist and surrender. We still support the rights of the Ukrainian people to determine their own destiny and defend themselves, free of outside coercion and threats.

We still think it's imperative that

the global community oppose Russian aggression and support Ukrainian independence and self-determination. We think imperialism needs to be resisted, no matter which country is the perpetrator, and what their past actions have been. We also know who profits while arms are shipped to Ukraine. As his failed imperialist venture starts to collapse, Putin is becoming more dangerous and the use of nuclear weapons seems more likely. More reason than ever to resurrect the call to reduce the global nuclear weapons stock from all who

have them, whether they admit they have them or not.

The US and President Biden should not raise the temperature at this moment through careless posturing. The best outcome is a deal won at the negotiating table. Even though the Ukrainian resistance has been impressive, defeating the Russian state militarily will be difficult without turning the whole region into an abattoir. Diplomacy cannot be left off the table. The end of this war is of paramount importance for the entire region, if not globe. The

US and President Biden should work to calm global tensions and conflicts, not inflame them.

It is encouraging to see the Republicans supporting the efforts for Ukrainian military aid. However, this bipartisan support for aid also needs to extend to those in need in this country. Right now the Military Industrial Complex and its partisans are happy as shit to be reaping the profits of regional and global tensions. War is good for them and their Congressional enablers

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Another VVAW Library Project Launches

VVAW

VVAW, working through the Library of Vietnam Project, has committed to fund another library in Vietnam. The library will be built in the courtyard of the Hanh Trung Primary School, Nghia Hanh District, in the Quang Ngai Province of Vietnam. The school has 450 students, and 30 teachers.

This will be a "Small Dream" library—meaning it will be smaller than our previous library and only one story tall. After its completion the school can hold Book Days indoors, in wet or dry seasons, sheltered from the elements. Weather and unforeseen issues permitting, we hope to have this library completed in the Spring of 2023.

The librarian at our first library in Pho Vinh, says it is getting lots of use. They are entering an administrative competition for recognition as the Number One Library for a secondary School in all of Quang Ngai Province! VVAW intends to continue supporting these library projects with construction or enhancements to equipment, or whatever the libraries need to better help the students.

To donate to the VVAW library



Entry Gate at Hanh Trung Primary School, July 2022.

projects, you can donate at www.vvaw.org and then email vvaw@vvaw.org to let us know the donation is for the libraries. Or mail us a check at the address below. Thanks for helping us make these projects possible.

"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."—Nelson Mandela



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Kids reading outside of the Hanh Trung Primary School, September 2022.

More photos on page 8.

Stand Up For Your Rights

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know this. Every bullet and rocket that goes to Ukraine is another dollar that lines the pockets of the war profiteers. That is why a cease fire is essential as a prelude to peace. But we know no peace can come without respecting Ukrainian national sovereignty.

While US military aid keeps flowing, we are seeing the full out effort by the Trumplicans to erode our hard won rights and steal the next and future elections. They have stacked the courts from the lowest to the Supremes with right wing ideologues intent on enshrining 1% rule as the law of the land. Voting rights, women's rights to control their bodies, gay rights, interracial marriage, a working non-privatized VA—these are all at risk if they seize power again. We understand January 6 was a failed attempt to seize state power, but it was also a dry run. We need to make sure those responsible are brought to justice.

55 years ago in 1967 (the year VVAW was founded), Rev. Martin Luther King delivered his speech "Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break Silence" at Riverside Church, New York City. Some of his observations are as relevant today as they were then.

A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth. With righteous indignation, it will look across the seas and see individual capitalists of the West investing huge sums of money in Asia, Africa and South America, only to take the profits out with no concern for the social betterment of the countries, and say: "This is not just." It will look at our alliance with the landed gentry of Latin America and say: "This is not just." The Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them is not just. A true revolution of values will lay hands on the world order and say of war: "This way of settling differences is not just." This business of burning



human beings with napalm, of filling our nation's homes with orphans and widows, of injecting poisonous drugs of hate into veins of people normally humane, of sending men home from dark and bloody battlefields physically handicapped and psychologically deranged, cannot be reconciled with wisdom, justice and love. A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death.

Our only hope today lies in our ability to recapture the revolutionary spirit and go out into a sometimes hostile world declaring eternal hostility to poverty, racism, and militarism. With this powerful commitment we shall boldly challenge the status quo and unjust mores and thereby speed the day when "every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be

made low, and the crooked shall be made straight and the rough places plain."

We need to take Dr. King's words and once again put them into action. We must resist those who want to subvert the democratic process and rig the system to maintain their control over us and remove the rights we have won through hard fought battles. We have to resist and organize however we can. VVAW can longer be at the vanguard of any of these struggles. War and time has worn us down and taken its toll. But as long as we have

breath left, we cannot just stand by and watch the fascists and their enablers stomp on us. Unite with younger folks, volunteer to poll watch, support candidates who oppose the fascist agenda, volunteer at the VA—do what you can. Once again we see that our issues are connected—we must fight war, we must fight oppression, we must support those who resist.

VVAW—still fighting for peace, justice, and the rights of all veterans.



BILL BRANSON IS A MEMBER OF THE VVAW BOARD.

Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Lorraine Cohen, Michael Pacifico, Jane Lynn Leach Kelly, Stephen, Sossaman, Bhavia Wagner and others for contributing photos.

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

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Agent Orange's Long, Brutal Reach

JAN BARRY

Until a couple of years ago my health seemed pretty good for an old guy in his 70s. Then it fell apart. Now I'm disabled due to parkinsonism and other illnesses stemming from the war in Vietnam, which officially ended decades ago.

Parkinsonism is one of the latest diseases on the Department of Veterans Affairs Agent Orange disability list. It's related to Parkinson's Disease and increasingly affects military veterans. Identifying signs include severe balance and walking problems, memory loss, and confusion.

Making it worse, I got bush-whacked altogether by three Agent Orange diseases, nearly 60 years after I departed the Vietnam war zone. The other long-lurking illnesses that reared up are hypertension—just added to the Agent Orange list via the recently signed PACT Act, designed to aid veterans injured by burn pit smoke and other toxic substances—and peripheral neuropathy.

Basking in the golden years of senior citizenship, I thought I'd been spared the fate of so many Vietnamese civilians and American war veterans whose health, and often lives, were destroyed by air and ground-sprayed toxic chemicals used to kill jungle foliage and rice farmers' crops in 1961-1972.

Thanks to unrelenting activism on this issue by veterans' groups and

supporters, I'm getting VA assistance that was hard to get until recently. But I no longer can do the work I love. Medically sidelined last year, I taught college classes after a career as a news reporter. Having lived a very active life, including as an environmentalist and anti-war activist, I'm baffled by my new identity: disabled war veteran.

What seemed like standard aging problems popped up in the winter of 2019-20. I began struggling to walk, waddling like a duck with slow wobbly steps. A neurologist diagnosed peripheral neuropathy in my feet. A VA doctor concurred. Peripheral neuropathy is on the Agent Orange disability list, but with a Catch-22 provision that a GI must report the condition within a year of wartime service.

I served in an Army aviation unit in Vietnam from 1962-63. Treated at an Army field hospital for a broken collarbone, I never heard of peripheral neuropathy in those days. Healing from the collarbone injury, I spent the next year doing intensive training at the US Military Academy Prep School and West Point. Physically, I felt fine. Psychically, I questioned why we were warring on Vietnam and resigned from West Point.

After the Army, I enjoyed a fast-paced career as a journalist. Struck by reports of rare cancers some vets developed in their 20s and 30s, I did

an investigative series carried by *The Associated Press* in 1980 on questions vets were raising about Agent Orange and other toxic chemicals used in Vietnam. I didn't think it affected me, as I didn't recall seeing or hearing about the secretive herbicide spraying operations.

Over the years, I've written periodic updates on the widening Agent Orange disaster. When Navy vets questioned whether they were poisoned by Agent Orange runoff reaching offshore ships, I realized I never considered if the contamination might have gotten into the groundwater that supplied US military bases. I flew in and out of many airfields, often staying overnight, eating and drinking at local Vietnamese bistros. Who worried about what was in the water in the middle of a war zone?

Nor had I thought about the times I caught rides on Air Force C-123s to go from one place to another. Then the story came out about stateside air crews getting Agent Orange diseases after flying in repurposed C-123s used by National Guard and Reserve units. But, as my health held up, I felt impervious to such possibilities, even as I wrote obituaries commemorating buddies who died of Agent Orange-related cancers.

Then, my luck ran out. Walking deteriorated to the point where I needed physical therapy to relearn how

to walk. An MRI found evidence of three small strokes affecting various parts of my brain. I often couldn't remember the names of the food I was eating. My primary doctor reviewed the VA's Agent Orange listing and determined that my deteriorating health was due to parkinsonism.

Recently, I was rated 80 percent disabled by the VA due to parkinsonism and post-traumatic stress disorder. That determination provides medical coverage and a modest monthly payment to supplement my Social Security income. Bizarrely, PTSD was not acknowledged by the VA when Vietnam vets first raised concerns about recurring nightmares. Now the VA says PTSD and parkinsonism exacerbate each other.

When I first began seeking information about PTSD and Agent Orange, I was reasonably healthy but curious. I had no idea what would turn up. Who knows what else is yet to bubble up out of that disastrous use of chemical warfare?



JAN BARRY IS A POET AND AUTHOR. HIS BOOKS INCLUDE *A CITIZEN'S GUIDE TO GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGNS* AND CO EDITOR OF *WINNING HEARTS & MINDS: WAR POEMS BY VIETNAM VETERANS*. A CO-FOUNDER OF VVAW, HE SERVED IN THE US ARMY IN VIETNAM.

War's Long Reach

Memorial Day 2022

Jeff Sharlet was 27
When the war in Vietnam
He came happily home from,
That catapulted him into college honors
And anti-war activism,
Whacked him with kidney cancer.
Agent Orange poisoning,
His brother wondered.
Jeff died in Coral Gables, Florida in 1969.

Cody Camacho was 39
When the war in Iraq
He tried to put behind him—
Raising a family with two kids,
Helping fellow vets
at his American Legion post—
Unleashed horrendous demons
Dragging him into a black hole
Of suicide.
Cody died in Des Plaines, Illinois
last November.

Ellie Garcia was 9
When a teenage assassin
Assaulted her classroom
With a semi-automatic rifle
Designed for jungle warfare in Vietnam.
Ellie died in Uvalde, Texas last week
In a hellacious massacre
With 18 classmates and her teachers.

War kills in myriad ways.
There are not enough memorials
And bouquets of flowers
To cover the carnage.

—Jan Barry

To the Future

On behalf of my species, I'm sorry for the mess we've made of this planet. It must have been a nice place before we got here. Even as scary as the dinosaurs were, they didn't cause their own demise the way we've engineered collective suicide. What else to call it? How could we avoid the warning signs? Talk about denial. But we did. Year after year. For decades. Until it was too late. And then all hell broke loose, the mad scramble to evade the hurricanes, tornados, flooding, glaciers melting, ice caps shrinking, oceans rising, burning forests, burning prairies, burning cities. Those with the guns took what remained of food and water—as if their might could somehow alter the laws of physics—'til they too were drowned or starved or broiled alive. Whatever you are, wherever you are, if you're reading this, I send my apologies, and wish you wisdom greater than ours.

—W. D. Ehrhart

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

What a time it is in which we live. I know that gets said in this country every four years [and sometimes two] in which politicians beg for your support because the upcoming election is the most crucial in a long time. It will, they say, have a major effect for or against a war, for or against an economic direction, for or against a right, such as the right to vote, and therefore, the election will be crucial. The war being debated will end in a dozen years if not fought in Afghanistan. The economy will change back and forth, careful not to offend the wealthy. Rights will be won and then violated and lost. These things are meaningful and fought for regularly. But a couple of things are happening that are bringing change that will have long periods of disruption. First and foremost is global warming and whatever is left in its wake. The number and intensity of disastrous natural events are growing. And it's not going to be solved by someone in four years. Global warming and its effects take place gradually so few are in a hurry to get things changed. Meanwhile drought and flooding dance together. Fires. Rising sea levels. Starvation. Yes, pestilence.

We're technologically and scientifically way ahead of the dinosaurs so I don't think we'll wipe ourselves out or come close to it. But it will be cataclysmic for many

[most?]. Not quite Mad Max, but close—depending where you sit. Today we are closer to disaster than solutions. Just Sayin'.

You think the poor are suffering now? We as a society will find a way to make them take the brunt of Global Warming. Too many folks think that we turned on these environmental problems and therefore we can turn them off. Like a spigot. Nah. It's more like turning an aircraft carrier in the opposite direction. It's a wide turn taking miles and miles. In its wake masses starve and drown. I'm not scientifically trained. Only an observer. And this is what I observe. Those who have the power think turning a spigot on and off will work. It won't. There is step-by-step dealing with the problem, but the problem is not step-by-step. It is exponential. Just Sayin'.

This attempt to destroy our planet's infrastructure may be something that happens only every millennium. Meanwhile, the attempt to bring fascism to the US may someday be a regular battlefield. Right now it's kind of new, with apologies to Father Coughlin and his cohorts in the 1930s. Ninety years ago—during the Great Depression—fascism reared its ugly head as a solution to end the Depression. It happened in many countries around the world, often accompanied by violence. It was a threat here, but never gained traction—

at least overtly. Here in the US, we're seeing it in large part from Trump and his delusions of grandeur. Fascist foot soldiers have met their man in Trump. Millions have voted for the man and half would do it again. They were waiting for him. He encouraged what? Use of force to gain and retain the Oval Office. And more people support that than most of us thought possible.

Would-be dictators appear now and then. Some are strong. Some not. Weak or strong, it can happen here. The odd thing here is that this budding fascism is linked with a denial of reality. It is something I have trouble wrapping my head around. How do you discourse with these people? And then you have elections where the results are not accepted by the state's governor or Secretary of State. So a phony count is verified. This alternate reality is not only about voting. It could be an accusation that a child porno ring was being run out of a pizza parlor by politicians, or various lies about the COVID vaccine.

How do you deal with this unification of fascist ideology and altered reality? Hitler had Goebbels who propagated the Nazi program. Trump has the Big Lie, used to justify anything he wants. But then he brings in QANON and other unrealities and there is no basis on which you can debate. It's hard to take on true believers. Arrest them and jail them for their deeds and more people become

believers and MAGA followers. Remember the movie *Invasion of The Body Snatchers*? MAGA reminds me of that. Ordinary people, with a grasp of reality, somehow become pods with new beliefs. And this marries with the rise of fascism to produce a formidable threat.

Trump won't be with us forever. It will not be a good idea to think that the problem will be solved when he goes. The doctrine he is pushing will be around especially on the net. This won't be the last time fascists visit these shores. It could come back stronger through lies and deception.

Bleak is the future. Maybe this brush with fascism is only that. Maybe it goes away in four or eight years. Maybe we get back to fighting normal right-wing conservatism. On the other hand, the environment looks to be getting out of control. The natural world is a delicate balance, and we're not paying attention. Old-fashioned capitalism has got those in power heading down the road to at least many little disasters. Or worse. The Pakistan flood seemed awful. Or is it the new normal?



BILL SHUNAS IS A VIETNAM VETERAN, AUTHOR, AND LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER.

Ukraine and Vietnam: Nothing is More Precious Than Independence and Liberty

MIKE WOLOSHIN

I have witnessed too many "unnecessary wars of choice/wars of aggression." I oppose direct US intervention in Ukraine but support providing weapons to the Ukrainian Army and Territorial Defense Forces to defend the territorial integrity, political independence of Ukraine, and its right to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries, free from threats and acts of force. While the geopolitics of Vietnam and Ukraine differ, the genesis of both wars lies in diplomatic duplicity. The US reneged on its pledge to respect the 1954 Geneva Agreements, providing for 1956 elections for a reunified Vietnam. Putin reneged on the 1994 Budapest Memorandum, negotiated by his predecessor, Boris Yeltsin, agreeing to respect Ukraine's territorial integrity in exchange for Ukraine relinquishing its nuclear arsenal. Just as the Soviet Bloc and China provided MiG-17s, MiG-21's and SAM-2s to Vietnamese liberation forces, the US and NATO nations provided the Ukrainian Army with Javelin anti-armor missiles,

switchblade drones, HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Missile Systems), and satellite intelligence. If Ukraine falls or concedes to Russian aggression, the Russian Federation will be emboldened to extend its aggression westward to its former colonies, some of which are NATO members, potentially leading to World War III.

At first, no one expected Ukrainians to resist Putin's blitzkrieg, but when President Zelenskyy declined a US offer for a ride out of Kyiv, he replied, "I don't need a ride; I need ammunition." Ukrainian liberation forces made excellent use of the few weapons provided by the US, to disrupt Russian logistics, detonate ammo dumps and strike behind the lines in occupied Crimea. Recently, Ukrainian forces liberated a large area of territory around Kharkiv. No one expected Ukraine to expertly execute an offensive as they did. Likewise, no one expected Ho Chi Minh to haul artillery pieces over the mountains to lay siege to Dien Bien Phu, or extract a political victory,

despite enormous losses, as he did during the Tet Offensive. The outcome of such wars is determined far more by morale, than material. People are far more motivated to defend the homeland than they are to engage in wars of aggression. Both Vietnamese and Ukrainians prevailed against far better armed and equipped opponents. Russian troops folded and fled, leaving ammo and serviceable equipment behind, just like the puppet ARVN during the 1972 and 1973 Spring Offenses. The associated deaths, costs, and sanctions led Russian media figures to question the war and call for Putin to resign or be put on trial for treason. The Russian retreat has exposed war crimes in the murder of 440 civilians in Izium. Like My Lai and Bucha, such crimes are not an aberration, but SOP.

The tenacity and determination of Ukrainians to defend their country reflect that of the Vietnamese. The following statements of Ho Chi Minh illustrate that tenacity and determination:

"Our resistance will be long and painful, but whatever the sacrifices, however long the struggle, we shall fight until the end, until Vietnam is fully independent and reunified."

"You will kill ten of us; we will kill one of you, but in the end you will tire of it."

"Nothing is more precious than independence and liberty."

August 24, 2022, was Ukrainian Independence Day, it also marked the resistance to six months of Russian aggression.

Slava Ukraini—Glory to Ukraine!



MIKE WOLOSHIN, AMH-2, USN, ATKRON 86, ONBD USS CORAL SEA (CVA-43), VIETNAM (YANKEE STATION) 1969-1970. MIKE IS THE GRANDSON OF UKRAINIAN IMMIGRANTS, A RETIRED ASSISTANT COOK COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER, AND ACTIVE IN VVAW SINCE JOINING IN 1971.



Radio Free Devens

MARC LEVY

In 1971, Robert Bowman and Marcus Gaufman and I were among the active-duty soldiers who met weekly at the Common Sense Bookstore in Ayer, Massachusetts. Located less than a mile from Fort Devens, the book store, the converted first floor of a single-family house, was overseen by college grad activists Peter Hagerty, and Paul and Claire Grace. GIs were welcome to buy books or just hang out. Legal counseling and referrals were on hand. David Rubin of Boston University led a weekly poetry workshop. From time to time there were gatherings in the yard out back. The bookstore also distributed *The Morning Report*, a covert mimeographed broadside written by GIs at Devens. Its strident articles denounced the war, the brass, and the US government.

Radio Free Devens was likely the only active duty GI anti-war radio show broadcast by a commercial station during the Vietnam war. Whose idea was it? Once a week Peter Hagerty drove Marcus, Bob, a black GI named Ron, and myself to rock station WAAF—107.3 on your FM dial—located in downtown Worcester. We had an hour of air time, and access to a large collection of LPs. Our live shows were planned at the bookstore. Between songs by Dylan, Baez, and the like, we read poetry and anti-war rants. Once, while reading Wilfred Owen's *Dulce Et Decorum Est* I nearly broke down. A satire I'd written about a pestering black NCO identified his name and unit. When I returned to the

barracks he was not pleased. Marcus and Bob read items they'd written in David Rubin's workshop. It was said the Army's Criminal Investigation Division (CID) monitored the show. One day, Ron—who directed his radical remarks to black GIs—was transferred to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, never to be heard from again.

According to Peter Hagerty's memoir *Out Watering Horses*, the bookstore too was under Army surveillance. After a CID agent was injured in a fake drug bust—the agent played the part of a drug-addled GI—Peter decided he'd had enough. Four months after it opened, the bookstore shut down. Radio Free Devens went silent.

I returned to Ft. Devens in 2006. The once-thriving PX, an enormous hanger-like warehouse, sat abandoned, its linoleum aisles and packed shelves empty, inhabited only by ghosts. The rotted roof of the movie theater—it was here that I saw Franco Zefferilli's *Romeo and Juliet*, admission 35 cents—appeared ready to crash to the ground. Inside, the regimented rows of plush seats had all but vanished. The once brightly lit marquee hovered mid-air in a pitiful state.

Farther west, the ivy-covered red brick JAG compound, where deals were done, careers were made, and punishments fair and foul were meted out, lay deserted, a shell of itself in criminal neglect. As was the nearby brick barrack where, in the dead of winter, returned from war, I announced

to portly First Sergeant Weiner, "I don't pull guard duty, Sarge." I had packed an AWOL bag and added as I walked past, "I'm going to Boston. See you in three days." On my return, I was given an Article 15, but the look on his face was worth it.

A few miles up the road, the sprawling base hospital, a World War II relic whose labyrinthine halls were daily mopped, waxed, and buffed, had been mercifully torn down. It was here, on the Med/Surg ward, that I tended to the jolly wounded LRRP who would not part with his M1950 magnetic compass, which he wore round his neck on a sweat-soaked lanyard. And where I daily stuffed Iodoform gauze into the still shocked out lieutenant's right thigh, gradually healing, having been ripped apart by an AK round.

It was here too that I slowly turned over in his bed the groaning young sergeant shot in the hip. A few beds down lay the handsome foot-injured captain, who carried on with the beautiful nurse on the back porch where, on Friday nights, nearly all the ward casualties smoked smuggled-in pot. And where I tended to stateside Kevin, a tall lanky young man who one freezing night, tripping on LSD, wandered barefoot for hours in heavy snow. His feet were frozen solid, the toes turned gangrenous black, his mind an acid blank. And so it went. The casualties, stateside and wartime, just kept coming.

About twenty years ago, by great coincidence, I met David Rubin at

a writers' workshop in Boston. He showed me a poem I'd written in one of his bookstore classes, which he'd kept all this time.

Paul Grace became a lawyer and labor arbitrator. He and Claire live in Washington state.

Peter Hagerty and his wife Marty Tracey (whom I met at the bookstore and was stunned by her beauty) live in Maine, where Peter, an environmental activist, is a horse logger and sheep farmer. The Hagerty's also own and operate Peace Fleece, a wool co-op. I didn't know until recently that after being discharged from the Navy for refusing to certify the safety of a defective gun mount, Peter traveled to Vietnam to counsel imprisoned soldiers. One night, at a Buddhist monastery in the Mekong Delta, he met four Viet Cong who had visited there on leave to seek advice from the famous Coconut Monk. The encounter changed the way Peter viewed the enemy.

In 2013 I queried the Army about Radio Free Devens and the CID. No criminal investigation existed, they said. Or maybe they preferred not to share it. Stay tuned.



MARC LEVY WAS AN INFANTRY MEDIC WITH DELTA 1/7 FIRST CAV IN VIETNAM/ CAMBODIA 1970. HIS WEBSITE IS MEDIC IN THE GREEN TIME.

Returning

E. C. STREETER

Deprivation was clearly the thinking behind the way we were treated during my time in boot camp at Fort Bragg in the summer of 1969. The goal was to force us to live without the pleasures our civilian lives had accustomed us to so that we might become at least somewhat hardened to the rigors of warfare. Thus, there was no communication with loved ones except for one brief telephone call a week from a pay phone that we had to wait in line for, no clothing options—"fatigues" was certainly the right word for the uniforms we had to wear because I remember being exhausted just about all of the time—and no hairstyle options—shaving off our hair was one of the first things they subjected us to.

We were able to socialize a little, though. One evening I found myself drawn to the bunk of Terry Sponaugle who was regaling his listeners with tales of his amorous adventures. Like all good raconteurs, he knew just when to encourage his audience to enter the discussion, and a fellow named Smith volunteered his saga of getting his girlfriend pregnant. "Only did it once!" he bemoaned. We all nodded in sympathy, our youthful view being that he deserved at least a few more moments of ecstasy before

the consequences of his actions set in.

Eventually the dreaded spotlight fell on me when another barrack mate, gleefully open to the pleasure of putting someone else on the spot, said, "So Streeter, ya ever done it?" Un-light on my feet as usual, all I could think of to say was the truth, which, of course, then prompted multiple sneers of "Streeter's a cherry..." Fortunately, another guy came to my rescue by quickly adding, "Me too. But it ain't 'cause I can't get it or nothin'. I mean, I had 'em waitin' in line, waiting—in—line, I tell ya, but, uh, what can I say? Unlike some people here, I happen to have standards!" Among the ensuing hoots of laughter, Sponaugle was the loudest.

Needless to say, we had no access whatsoever to televisions, but we were allowed to have transistor radios. I remember the much-needed solace that came from listening to some of the pop songs that summer, for example, *Working on a Groovy Thing* by The Fifth Dimension and *Sugar* by The Archies. Music historians might be inclined to give short shrift to those songs, but they loom large in my particular history.

Thanks to the radios, we knew a little about the goings on in the outside world. For instance, the Woodstock

music festival that took place that August was something we talked about at length because it epitomized so many of those civilian pleasures we missed. We also knew that the Apollo 11 Moon landing was going to be telecast, but we tried not to think about it too much because we all assumed that the television rule would not be waived even for such a special event. On the night of July 20th at around 8:30 pm, though, we were amazed to see the drill sergeants, without any fanfare, set up a card table in the alley between the barracks and place a small black and white television on it with an extension cord running to an indoor electric outlet through an open window. All of us in the company sat cross-legged on the pavement in front of it.

For me, the video images of the surface of the Moon as the lander approached it and the eerie view of the horizon after the landing were amazing enough on their own, even apart from the subsequent sight of Neil Armstrong's first steps; the fact that these images were coming to us from a distance of a quarter of a million miles was something that I still cannot quite get my head around. At the same time, though, I wasn't giving any thought to how terrifying it must

have been for the two astronauts as they tried to avoid crashing until I heard Buzz Aldrin say, "Tranquility Base, here, the Eagle has landed" and the supervisor of the support team in Houston replied, "Roger, Tranquility, we copy you on the ground. You got a bunch of guys about to turn blue. We're breathing again!"

Their journey was, of course, only half over; they still had to make it back to the command module orbiting the Moon before traveling for another four days back to Earth. But most viewers weren't thinking about that as they excitedly watched the astronauts walk around picking up Moon rocks. We too marveled at it all, but I'm sure I wasn't alone, there in that alley, in also thinking about the precariousness of the astronauts' return journey, and then wondering about whether we would be as lucky as everyone hoped they would be when it came to our journeys to the war in Vietnam.



E. C. "MIDDY" STREETER TEACHES ENGLISH AT HUDSON COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND IS THE AUTHOR OF "SOLVING THE SOLAR ENIGMA" (2005). HE SERVED AS AN INFANTRY MEDIC IN VIETNAM FROM JUNE 1970 UNTIL MAY 1971.



We Still Need To Oppose Privatizing the VA

JOHN KETWIG

In 2018, at the height of the Trump administration, the MISSION Act created an independent Asset and Infrastructure Review (AIR) Commission. This Act required the VA to compare local market assessments of VA and private-sector or for-profit capacities and capabilities to provide healthcare for American veterans across every area of the US. The resulting recommendations called for the closing of many VA hospitals and replacing them with clinics, among many other out-of-date actions intended to limit the VA's ability to provide healthcare for veterans. Throughout his presidency, Donald Trump relied upon three members of his Mar-a-Lago Club to advise him regarding the VA, or the US Department of Veterans Affairs. None of the three had any military, medical, or large-scale corporate leadership experience. They were, however, avid conservatives, and they subscribed to the idea that the VA should be disabled and, ultimately, dismantled.

That objective came with enormous funding from the Koch brothers, and although Charles Koch has passed away, surviving brother David is continuing to support abolishing the VA! The plan is to remake the VA into just another insurance company that will be allocated funds just like today, but all veterans healthcare would be relegated to the private, or for-profit healthcare system. It is important to mention that the Kochs are thought to be heavily invested in that immensely profitable private system. One can only imagine the increased number of accountants and bookkeepers that would be required for the proposed system, let alone the degrees of computerization.

The MISSION Act's provisions have proved to be an outstanding example of government bureaucracy and pork barreling, but this summer the Senate Committee on Veterans Affairs surprisingly acted to disrupt the heart of the program by refusing to approve the proposed members of the AIR Commission. This was an astoundingly good and responsible decision, as the appointments to the Commission were a pack of unqualified military lifers and PhDs eager to feed at the trough. There was, notably, not a single NCO or enlisted man nominated, although it is doubtful that any of the suggested lifers have ever visited a VA facility,

let alone depended upon the VA for their healthcare. The disapproval of the AIR Commission appears to have completely derailed the entire AIR program, but we cannot allow ourselves to be misled. The MISSION ACT is still the law of the land, and the threat to our VA healthcare continues to be intense.

This is a good place to mention an organization called Concerned Veterans for America, a Koch-financed group whose only purpose seems to be lobbying for the complete privatization of the VA. Of course, those guys are representing you and me, and they are in the halls of the House and Senate every day, pushing their program and calling it our agenda!

Sadly, millions of dollars are being spent by organizations and individuals that are seeking to dismantle the Department of Veterans Affairs and divert, or "outsource," veterans care for private profits (and profiteers) instead of directing it to the VA. In stark contrast, what's needed is the expansion of the VA by providing more VA hospitals, rural clinics, mobile clinics, and increased telemedicine under the supervision of each vet's primary VA doctor.

The VA's most recognized operation is the VHA, or Veterans Health Administration, the federal government's largest single agency. Since a scandal involving delayed appointments at a VHA hospital in Phoenix erupted in 2014, conservatives have supported an array of measures that appeared to improve access to healthcare by allowing "distant" vets, or veterans requiring specialized care not available at local VHA facilities, to be treated at nearer mainstream private, or for-profit medical facilities. Of course, given limited access to the VA's sizable budget (\$301.4 billion in 2023), the for-profit medical industry, and those heavily invested in that industry, have swarmed like sharks smelling blood.

The reality is that the VHA is a non-profit entity. VA doctors are salaried, and they don't have to beg on bended knees to the insurance industry for permissions or payments. They can spend however much it takes, and however long it takes to fully understand and treat a veteran's often unique medical or mental needs. The results have consistently been more effective than those provided by the private sector.

Surveys repeatedly show that more than 80% of veterans who have received health care from the VA prefer it to the for-profit system. The comparison between the private sector or for-profit medical industry and the VHA healthcare system is unmistakable, and because the VA offers superior care in virtually every way, and far more genuine health care for every dollar spent, it is an excellent example of why America needs to adopt a system of universal healthcare. The conservatives see that as "socialism," and they continue to invest a mountain of money into efforts to abolish the VA and divert those billions of dollars to their industry. True health care for veterans be damned; this is about money!

The VA is currently providing health care to approximately 9,300,000 vets, up 82% since 2001, and the recent passage of the PACT Act and the end of the long wars in Iraq and Afghanistan will surely bring a larger number shortly, with very serious disabilities. The Department of Veterans Affairs is better equipped than most non-VA providers to coordinate complex veteran care and provide continuity of resources for veterans, but it cannot maintain its high standards while a band of reckless and uncaring for-profit pirates seeks to plunder the chests of treasure allocated to take care of our veterans.

Of course, a veteran who lives far away from the nearest VA facility should be allowed to get his care from a local non-VA facility, but make no mistake, the bill for those services goes to the VA, and it is enormously more expensive. The privatization folks suggest that the VA supply the money for a veteran's care, but have no input into the quality of that care! Most private physicians are unfamiliar with the particular needs of combat vets, especially their mental health needs. Since the passage of the MISSION ACT, the excuses offered for transferring veterans to private health industry facilities and physicians have been extraordinarily creative, and "Community Care" has already devoured an unprecedented and troubling portion of the VA's annual budget!

What can we do to resist the privatization efforts? A major step is already underway, although its progress has met with resistance. House Resolution #701 was submitted back in November of 2019. This

resolution would effectively condemn privatization efforts while it supports a robust and well-funded Veterans Health Administration. One of the co-sponsors of this legislation, Rep. Raul M. Grijalva of Arizona said, "Our veterans have made countless sacrifices in service to our nation and deserve the best health care available to them. Instead of auctioning off their care to the highest bidder, Congress should invest more money and craft better policies to ensure exceptional treatment for the unique health needs of our veterans." Rep. Ann Kirkpatrick, also from Arizona, added "We must fight with all our might to protect the VA and put the health of our veterans before profit."

What does your Representative in Congress think of this resolution? Are they aware of it? Are they aware of your feelings about the privatization of the VA? Are they willing to support adequate funding to attract the additional personnel needed by the VA, build the necessary facilities and purchase the state-of-the-art equipment needed to provide the very best quality health care to every veteran? In July of this year, the VA said it had 67,000 open positions!

Congress will respond to pressure from veterans. If you value the VA, you will contact your congressional Representative today. Tell them that nearly all of the veterans service organizations (VSOs) oppose the privatization of the VA, along with the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and National Nurses United (NNU). And, remind your Congressperson that they must also oppose any efforts to restrict unions or collective bargaining procedures.

The only way we can ensure the survival of the VA is if we present a chorus of so many veterans voices that we cannot be ignored. Please dial the phone, or put a postcard into your mailbox. This threat won't go away soon, but with your help, we can make it go away.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING MEMOIR ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM, AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.



Dewey Canyon IV, Washington, DC, May 1982.

Coming Home

FRED SAMIA

I left my 3rd Marine Battalion tank company at Con Thien at the DMZ in January of 1968 and less than 10 days later, I was walking the streets of San Francisco as a civilian. (Drunk, I missed my scheduled flight out of the country, certain that I would die that night in a rocket attack on DaNang airfield.) I didn't know the term then, but I am sure that I experienced culture shock. Not only because I was in the heart of the Peace and Love Hippie movement soon after the "Summer of Love," but also because there was no sense that there was a war going on. The red mud of the "Hill of Angels" was still oozing from my pores and my buddies were still ducking (and sometimes dying from) NVA artillery shells there, but here in this All-American city, life was being lived "normally."

I was heading to my parent's home in New England but stopped first to visit friends of theirs who lived in Alameda, just across the bay to the east of the city, who graciously welcomed me into their home. I was "free" from the war, or so I thought and was now just a normal person like everyone else. So when my parents' friends' daughter, home from college for the holidays, who at the urging of her mother had written me a letter or two while I was in country, took me into the city to sight-see, I proposed to her after a few hours together. She had the good sense, thankfully, to gently refuse—thus sparing her and I many years of torment that we would have certainly faced had she accepted. After a few more awkward days in Alameda,

I caught standby flights and eventually made it back home.

Although not as glamorous or hip as San Francisco, my small New England former industrial city did share the same seeming amnesia—there just wasn't any sense of the country being at war—even though the count of local boys, including high school friends, who had died in Vietnam was growing. (Despite editors and glib-mouthed politicians' fondness for the term, no one "gives" their life for their country. It is torn from them by jagged molten metal, the silent snap of a bullet, or obliterated in a microsecond blast of high explosive.) At least one person, however, had a certain awareness of, if not the war, then one of the warriors. Because I couldn't tolerate my parents' daily routine I moved into an apartment and soon after, started receiving telephone calls from an unknown man whose age I couldn't decipher. When I'd answer he'd say things like, "So, you think you're a hero, huh?" or, "Did you kill a lot of kids?" I told him that if he had something to say to me, then he should do it to my face. After several weeks the calls stopped. Whatever euphoria I felt at having survived and making it home was soon replaced by a sense of unease and dislocation, exacerbated by the news of the ferocity of the TET offensive that lit up the TV screen every evening, as I imagined my friends struggling to survive in Hue, Khe Sanh and the DMZ.

I was smoking a lot of pot to try to keep at bay the conflicting surging emotions straining just below my

consciousness, and with varying success. I crashed the demo sports car that the owner of the dealership I had gotten a job with had generously given me, and treated women like they were Vietnamese whores. I muddled through a year or so of living as if in a confusing fog, and when a second cousin close to my age told me that he and a friend were driving to California to go to college there, but first were stopping at a music festival in New York, I gave notice at work and said goodbye to my family with no hesitation.

Woodstock was like falling down the rabbit hole and going through the looking glass all at the same time. After the rigid discipline of the Marine Corps, to experience people taking care of one another just because it was the right thing to do, was truly, "mind-blowing." And after literally getting run out of Long Beach by the cops—"we don't want your kind here"—we ended up in San Francisco. My cousin and his friend returned to New England shortly thereafter but I stayed on, and eventually migrated up to Sonoma County, where I enrolled in Santa Rosa Junior College. It didn't take long for me to meet other veterans—we were as recognizable to one another as if we were wearing a scarlet "V" on our chests. We naturally gravitated together and formed an impromptu "rap group" years before it became an accepted form of therapy for veterans. We formed a chapter of VVAW as well as the IPC (Tom Hayden and Jane Fonda's Indochina Peace Campaign) and together with anti-war students

and sympathetic faculty, took control of the student government, organizing teach-ins and demonstrations. In one march through downtown Santa Rosa after the 1972 Christmas bombings of Hanoi, a manager at a bank that I tried to leaflet in, became irate at such an expression of First Amendment rights. When I told her that I had fought and been wounded in Vietnam, her forever indelible response was, "Too bad you didn't die there!"

I will forgo detailing the decades of difficulty of coming to grips with my experience in the war—it is probably no worse or better than that of thousands of my brothers and sisters. Perhaps it is best summed up by this quote from the Netflix series, *The Liberator*. Just substitute "Vietnam" for "Anzio."

"Why am I alive to write to you when so many are gone? I know I should feel lucky, but instead I feel my soul starting to fray. I know I can hang on, thinking of you helps. But for the rest of my life, if ever I go silent or weep for no reason or seem to leave you when you're right beside me—remember one word and you'll know where I am—Anzio."



FRED SAMIA IS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST WHO HAS WORKED IN THE MIDDLE EAST. HE SERVED IN VIETNAM WITH A CO, 3RD TANKS, 3RD MAR DIV, 1967-68; HIS EIGHT DECORATIONS INCLUDE THE PURPLE HEART. HE HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE 1970.

Through the Looking Glass

"When the wise man points at the moon, the fool looks at his finger."—Lao-tzu

And it doesn't take a philosopher to notice that there's no shortage of fools in this country these days, walking around in combat cammo, openly packing assault rifles, wearing Glocks to the barber shop: "Hey, look at me, I've got balls!" Even the women, for goodness sake. Or the folks who believe a woman's body is none of her business, and women on public assistance are freeloading Welfare Queens, teaching our children the actual history of slavery is un-American, and gay pride is abomination, violent insurrection to halt the peaceful transfer of power is legitimate public discourse, and half the nation is ready to vote again for the grifter who won't admit that he lost. Speaking of which, what about that "big, beautiful wall" Mexico was going to pay for to keep their dealers and rapists out? And wearing masks to prevent the spread of Covid clearly violates my right to be stupid. Meanwhile, the whole planet is bubbling away like a pot on a stove on high, and the cook's asleep at the wheel. I know, I know, a mixed metaphor. And I have to admit this isn't much of a poem, but at least I can see the moon; it's up there, grinning like the Cheshire Cat.

—W. D. Ehrhart



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.

VVAW Library Project Updates



Future site of VVAW Small Dreams Library outside Hanh Trung Primary School, September 2022.



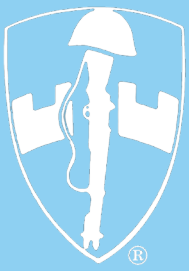
Book Day outside of the Hanh Trung Primary School, September 2022.



Kids reading at the VVAW Library in Pho Vinh, September 2022.



Kids checking out books from the librarian at the VVAW Library in Pho Vinh, September 2022.



THE VETERAN

SECTION B

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Barry Romo in Vietnam, 1972

AS TOLD TO RICHARD STACEWICZ

From Richard Stacewicz's Winter Soldiers pages 358-362.

In December 1972, Barry Romo went to North Vietnam—the third such trip by a VVAW member. His experiences there reveal a great deal about the changes these men underwent as a result of their activities in VVAW. Barry Romo witnessed the Christmas bombings firsthand and received a strong impression of the American government's deceptiveness and its willingness to "bomb Vietnam back to the stone age."

What was the purpose of your trip?

To see what was going on there and be able to break the United States' media embargo. We could cut through all of the lies of the Nixon administration. We also brought packages and letters for 500 POWs.

We left New York, and on the plane was Telford Taylor, who was the chief prosecutor at Nuremberg; Joan Baez; and Reverend Michael Allen, assistant dean of theology at Yale.

I got there [Hanoi] three days before the Christmas bombing in December of 1972. They dropped more than [the equivalent of a nuclear bomb a day on Hanoi. In a 24-hour period, there would be two waves of B-52 strikes. They would lead with F-111s, who would come in below the radar. Then they would be followed by a combination of B-52s and Phantoms doing both strategic and tactical bombing. That was a freak. Because in October they had ended the bombing. Kissinger had said "peace was at hand."

We had to go down into the bunkers. I couldn't stand being underground. I think after the third time we went down into the bunkers, I talked to the Vietnamese and said, "I can't handle being underground." They said, "OK. Go to the bunkers, and after you've gone underground, then

you can go back up—but you have to help and make sure all the other Americans get down there, because it would be an embarrassment if they were to die." So I would go help them get down in the bunkers, and then I would come back up.

Agence France-Presse was at the hotel we stayed at and they had a teletype machine. We would immediately see what the United States was saying. We would go visit someplace that was totally bombed and destroyed and see on the teletype machine the exact lie. It was like that. [Snaps his fingers.] Then we would issue a statement.

We went to Bach Mai hospital several times. The Vietnamese said that Bach Mai hospital was bombed, and Kissinger said there was no such thing as Bach Mai hospital—this is communist propaganda—despite the fact that Bach Mai was the largest hospital in Vietnam. It had been a hospital since French colonial days in the 1930s. We issued a statement that we had been there and it had been bombed. It was bombed more than three times. I got pictures of it. Then Kissinger changed twice. He said, well, it was an aid station. Then he said it was a hospital bombed by accident because there was military stuff around it. He went through all these changes.

We met with survivors of Con Son Island. We met with a group of women who had been tortured and raped on the island. They showed us their cuts and burns and physical problems and would tell us what it was like to be raped and tortured in American-built tiger cages.

Con Son, off the southern coast of South Vietnam, was used as a detention center by the South Vietnamese government; "tiger cages" were 4- by 5-foot cells in which political prisoners were held. The women Barry Romo met had peacefully protested against the war.



The aftermath of the Christmas bombings in Hanoi, December 1972.

We visited POWs who had been bombed. They were incredibly freaked out because they thought the war was coming to an end and they were going home. All of a sudden, the bombing started again. "Am I going to be here five or six more years?" They may have come home and said one thing, but it was real interesting what they said while we were talking.

There was a committee of anti-war POWs. I put in a specific application to meet with them. We weren't allowed to meet with them. We only could meet with right-wing POWs. I think that they said, "If we let you meet with the anti-war people, they'll say it's a total propaganda trip. If we let you meet with people who aren't anti-war, they can't say that."

The Vietnamese were very leery of the humanitarian stuff. At first, they allowed the United States to send all kinds of goods to the POWs. They had this whole display of stuff that the United States, through humanitarian aid, had tried to send. Inside the toothpaste tubes, they had monitors and electronic devices and razor blades, and hidden wire saws. Very crude and stupid things, but it didn't surprise me because they (the United States military) were so racist: "Oh, these silly little gooks won't never know what's going on." They let stuff be sent if it was sent through the anti-war movement. We constantly got stuff in.

We could go walking totally free every day. In fact, our Vietnamese guides emphasized that they wanted us to go walk the streets alone so that no one could say that we were guarded. One time, we were walking and a little kid saw my VVAW button and flashed a smile, riding his little bike. Someone on a past trip had given him a VVAW button. He waved and showed it, and Baez freaked out: "Look, he's got a VVAW button."

Then we went to the Army Museum in the center of Hanoi. There was a glass case full of international gifts, and right in the center of the case was a Vietnam Vets Against the War button. That was pretty incredible.

What effect did all of these experiences have on you?

I was freaked out because here I am in the center of Hanoi, and I killed Vietnamese, and now not only that but the United States is trying to kill me, So where do you go from there? I also didn't feel like other people saw what I saw. When we saw the POWs, Telford Taylor, Joan Baez, and Michael Allen showed more compassion and love for the Americans than they did for the Vietnamese who were getting bombed. It really bothered me—not that I like to see a POW. I was a former soldier; my God, my nephew was killed in

Vietnam. I knew what it was to cry over dead Americans. Seeing live Americans didn't bother me. If I had seen dead Americans, maybe that would have been too much.

What bothered me was that I was watching Vietnamese being slaughtered by our government. Going into workers' quarters where pieces of bodies were lying all over the place was a lot worse than seeing a person totally well walking to a press conference and feeling disoriented.

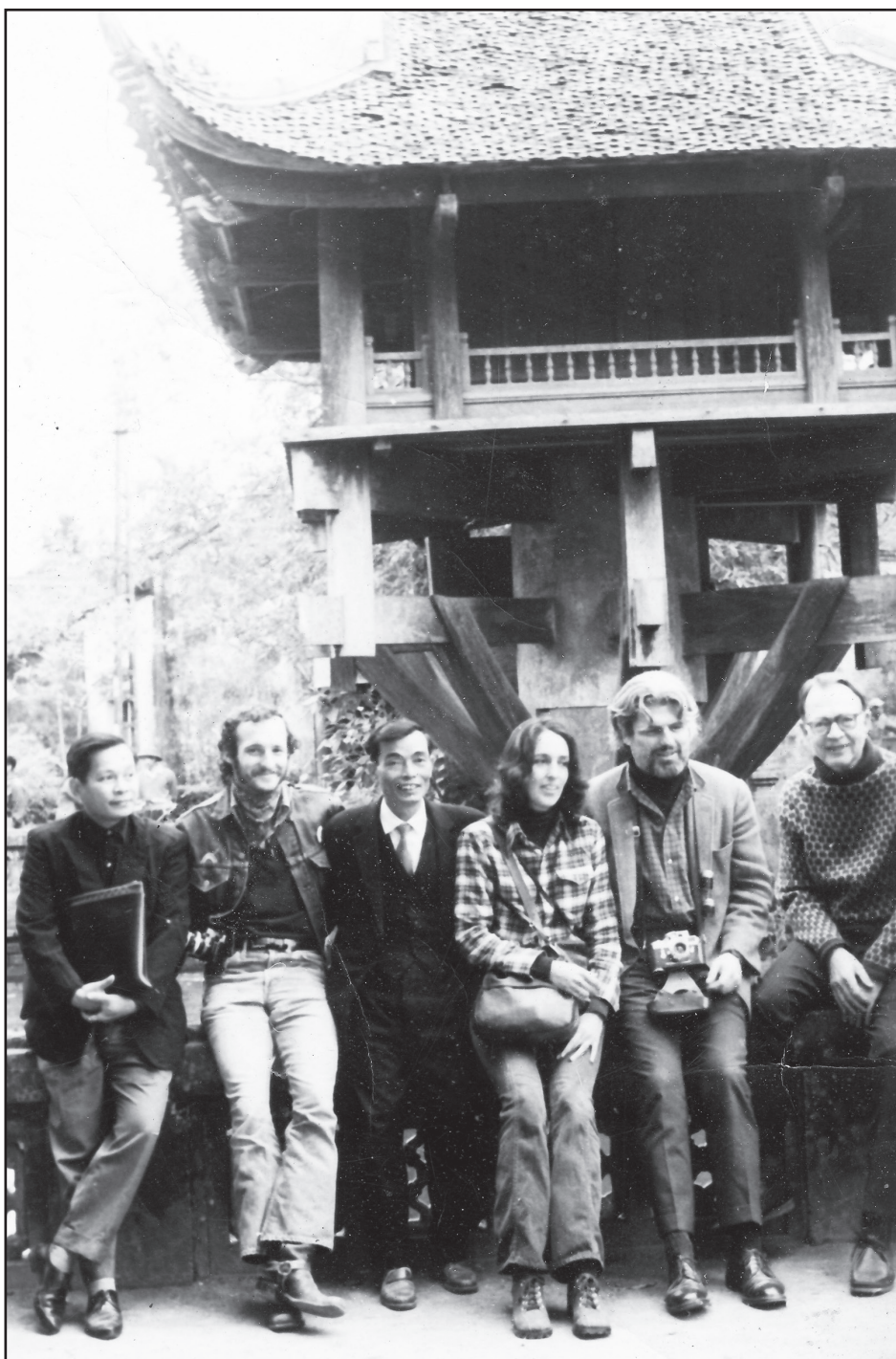
One day they held a party for us, and there were government ministers who came. They had made all this food and we were eating and drinking, and finally, I had the equivalent of a mental breakdown. I started to cry. The Vietnamese stole me from the Americans and took me over to a corner. They calmed me down. They surrounded me like mother hens around a baby chick and started talking to me and told me that I was working off the question of guilt and hate and that they were destructive emotions—I had to start working off of love—and that the United States government had used me and taken my precious idealism and used that to get me to go to Vietnam and kill Vietnamese, and I had seen that was wrong. And that now I had taken the correct political stance, but I had to deal with it emotionally as well. If I didn't change, I would become self-destructive. I had to see that it wasn't my fault. When the war would end and there would be a great victory, the victory would not only be theirs but would be mine as well. Unlike any other American, I would be able to join in their victory because I had seen the war from both sides. It was a transformation time for me. Unbelievable.

What do you mean by "transformation time"?

That's where my love for the Vietnamese comes from. Here were people who had never gone to college. Here were people who owned one suit. Here were people who were having the equivalent of a nuclear bomb dropped on them every single day. Here were people who could cry, because I was crying, who could reach out and be that much of a human being. What they truly and genuinely were concerned with was me. My God, this is unbelievable. So the question of loving and respecting the Vietnamese grew out of that.

Nixon was pulling out GIs and turning it into an air war. I knew what B-52s could do. There ain't no precision bombing. A worldwide effort stopped Agent Orange from being used in Vietnam by the United States. We just gave it to the Vietnamese, our

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Barry Romo, Joan Baez, and others at the Symbol for Freedom in Vietnam, December 1972.

Barry Romo in Vietnam, 1972

continued from page 9

surrogate, to keep dropping on the Vietnamese. We knew that 6 percent, or whatever it was, of the population, was being born deformed. The more the war became technological, the more the war became clean for America, the dirtier it became for the Vietnamese, the bigger blot it was on the United States.

I had to deal with the innocence of the Vietnamese. If I invade their country, then I have to have a reason. The reason is they're vicious, evil, rotten communists, right? They're out for worldwide destruction, and if I don't defeat them in Vietnam they'll be here; but if I went over there and slaughtered them, killed people, and bombed them, and they were never going to come to the United States, they become innocents. They didn't become equally wrong for living in their own country. You can't allow them to die. That became the imperative. We knew we were fighting for little kids being born deformed and we knew we were fighting against people who were bombing dikes.

I came back and I was an absolute maniac because the stress had been too much, despite the fact that I had gone through this little catharsis with the Vietnamese. I have just relived in my dreams every firefight in Vietnam. I've been bombed, seen bodies ripped apart, and been through the most intense two weeks in North Vietnam. Now I had come home and the war wasn't over!

[I] got back on New Year's Eve to New York. I'm getting up in the morning the next day, I think at three, to do CBS morning news with Walter Cronkite. I debated the head of the Conservative Party.

I would say, "Con Son Island. I met these people who were tortured." He would say, "Well, these aren't young Republicans on Con Son Island." I'd say, "Quite the contrary. Truong Dinh Dzu, who was number two in the last election, was arrested afterward, and he's there.

This woman from the POW families kept saying, "We want our relatives home." I said, "Well, if you expect them to come home before the war is over, then you're expecting a first-time event. We didn't let Germans go and Germans didn't let Americans go. POWs get released at the end of a war. If you think they're going to release pilots who then can come back and bomb them a month later, this is not going to happen. If you want them back, peace. There's no other alternative."

If I do say so, I smashed the guy. Afterward, he shook my hand and said, "Oh, you're a really good debater." I said, "Truth. It's not debate; it's truth."

Then I went on the road because we were building for the counterinaugural. So I went on a God knows how many states' tour. I would give five, six, seven speeches a day in building for the January 20 counterinaugural. I was just burned to a crisp.

The peace movement was alive and well. A million people went. We had 15,000 from VVAW. We met at the Arlington cemetery and where we had camped. We signed the People's Peace Treaty and another agreement, and then we joined the larger demonstration. This was probably our strongest point.

Before he won his second term in office, Nixon turned his attention to other matters of foreign policy. He opened dialogues with China and struck new deals with the Soviet Union; and he and Kissinger felt that they could rely on these new friends to pressure their North Vietnamese allies into signing a lopsided peace accord, which would favor the South Vietnamese government

For Nixon, Vietnam became more and more of a distraction that he wished to be rid of. After the Christmas bombings in 1972, he accelerated the peace process. An accord was finally signed on January 27, 1973, only a few days after the inauguration. This agreement was basically the same one



Bombing site near the Cuban Embassy in Hanoi, December 1972.

that Nixon had rejected in October 1972; evidently, the earlier rejection had been calculated to ensure his reelection by prolonging the peace negotiations until after the voting,

In the months following the accord, POWs were released and the withdrawal of American troops was completed. The war was now in the hands of the United States' proxies in South Vietnam.

From this point on, the American press, and the public, virtually ignored Vietnam; but VVAW members who had been educating themselves knew that the war raged on, funded by the

United States. Since many of them, like Barry Romo, had come to sympathize with North Vietnam, seeing the war as a struggle by the Vietnamese for independence, they remained committed to their anti-war crusade. For many in VVAW, however, the end of direct American involvement brought an end to activism.



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Bombed Bach Mai hospital in Hanoi, December 1972.

Report from Hanoi: Vietnam Revisited

BARRY ROMO

Reprinted from the April 1973 issue of VVAW's Winter Soldier.

In December an American peace delegation was invited to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam by the Vietnam Committee of Solidarity with the American People. The group consisted of Joan Baez, Telford Taylor, Reverend Michael Allen, and myself, Barry Romo.

I felt strange about the upcoming trip, wondering how the Vietnamese would receive me, considering that I was a former infantry lieutenant in the Americal Division. As we got off the plane in Hanoi, the people met us with bouquets of flowers and handed me a beer. I knew there would be no problem.

When we walked through the streets of Hanoi I couldn't help but compare life in the north to the section of the south controlled by Saigon. In the south I had seen a cheap carbon copy of America. The influence was more pervasive than the American oil companies we guarded and the advisors we provided for the Thieu regime. The radios blared American music, the people spoke broken English. Vietnamese women, forced out of economic need, had operations on their eyes to make them round, and silicon injected in their breasts in order to become more attractive to American soldiers. The people lived in hovels made of C-ration cartons and scraped food out of American garbage cans.

By contrast, in the north I saw Vietnamese running their own lives without advisors from other countries. I saw no advisors during the two weeks I was there. The people had good homes and plenty of food. There was no one starving or begging. The Vietnamese watch Vietnamese movies, listen to Vietnamese music, even smoke Vietnamese cigarettes and drink Vietnamese beer! It was then that I realized that this was the true nature of Imperialism. The people in the south had lost, not only control over their resources and political freedom, but their culture as well. Their oppression, Imperialism, is total: political, economical, and cultural.

On the first night of our visit, the committee sponsored a dinner for our delegation and for some government and union officials. We were served by waiters and waitresses, but in contrast to their counterparts in the United States, they were very relaxed. The workers were not overly impressed with us or the officials, but at the same time, were very friendly and concerned. For instance, if there



Mike Allen, Joan Baez, and Barry Romo walking through the rubble of Gialam International Airport after it had been bombed by American B52s during their visit to Hanoi in December 1972.

was a toast, they would put down their trays and drink with us. If they wanted a cigarette, they took it off the table. They would also make sure our glasses were full, ashtrays close, and our area cleaned. This was an attitude of respect, not servitude.

On the third day, the Nixon administration, in an act of desperation, initiated the most massive bombing in history. Centering his attacks on civilian areas, he destroyed homes, schools, nurseries, and hospitals in an attempt to terrorize the people into submission. We lived under American bombs until we left ten days later. During this time we observed the massive destruction, the human pain and sorrow, watched the people cry; and cried with them. It is not the suffering that I remember now, but the examples of heroism, kindness and strength of the Vietnamese. I remember people

standing in the streets shooting at Phantom jets with old K-44 carbines. I remember our friends from the committee apologizing to us because the electricity was out due to the bombing. I remember a toast to the friendship of the Vietnamese and the American people while B-52s were destroying hospitals. I remember the statement made by one of the Vietnamese to us, "It is good that you are here to share in our suffering, because after the war you will also really share in our joy."

This was not an isolated incident either. Our delegation walked the streets alone without guides almost every day. We watched the people and their attitudes were the same throughout.

We had always been taught that North Vietnam was a totalitarian society. Yet the people were armed and the police were not. Their officials walk

the streets unarmed and without body guards. The Vietnamese constantly echo the statement by Ho, "Nothing is more precious than freedom and independence." This is more than an empty phrase. The Vietnamese were fighting jets with rifles for "Freedom and Independence." There can be no doubt that the strength and determination that has persevered through the bombing would be turned against their officials if they were stifling freedom. What I had seen was a system of socialism that had allowed for work that was not oppressive nor degrading and provided for real "Freedom and Independence."



BARRY ROMO IS A LONG TIME MEMBER OF VVAW.



Press Conference after return from Vietnam - Barry Romo, Telford Taylor, Joan Baez, and Michael Allen in New York City, January 1, 1973.

Coming Home In Vietnam

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Coming Home in Vietnam
by Edward Tick
(Tia Chucha Press, 2021)

As I sit down to review this latest book by Edward Tick, Ph.D., I am feeling a bit anxious. Fifty-five years ago today I arrived in Vietnam, and Dr. Tick's book of poetry ignited a firestorm of memories and impressions from the year that followed.

I should also mention that a few years ago, having recently retired to rural Virginia, I was researching my second book, *Vietnam Reconsidered: The War, the Times, and Why They Matter*. I contacted Dr. Tick through his non-profit located in Troy, New York. He mentioned that he and his partner, Kate Dahlstedt, would soon be traveling to Fredericksburg, Virginia, and he invited me to have dinner with them. I drove for about three hours, and as I approached Fredericksburg I drove across battlefields toward a city that surrounds a visitor with carefully preserved architecture and memorabilia from our own Civil War. It was a most enlightening and fascinating evening. I was searching for insights into Moral Injury from War, a subject Dr. Tick has explored and treated for decades. "The Vietnamese people don't experience PTSD," he declared. "They know exactly why the war was fought, and why it was necessary. There is no guilt. They were defending their homeland against invaders, something they had done for many years. There is great sorrow, sadness, and loss, but those are different from PTSD."

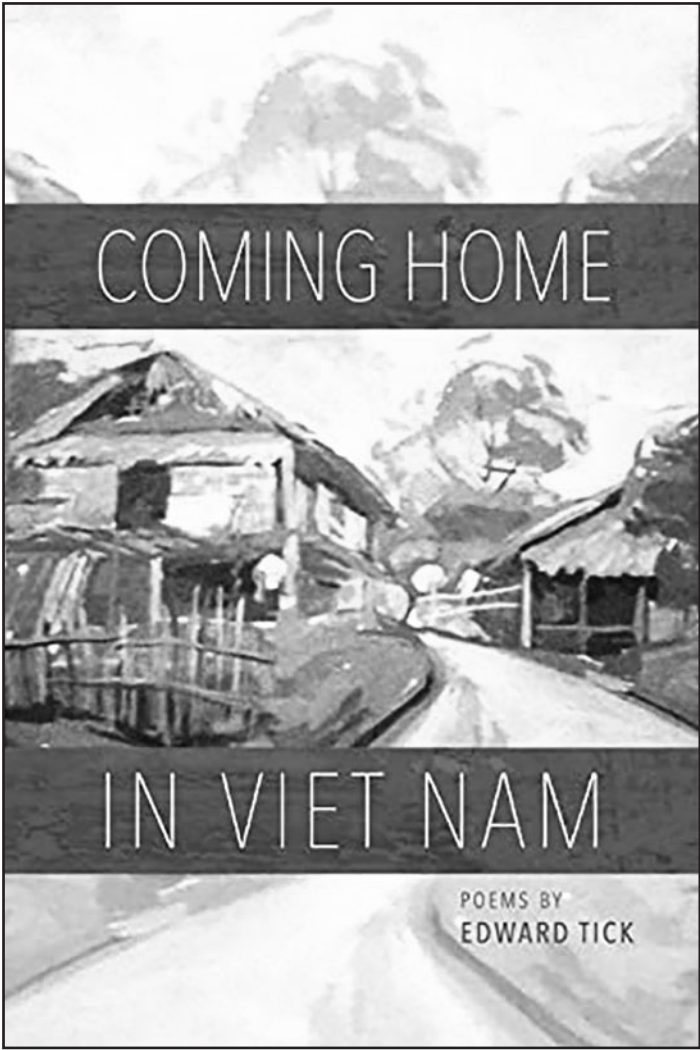
Edward Tick, Ph.D., is widely honored for his unprecedented and thoughtful, caring work in the spiritual, holistic, and community-based healing of veterans suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Moral Injury from War. He is an accomplished psychotherapist, the author of numerous books, and a highly regarded teacher. He prefers to work outside of the office, conduct retreats in the wilds, or trips back to Vietnam. Those trips include civilians and educators as well as veterans, encouraging all who have been impacted by the war to achieve meaning and friendship as avenues toward healing and achieving inner peace.

The back cover notes of *Coming Home in Vietnam* describe this collec-

tion of poems as a sharing and revealing reconciliation from Vietnamese women, children, and veterans, as well as Americans returning to contemplate the war and its effects years later. I must say that I am not familiar with Dr. Tick's previous poetry, and my appreciation of poetry related to the war in Vietnam has been limited to the works of W.D. Ehrhart, Steve Mason, and Jan Barry. *Coming Home in Vietnam* is far different. I suppose it is necessary to point out that Dr. Tick did not participate in the Vietnam War. We cannot hold that against him. Ed Tick's kindness and compassion have overflowed across the entire planet! He teaches that PTSD is not best understood or treated as a stress disorder; it is best understood as an identity disorder and soul wound affecting the personality at its deepest level.

Like a teacher who walks into a classroom and teaches a familiar lesson in a refreshing new way, *Coming Home in Vietnam* is classic Ed Tick. It is infused with sadness and loss, but also with an optimism that is Zen-like and ethereal. And, trivia. Did you know that every word in the Vietnamese language is composed of a single syllable? This is a surprising collection of contemplative thoughts that happened in or about the country of Vietnam, not about death, but life. The themes are surviving, survival and the rich experience of living that can be available, even in that far-off but unforgettable land. Dr. Tick was looking around every time he traveled to Vietnam, absorbing the culture and the climate, and admiring the hearts of people who live there still.

From page 97:
Street Vendor
Hoa, an aging street woman
My name Hoa. Captain name me Suzy.
I grow rice. Captain teach me type.
I speak Viet. Captain teach me English.
I believe we friends. Captain leave me 45 year ago.
Captain go home. I homeless.
Now I sell juice on street.
This small wagon my shop.
I strain and strain to remember your words.
This first time I speak English since Captain.
I say we friends but he forget.
You come back. You buy juice. You talk me.
Maybe you not forget.



From page 118:
Return to Phu Bai
Forty years and half the globe
To return to see
An empty field,
An unused airstrip,
A green plain with no hooches
Chewing water buffalo and sprouting weeds.

The tears I shed here today
Have been leaking for decades
From my broken heart at home,
But they melt my mouth into a smile
That I have not felt or worn
Since I was a boy and I did not know war.

I am reminded of my first meeting with a new counselor a few years ago. "What can I do for you?" he asked. "I want you to make me seventeen again," I answered, "with long hair, playing rock 'n roll music and stealing touches of pretty girls' thighs." He is a good man, a Marine Corps veteran, scarred, religious, and sincere, but he has never been able to make my wish come true. And, make no mistake, neither can Dr. Tick. But both of them understand, and they very sincerely try to make it all better. My counselor is an amateur, in a decrepit office where he invites me to sit on a broken, worn, and torn couch. It is summer as I write

this review, and I have been reclining in my Pawley's Island hammock, a Father's Day gift from my daughter forty years ago. She is estranged from me now, convinced my ideas are crude and threatening to her boys, my grandchildren. I've spent a few afternoons in the hammock, hearing the birds sing, reading Ed Tick's poetry, his word pictures of Vietnam today, and veterans, and the people with all their scars and memories, and hopes. It is 2022, I have carried the wounds to my soul for more than half a century, but this afternoon I am touched, and encouraged. I can imagine scenes and people who do not resent the great harm that my country inflicted upon theirs. It is a very worthwhile book.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING MEMOIR ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM, AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

Waging the War Within

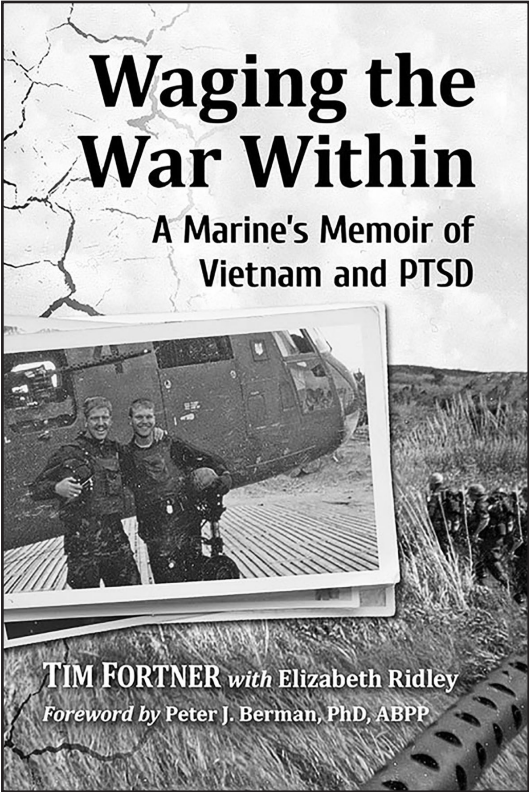
TIMOTHY FARLEY (REVIEWER)

Waging the War Within: A Marine's Memoir of Vietnam and PTSD
by Tim Fortner
McFarland (2020)

This is an honest book; if you're like me, you have to get over the frequent profanity. It reads like a novel and to be honest in this review, I have to mention it led me to suspect some of the things didn't happen or were dressed up at times. But who am I to challenge another vet's integrity; we have the same first name, were born in the same year, and served in-country during the same time. He was in the 3rd Marine Division and I was in the 1st, farther south around Phu Bai and Da Nang and he's got to know it. I was safer at times, since the farther north you were, the greater chances of being injured.

His book provoked me to remember those days and I must admit if I was with him, he would have become a target for kidding when he went on R and R in Honolulu to meet his mother to apologize. When he writes about his encounters with women, I can see myself singing that

old blues song in his ear "You gotta love with a feeling." I believe he was involved in medevacs, in harm's way, and far too young at the time to be part of what turned out to be a dreadful wrong turn our government was making in its involvement in a civil war in Vietnam. Despite all the anti-communist baloney, it had little to do with making anyone safer or freer. We signed up believing we were doing the right thing, and we watched out for each other. I'm convinced we should all get together and say "Thank you for your service, welcome home, Brother!" I don't doubt for a second that he set up a bar inside his hooch and his problems with alcohol began, as I think it probably did for plenty of us. Call it self-medicating, but the military took on a zero drug policy in the '70s, which I believe is too extreme, while totally ignoring the alcoholism, which goes along with isolating young men, far from home, no mixing with girls or their families, boring them incessantly while they continue to hope nothing happens and providing them with all the beer they want to drink.



Tim writes with honesty and wit of his time in-country, as we called it, and after. I was especially moved by his mention of sitting next to a young Vietnamese lady on a jet, hearing her tell him of coming to America at the age of seven and being the first and only person to say "Thank you for your service." For too many of us, coming

back to the US was like seeing the war in Vietnam treated like a bad tv show. Too many people had long ago switched channels.



TIMOTHY FARLEY WAS WITH THE 1ST MARINE DIVISION IN VIETNAM FROM NOVEMBER 1967 TO OCTOBER 1969.

Two Reviews of Self-published Books

MIN WARBURTON (REVIEWER)

Remembrances: True Stories of a Reluctant Warrior
by rg cantalupo
(self-published, 2022)

A Long Way Home
by Terry Raycraft
(BookBaby, 2021)

Two books, both self-published, highlight the pros and cons of self-publishing.

Ross Canton aka rg cantalupo's *Remembrances: True Stories of a Reluctant Warrior* is a slim poetry book—fourteen poems and two letters, one to a Vietnam buddy, and one to his first wife, Janice. The letters are letters of love, sorrow, sadness, and repentance, the essence of all true remembrance. Between the pages of poems, there are also photographs of American and Vietnamese faces. If you were there, they will take you back, but gently I think. The poems—I have read them, read them again, and then read them aloud.

"...I was done with War long before/War was done with me..." is a line that echoes and reverberates. It is, for many soldiers, a simple truth eloquently stated. "...I was done with War long before/War was done with me."

The opening poem, *Remembrances*, reads like a litany: "I remember the scent of the lotus/ blossoming under the bridge at /Trang Bang, more than the stench/ of the bodies crumpled along the/ bank..." In 23 lines, cantalupo ferries us through the memories he would keep, the memories he would forget. He does it with kindness to himself which is not easy for any of us to achieve. In *Looking at an Enemy Hit by a Five-hundred Pound Bomb*,

he writes, "the small figure/apelike,/ curled inside/a palm-leaf's shadow." This is exquisite writing laced with tenderness, an older man looking back at his younger self's participation in a war that clearly shredded him. And yet as he remembers, he seems to come to terms with his past, his history, and his losses, and as he does, reveals a soul that was not destroyed in a soul-destroying war.

The gift of self-publishing is that we have this book. The downside is that it's a hard book to get your hands on, often a problem in self-publishing. Poets are not salespeople—they are poets, and rg cantalupo (aka Ross Canton) is a very fine one. To order his work, contact the author at: rgcantalupo@gmail.com or author@rgcantalupo.com

Terry Raycraft's novel, *A Long Way Home*, exposes other problematic aspects of the self-publishing business, in this case, the lack of both fiction and copy editor.

The story is simple. Ben is home from Vietnam and before going to see his parents, he takes a meandering journey across the United States, having romances and crushes, flashbacks interlaced with drug and alcohol binges. There is a cacophony of voices throughout the book—often the naive, optimistic, vaguely arrogant voices of young people—college students and commune dwellers who would never go to Vietnam. Those voices mostly work.

Where the book first goes astray is in shifting characters. Ben arrives in San Francisco where he is greeted at the airport by his friend and fellow vet, Tom, who several chapters later abruptly disappears from the story as

Ben takes up with another vet, David. From a narrative point of view, the characters could easily have been combined into one. David's story is tragic, and we shift back and forth between David's and Ben's memories and flashbacks.

The story's problems become minor in comparison to factual errors in the book. Ben's girlfriend in Boston, an undergraduate, allegedly goes to Harvard; however, in 1970 (or 1971—it is unclear which year it's meant to be) no girls went to Harvard. They went to Radcliffe. This would not change until 1977. Some women were admitted to Harvard Law and Harvard Medical School, but the undergraduate body of Harvard was all-male. This is a significant part of women's history presented incorrectly.

The time confusion: Just before his Boston visit, Ben is at Kent State during the week the four students are killed. From there he goes on to DC for the week-long protest when Vietnam Vets threw their medals onto the Capitol steps. The four students were killed in May of 1970; the Vietnam Veterans' protest followed by the testimony to Congress took place in April of 1971. Raycraft puts them in the same year, same month, a week apart. This is where, for me, the book falls apart. Historical fiction does best when it adheres to facts, especially easily verifiable facts. When the facts are wrong and the reader realizes it, the entire story becomes suspect.

The mistakes increase. When a much older Ben goes with his wife to the Vietnam War Memorial, they land at "Kennedy Airport" and take a cab into DC. No. They would have landed at Reagan aka National or Dulles. When Ben and his wife take a train

to New York and are in the city, they stare at the stars, "twinkling bright white dots, in the millions..." Once again, no. Not unless they were at the Hayden Planetarium, or the power grid was down and the city was in a blackout. Because of city light, it is simply impossible to see stars in the Manhattan sky.

The final section of the book is a series of essays and appendices on Vietnam, the Middle East Wars, explosive devices, and Agent Orange. This nonfiction writing is the best in the book although, again, there are numerous errors. These errors could easily be corrected in the age of Google.

Raycraft is good at dialogue and with a professional fiction editor, he might have turned this into a better novel. Fact-checking was paramount. A copy editor would have caught the grammatical and spelling errors. That said, I also want to acknowledge that for most writers these days self-publishing is the only way to go. There are few good publishing companies left, and I am guessing the attitude of most is, "The Vietnam novel is over and done." It will never be over and done—not until every person who wants to tell their story has had the chance. And therein is the upside of Raycraft's book. He told a story, some his, some other people's, some made up, but he told a story of coming home from that war, and for that I applaud him.

The book is available at amazon.com in paper and Kindle formats.



MIN WARBURTON IS A WRITER, ARTIST, EDITOR AND SERVED AS A MILITARY SPOUSE FOR TWENTY YEARS.

He Was Right

In 1967 I despised Muhammad Ali. I believed the Vietnam war was a just cause. He believed the war unjust.

I was drafted and went willingly. He was drafted and refused to go.

I went to war. He went to court.

I came back to America and was shunned. He came back to the ring and was celebrated.

I was bitter. He was arrogant.

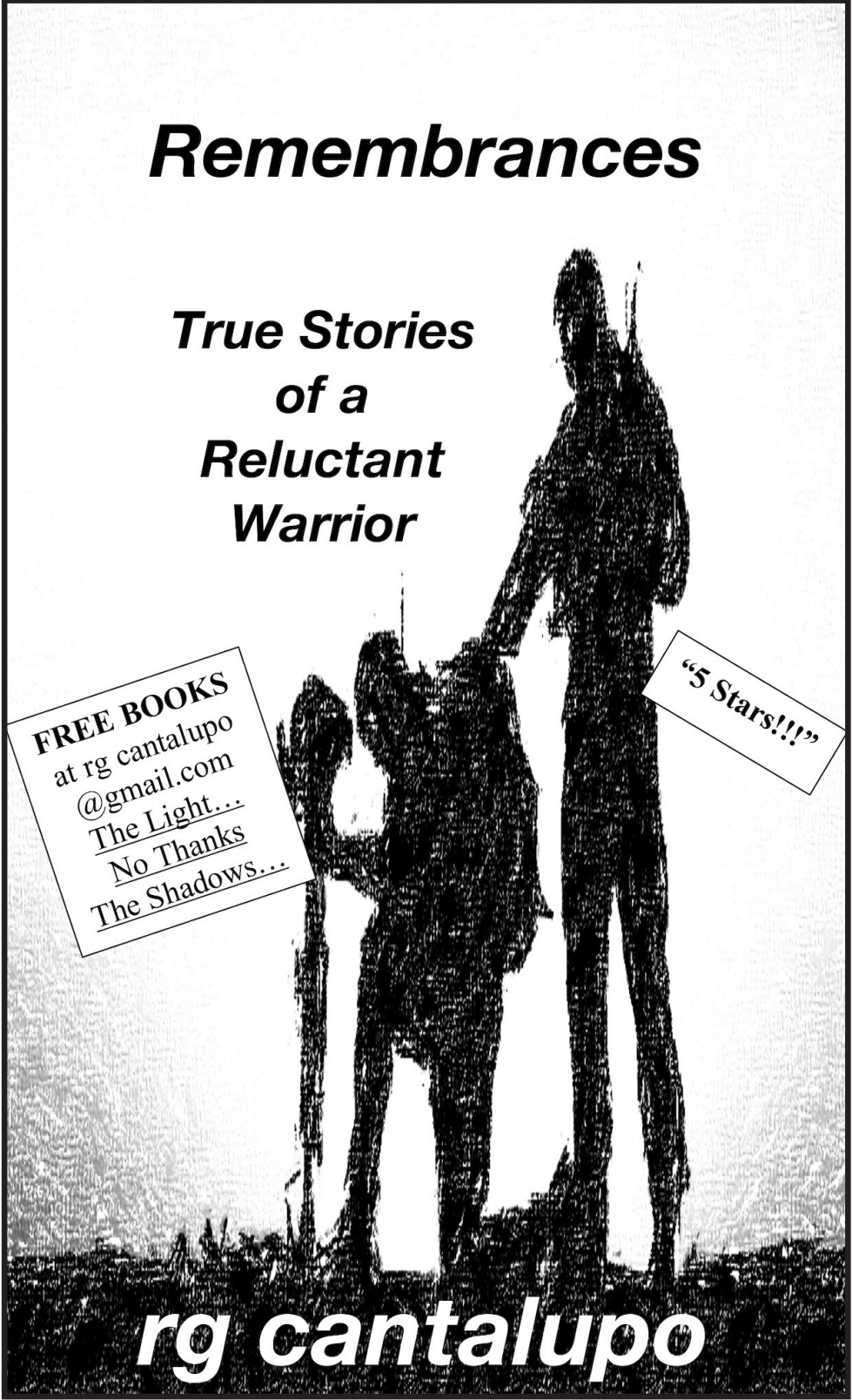
But he was right. And I was wrong.

—Larry Booth

PTSD

Like a rotted rope stretched beyond its limit he broke screaming when she probed too close, to those shifting shapes at the edge of his averted eye; the alternating shapes of terror, shame, guilt, of horror; of that uncovered part of himself he never before knew until it was pried into being in a war.

—Woody Powell



Our Veterans

KIM SCIPES (REVIEWER)

Our Veterans: Winners, Losers, Friends, and Enemies on the New Terrain of Veterans Affairs
by Suzanne Gordon, Steve Early, and Jasper Craven
(Duke University Press, 2022)

This country is really good at sending young people off to war, killing people, animals, plants, and the environment overall while destroying buildings and highways, and disrupting people's lives and societies wherever the US invades. The US has turned this into an art form. What they haven't done well is taking care of the women and men they send to do their dirty work once these service members return from the field of battle; or even from their term of "service." This new book by Suzanne Gordon, Steve Early, and Jasper Craven does an excellent job of pulling the covers back and illuminating the governmental disservice to these veterans.

This book gets behind all of the "Yankee Doodle Dandy" bullshit that is propagated throughout our society about military service. The military picks on young people who often want desperately to contribute to the well-being of our society, to make it better, and who think military service is a noble cause, as well as those living in economically devastated areas and who are willing to do almost anything to get out and be able to (ultimately) try to get another shot at life. The key thing to note is the emphasis on young people: they want to get to them before they learn to think critically about what they are being told and before they figure out that they have options otherwise that they may not have known about or even considered. (Increase the minimum age of enlistment to 21, for example, from 18 or 17 with parental approval, and I'll all but guarantee that enlistment rates plummet; free college education for all would have a similar effect.)

The strength of this book is the clear thinking behind it. Most importantly, for which I'm extremely grateful, is that they recognize that "veterans" are not just a bunch of flag-waving "patriots" who don't have a brain in their head. Yes, there are some like that. Military service affects each person who survives it; some say it was the best time of their lives, while others recognize they have had their desire to improve their life distorted, instead causing great pain and suffering wherever the US sent them. Add in a suicide rate averaging 22 veterans a day, along with massive amounts of alcohol and drug abuse, and you see the human cost to many of the US's veterans. The key thing to recognize, however, is that "veterans" are not a monolithic group.

And "Veterans of all types experience higher-than-average rates of joblessness, homelessness, chronic pain, mental illness, and substance abuse." Approximately one-in-three women veterans are survivors of military sexual trauma from their military "comrades." "These problems," the authors note, "were particularly

acute among former enlisted men and women who returned to poor and working class communities slow to recover from the great recession of 2007 and 2008."

This is even getting worse than for previous veterans: 44 percent of today's veterans are suffering reintegration problems, as compared to 25 percent previously.

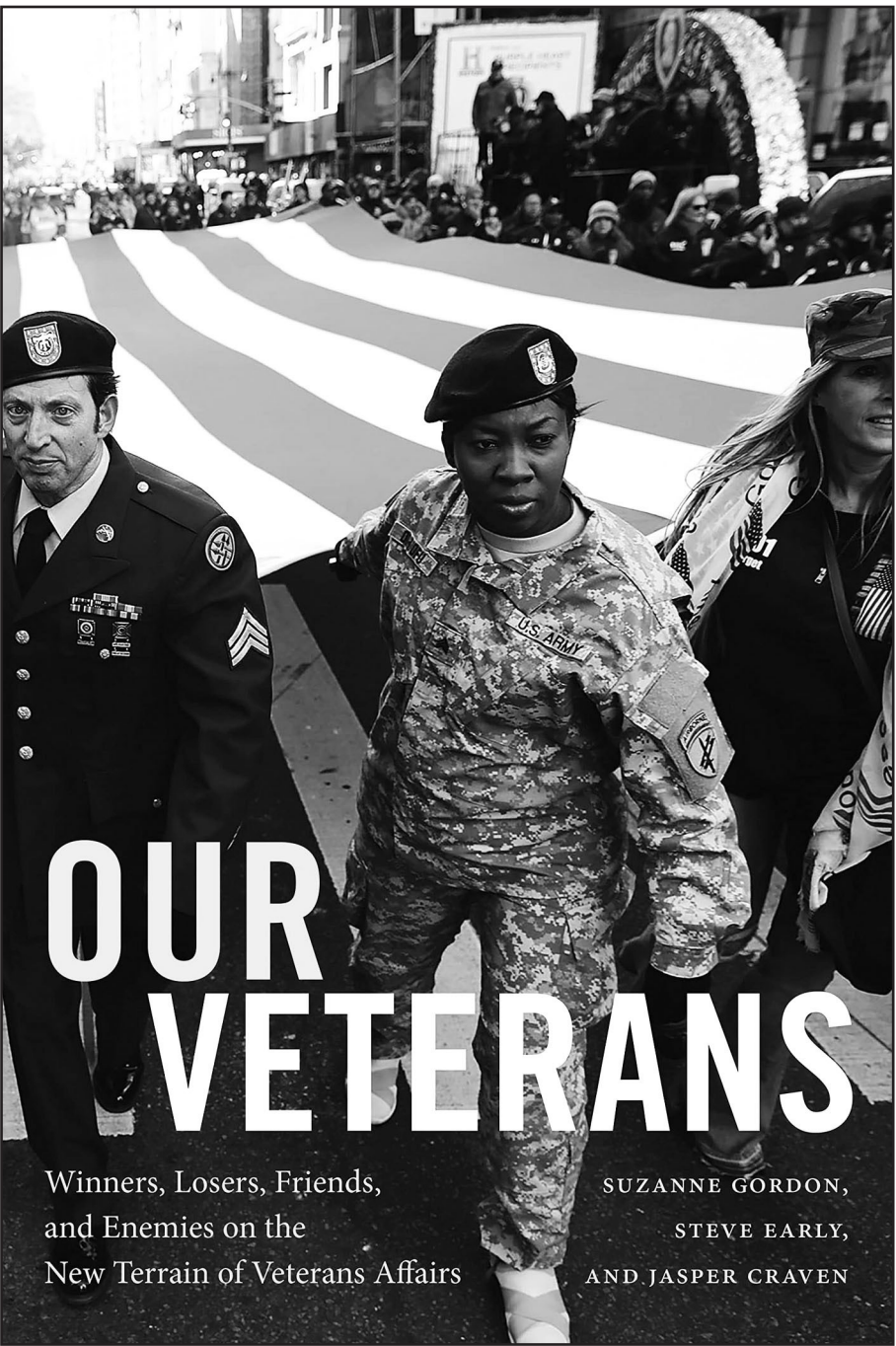
The thing the authors make clear is that military service itself, excluding combat, is dangerous. This begins in boot camp when the military tries to break down and then re-establish one's personality; this varies with the branch of the military, with the Marines being the most determined to build a "new" you. Again, varying with the branch, physical punishment is a key component in this process, whether a direct physical attack or the work of "motivation platoons," where the insistent digging and refilling and digging and refilling deep holes in the ground while incessantly being screamed at by a charming "drill instructor" who helps convey the message that you better get with their program—or you will continue to "pay" for your failure to comprehend. (The first half of the movie *Full Metal Jacket* is the most accurate rendition of Marine boot camp that I've seen; I think the second half of the movie sucks.)

Beyond that, many of the jobs that service people simply have to perform are inherently dangerous, whether driving a tank or a truck over imposing physical obstacles, firing artillery, or working on warplanes, with screaming jet engines, live ammunition, and active ordinance, including rockets and bombs: what could possibly go wrong? Service at sea also brings additional hazards for those in the Navy and Coast Guard, as well as for those who fly.

And then combat accentuates these dangers to the nth degree: not a single combat veteran I've ever met has come out unscathed, and many survivors have taken years to get themselves back together, if they ever do.

The US Government has an agency, the VA or "Veterans' Administration" that is supposed to provide medical resources to help veterans overcome whatever they experienced in the military when they present themselves for treatment. The authors point out that, when fully resourced, the VA generally does an excellent job of serving veterans. Their treatment of physical injuries is deemed quite good, and while it varies between facilities, the VA seems to be dealing better with mental health-related issues over time; it took multiple veteran occupations of VA facilities during the Vietnam War to get the VA to begin to address the issues of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Since many of the VA employees are veterans themselves, it shows that veterans in VA facilities can often get more sympathetic help than they can in most "civilian" facilities.

The problem, however, is tied to the phrase "when fully resourced." The government has never fully funded the



VA, and in fact, Congress has been channeling significant amounts of money away from the VA, supposedly to improve services for veterans—especially those physically distant from VA facilities—but have done this in a way that has undercut the VA itself and its ability to provide support for veterans in general.

Challenging the attacks, the authors argue that the VA is so good—again, when fully resourced—that it serves as a model for the entire country, and it shows how a single-payer system could actually work. This is important. In fact, they point out that something around 70 percent of all medical residencies in the country are carried out in VA facilities today, and that the VA served as a backup medical system when our medical system was overwhelmed by the COVID pandemic.

These political attacks have been given "cover" by several right-wing veterans serving in the House and Senate, as well as conservatives in office who cannot wave the flag enough, the "uber-patriots," many of whom avoided serving but who actually work desperately to deny the impact of their own decisions and who don't give a shit about veterans. (The word "scum" for both groups comes immediately to mind.)

Gordon, Early, and Craven deplore this, and detail what is really going on behind the flag-waving. Interestingly, they point out that most of the right-wing veterans were officers, and that we must not conflate their efforts with those of enlisted personnel who have often borne the brunt of officers' decisions: just because an elected official is a veteran, he or she is not necessarily "right" or looking out for the interest of most veterans.

The strength of this book is its honesty about the whole field of military service and its effects on those who survive it; as well as, obviously, those who don't. These authors demonstrate through this, and previous activities, that their concerns are for the well-being of those who have served. Their writing is straightforward, clear, and honest.

However, I have two criticisms as well. First, I think they delve into the veteran's world more deeply than many would on their own. To be honest, it can be very depressing to learn

a lot of the crap that goes on with veterans' groups, many of which out of self-interest work against addressing the real needs and concerns of veterans, despite their stated "missions" and their rhetoric. This is even worse when their actions provide "cover" for the right-wing idiots who use veteran groups' positions to justify their own.

My larger and more important critique begins with the cover photo and title of the book, but extends beyond: I don't like the cover and title. In my opinion, these are not "our" veterans; they are the veterans and victims of the US Empire. "We" didn't send them to Vietnam, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any of the other places around the world where they've been sent; the scumbag political leaders, both Democrats, and Republicans, sent them. And they bear responsibility for this, as well as taking care of these men and women upon their return home.

And I don't think sufficient attention has been paid in this book to explaining and understanding the US Empire: while these political leaders suggest our country and the Empire are the same, the reality is that they are not; the United States is our country, where we live, but the US Empire includes everywhere in the world that the US seeks to dominate, whether others want it or not. Our country is not at risk from others, despite all of the propaganda; the US Empire is at risk. If the political leaders want to defend the US Empire, let THEM do it. As Phil Ochs said, "I ain't marching anymore!"



KIM SCIPES, PHD, IS A FORMER SERGEANT IN THE US MARINE CORPS, WHO TURNED AROUND WHILE ON ACTIVE DUTY (1969-73); HE STAYED IN THE STATES THE WHOLE TIME. HE IS A MEMBER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR (VVAW). HE IS A PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF SOCIOLOGY AT PURDUE UNIVERSITY NORTHWEST IN WESTVILLE, INDIANA, THE AUTHOR OF FOUR BOOKS AND OVER 240 ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN THE US AND IN 11 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES. A GLOBAL LABOR SCHOLAR, A LIST OF HIS PUBLICATIONS CAN BE FOUND ON-LINE FOR FREE AT [HTTPS://WWW.PNW.EDU/FACULTY/KIM-SCIPES-PH-D/PUBLICATIONS/](https://www.pnw.edu/faculty/kim-scpes-ph-d/publications/), WITH MANY LINKED TO THE ORIGINAL PUBLICATION.



And in the End

TONY COKELY

On May 18, 1970 I wrote this in a letter to my friend:

"When you are in the Marines you only know you are not going anywhere good!"

Dear Dad,

I never shared with you what I did for you back in May of 1970. I was to depart shortly for the war in Vietnam. I had met a young woman from Vancouver, British Columbia. In 1970 there was a lot of anti-war sentiment and she offered me free room and board if I wanted to desert and go north with her.

I was more than tempted. I hated the Marines and could not see an upside to traveling around the world to help kill people. In college my friends and I had participated in the anti-war movement. It was always more about meeting girls than it was about conscientious objection.

So, this young woman offered me shelter and I was tempted. I shared my dilemma with you and you told me something I have never forgotten. You told me, "If you don't go, you are no longer my son." What a crappy thing that was for you to tell your son.

I went to a bar and had a couple of drinks. Then I made my decision. I am not sure I would have decided any differently without your threat; but, maybe you took that decision away from me. I decided that I would do this one thing for you. I would go to war; I would never tell you if things were bad; and, if I died you would only have the question of whether you forced my hand. You would not have to live knowing how miserable I had been.

I also decided that when I did this one more thing for you my debt was paid. From that time until the day you died and beyond I have followed my own mind.

When I wrote home I sent cheerful letters about the food, the weather and the characters I was serving with. I didn't write down what was really

going on. I didn't want to dump that stuff on you and mom. I didn't want you to be any more afraid for me than you already were. I didn't want you to know about the death and worse I was witnessing.

A friend sent me a letter early in my tour. He told me about all the money he was spending fixing up an old car. He said, "In the end only time will tell if it was all worth it." I thought about that statement for quite a while when I read his letter. Actually, I still think about what he said.

I graduated from college through the GI bill. I got the job that turned into my career because I was a Marine. I bought my first house with a VA loan. From the outside I look to be successful; but, there is a dark side beneath the surface. The darkness is the memory of the war.

I have seen what men are capable of doing to their fellow man. I saw between 50 and 100 people die before I was 24 years old. Most of them died in horribly violent ways. I saw torture, desecration of bodies, and booby traps left by our own troops for whomever might stumble upon them.

I was traumatized by what was happening around me and how men became capable of anything. I once found myself in a rage where at best I only severely beat a fellow Marine. The worst result of the beating I am unable to even consider and write down here.

Tell me, what could change an obedient college student into an animal? How did a boy who had attended church with his mother for eighteen years learn to accept the dark actions of his fellows? Those of us who have been where I have been understand that we all became what could be called "Combat Normal."

I got the job, the house, the college education and a disability pension. I also lost some hearing. I gained an anxiety or post-traumatic stress disorder. I have other medical issues due to exposure to Agent Orange.

I am no longer as healthy as some others my age. This could be for

reasons other than the war; but, I was one of the ones fit enough to serve in the military. One could argue that it is because of how I conducted my life after my discharge.

My life has progressed in a combat normal manner. I have had several marriages and more than several long term relationships without the marriage. I have abused alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. I have pursued activities that appeal to adrenaline junkies. All this is combat normal behavior.

I used to wonder why I avoided certain situations. Why do I need to sit near the exit to a room and with my back to a wall? Why am I uncomfortable in crowds where I cannot keep track of what everyone is doing? Why am I afraid that any confrontation might escalate to violence?

I mentioned in a Veterans group that I had only had maybe 5–10 physically violent altercations in my adult life. Everyone just laughed. In retrospect I don't believe any of my college roommates have ever had even one violent altercation. My behavior is not a life choice. Once again, I am just being combat normal.

Dad, I no longer harbor hard feelings for what you said to me. In the first place you would have gotten over my making a different decision. Secondly, I made the decision. After that day, and during Vietnam, I became way too stubborn to suffer fools. I learned to follow my own compass regardless of what others think or say.

I wasn't going to die because I followed a stupid order given by an incompetent. There was a lot of that in Vietnam. There was a lot of that in my work after Vietnam. However, Vietnam made me unconcerned about pissing off fools while attempting to do what is right.

I guess being combat normal has served me well. However, I have trouble maintaining relationships. I am a perfectionist. I expect everyone to think about what they are doing and what they will do next. If one fails to do that in combat someone dies.

I am impatient and critical with

others. That is hard on wives, friends and subordinates. It feels to them like I am always blaming them. I know I am like this. Those days and weeks and months I spent in combat formed the way I am. I can no more change this than I can change what you said to me in 1970.

My life has not been bad. There was the subsidized education, the first house and the career that were helped by my service. There is a little money each month now from the Veterans Administration.

These days I can even admit to being a Vietnam Veteran. Vietnam Veterans have outlasted the pendulum swing. We are no longer perceived as baby killers. We are revered by the public these days. I can't believe how many men my age wear their Vietnam colors with pride.

My life is good. My children know they will be loved by me whatever they do. I have been a better father because I understand what is important and what is trivial. I have taught my children to think for themselves.

I never gave my children "or else" decisions. Their homework was theirs and their decisions were theirs. They earned their successes by themselves. I am very proud of them and of their accomplishments. I am proud because they made their own way. Sometimes they sought my advice or consent; but, more often they found their own way. I hope they have never thought they owed me "one last thing."

I forgive you for any mistakes you made. I could have done without you telling me to go to war or I wouldn't be your son. But, that was a long time ago and it probably changed little in my life. As my friend wrote so long ago, "In the end only time will tell if it is all worth it."



TONY COKELY WAS DRAFTED INTO THE MARINE CORPS AND SERVED FROM 1969 TO 1971. HE RETIRED AFTER 29 YEARS AS A GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE, PROUD UNION MEMBER AND OFFICER. HE LIVES IN THE CALIFORNIA FOOTHILLS.

Draftee

I didn't give a shit about rifles, or flags, or 4th of Julys, or patriotic parades.

I was into drive-in movies, and cruising along Whittier Boulevard in my hopped-up

56' Chevy for excitement. I was a Patriot of Love, of my sixteen-year-old wife,

and my single mother, and my friends punching in and out of dead-end jobs.

I couldn't tell a mortar from an RPG, an AK from an M-16, a guerilla from

a gorilla, or a commie from a homie. I loved my life, as small as it was, and

for as little as I knew of death. I heard about those who believed War was All,

one's "ultimate" sacrifice and duty. They tried to tell me "what war was

was like", but it was never like that for me. I felt no thrill in the kill, and

vomited the first time I saw what a 500-pound bomb does to a body.

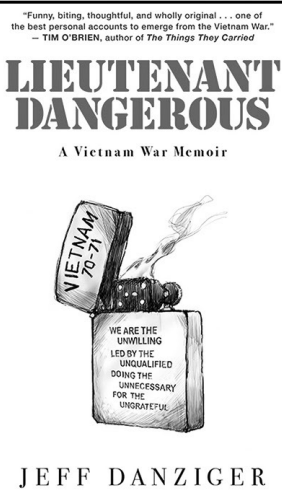
No, I was done with War long before War was done with me. I died and

came back to life and have lived all of my nine cat's lives. One was lived

out in firefights and night patrols where the sky fell with bullets, shrapnel,

and flesh. It's the one I keep waking to, and the one I will forever mourn.

—rg cantalupo (aka Ross Canton)



New Vietnam Memoir by Cartoonist Jeff Danziger

LIEUTENANT DANGEROUS

A Vietnam War Memoir

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



Help for Children in Vietnam Who Lost a Parent to COVID-19

BHAVIA WAGNER

Thanks to the generosity of the readers of *The Veteran* (article May 2021), we were able to raise \$10,588 to help school children in Vietnam who lost their mother or father to COVID. Funds collected were distributed in September 2022 to 120 heartbroken children in Vietnam. This assistance was a great comfort to them and a beautiful act of kindness. We are currently raising funds to give another grant in 2023 to help more children.

Our humanitarian program, Education for Girls in Vietnam, focuses on girls K-12 who come from families living in poverty in Vietnam. The students selected for the awards are chosen because they are both poor and working hard in school to get good grades. Currently, there is an additional criterion—the gift is for children who lost a parent in the pandemic.

Each girl is given 2 million Vietnamese Dong which is about \$85. This is a significant gift because the average monthly income in Vietnam is about \$150. The money is used to help the child pay for school expenses (clothes, a bicycle, and/or school supplies) and it helps feed the whole family.

The award is a form of recognition and encouragement for students who are overcoming difficulties in their life. The financial gifts are given to girls because they are more disadvantaged and have fewer opportunities compared to boys.

The agency overseeing the awards is the Vietnam Women's Union which works to uplift women and families. The Women's Union has local chapters in all the provinces in Vietnam. This organization has a reputation for having integrity and effectiveness. I can attest to this because I have been working with them for the past 30 years. The Vietnam Women's Union works with local schools to select students. The teachers and school principals nominate students who are most deserving.

The program Education for Girls in Vietnam was started in 1994 by volunteers in the USA following a citizen's friendship tour to Vietnam. The tour was organized through Global Exchange, a non-profit based in San Francisco, and led by Valentina DuBasky and myself (Bhavia Wagner).

We started this program as an act of reconciliation with Vietnam and to offer friendship. It is a very simple yet deeply meaningful program for people in the USA and Vietnam. It makes everyone happy—both those who give and those who receive. The



120 students received support in September 2022.

program is still run by volunteers. The donation this year was delivered to the Vietnam Women's Union with the help of Veterans For Peace Chapter 69 in San Francisco and Veterans For Peace Chapter 160 in Vietnam. Nadya Williams, Chuck Searcy, and other board members of both VFP chapters were a tremendous help.

Donations are made to the US-based 501c3 non-profit organization Friendship with Cambodia because it offers donors a tax deduction and we do not take an administrative fee.

The spread of COVID in Vietnam was kept to a minimum by strong measures taken by the government. Restrictions on travel and gathering were put in place and there was a lot of testing and quarantining. The economic and emotional impacts were severe, as many people could not earn a living. The number of cases of COVID-19 in Vietnam was among the lowest in the world until the Delta variant took off. Then it became impossible to contain and Vietnam experienced wide-spread infections, especially in the more densely populated areas of Ho Chi Minh City and the surrounding provinces. There have been over 43,000 deaths.

In September of 2022, monetary awards were given to 120 female students who lost their mother or father to COVID-19. These families also have financial difficulties. All of the girls are studying in grades K–12 and have good academic results.

The chosen students live in seven provinces in south Vietnam and Ho

Chi Minh City. The provinces are Tien Giang, An Giang, Binh Duong, Long An, Ben Tre, Dong Thap and Hau Giang.

Here are a few examples of girls who received the award in 2022.

Twin girls in 3rd grade and their older sister who is in the 7th grade lost their mother in the COVID-19 pandemic. They are from Tien Giang province and they are all good students. They are living with their father who works as a gardener and does not have a stable income. In addition to the terrible heartbreak of losing their mother, the family is struggling to get by.

Huynh Thi Nhi, from An Giang province, is in 7th grade. Her mother died from COVID-19 and now she is living with her poor grandparents. She is suffering from a great loss.

Le Hong Phuong Thao is a very good student in 10th grade and she recently lost her father to COVID-19. She lives with her mother in Long An province. Her mother does temporary work and earns very little. The tragedy has created many emotional and financial challenges for Thao and her mother.

Thousands of children in Vietnam had a parent die during the pandemic. We invite you to donate to help one or more children at \$100 each. Donations can be made online at www.friendshipwithcambodia.org or checks can be mailed to Friendship with Cambodia, PO Box 5231, Eugene, Oregon 97405. Donations are tax-deductible.

Thank you for your kindness. It

will always be remembered.

The following is a thank you letter from a student in Vietnam who received our gift.

Dear aunts and uncles,
I would like to send my greetings and deep gratitude to you. Today, I feel really lucky and touched to receive this support. It's like shimmering candles that light the way for broken hearts in dark places. It helps me rise up and overcome my difficulties.

The award is a meaningful gift to lift some of my family's burden. It encourages my spirit to overcome my despair. It gives me strength to follow the path of realizing my dreams. It's a very precious gift.

Thank you for caring about me and helping me. I don't know how I can repay your kindness. I promise I will try harder in my studies. Thank you for thinking of people with difficult circumstances.

I would like to send my best wishes to all of you. I hope the award program will grow stronger, more successful, and inspire other disadvantaged people to keep walking on their path of life.

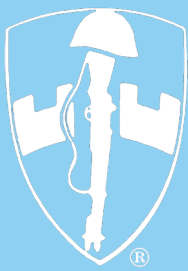
Yours,
Hoang Thi Thao
from Luc Khu High School



BHAVIA WAGNER IS THE FOUNDER AND DIRECTOR OF FRIENDSHIP WITH CAMBODIA AND THE AUTHOR OF SOUL SURVIVORS: STORIES OF WOMEN AND CHILDREN IN CAMBODIA.



Each school creates an award ceremony for the recipients.



Peace Marching in Vietnam 1993

STEPHEN SOSSAMAN

As eager as I was to leave Vietnam and the US Army artillery five decades ago, I later was as eager to return on a more peaceful mission. I did not want my most recent interaction with the people of Vietnam to be the distortions of war.

I returned to Vietnam in July 1993 with 11 others, including three other veterans, to conduct walks in five Vietnamese cities to call publicly for an end to the American embargo against normal relations with Vietnam. Our travel to Vietnam was still technically illegal, but the sanctions would end the next year.

My personal purpose was to interact with Vietnamese people as humans should interact, peacefully and cooperatively. Only after I left the army did I begin to discover the rich history and complex culture of Vietnam. The army never taught me or my stateside unit to dehumanize Vietnamese, and my unit in Vietnam in effect thought of Vietnamese as in one of three groups: targets, unreliable allies, or nuisance civilians.

A couple of other veterans had warned me against returning because they worried that returning might trigger flashbacks or panic attacks. At that time I sometimes felt hyper alert walking in New England woods, alert to likely ambush sites, despite having been an artilleryman rather than an infantryman. But I had no worries about returning.

And there was no problem. The Vietnamese I encountered helped me feel exhilarated and secure walking Vietnamese streets. I felt comfortable even in Hanoi, which to me was once mysterious and menacing, and in the once lethal streets around Hue's Imperial Palace.

The almost total absence of armed police and soldiers helped. Among pedestrians I saw smiles and looks of indifference, but no frowns or expressions of hostility. In Saigon I spoke with two veterans of our former South Vietnamese allies, who used me to practice their English, swap war stories, and complain mildly about life under the Communists.

America's large wartime peace movement, especially veterans organizations like Vietnam Veterans Against the War, can probably be credited

for much of Vietnam's friendliness during my return. During the war, the government in Hanoi repeatedly told the population that the American government was run by warmongers but that the average American was friendly and peace loving. They had photos of peace marches to prove it.

That reminder that the people of an enemy country are OK likely makes for easier post-war normalization, I think, than we are likely to experience in Iraq or Afghanistan.

Three incidents in particular convinced me that the Vietnamese were psychologically recovering from the war better than most Americans were. They had the can-do optimism that used to be part of the American myth, and I hope that they still have it.

Vietnamese children lightened my memory load at Hanoi's Army Museum. I was alone, taking an occasional picture, when one large group of schoolchildren turned toward me, away from their teacher, who was showing them rusting fragments of downed American and French aircraft.

The children held their poses, and I took the picture. When the photo was developed and enlarged, I saw their smiles and the ease with which they temporarily abandoned a lesson about foreigners' roles in their elders' sacrifices. Those children showed an openness and curiosity that pleased me greatly. I wrote about being an unwitting exhibit in this haiku:

Army Museum:
Hanoi children smile at one
old American

One night in Hanoi three of the veterans in our group were cycle-pedaled through the chaotic traffic of full energy pedestrians and cyclists, to visit with a local entrepreneur. He was eager for contacts in America who knew millionaires who could finance his idea: build a hotel catering to returning American veterans, staffed entirely by former NVA and NLF veterans. I thought that was a doomed idea, but I admired his optimism and his assumption that the fundamental relationship of two nations is trade and tourism, not war. No grudges, just a sort of international brotherhood.

Other Vietnamese I met were



Stephen Sossaman (left), July 1993 Saigon Peace March.

also obviously eager to rejoin the world community, see the economy flourish, and forget about the war. In two local bookstores, the crowds were after books about learning foreign languages, especially English, of course, the only language with which they could communicate with other Asians and the world at large. At that time, Vietnamese school children were assigned to schools that taught either Russian or English, not both, and that assignment was apparently thought of as a lottery with big winners and big losers.

At a cafe in Hue, I experienced the classic one-on-one meeting over beer with a former enemy. He was Le Huy, whose former AO was outside Hue, while mine was in the Mekong Delta. I have lost the photo, but certainly not the memory. Our conversation was fragmented and halting, but sincere and open, so it felt right for the next stage of relations between the people of Vietnam and the United States.

In a cemetery for NLF fighters killed in action in Cu Chi, I walked among the grave markers, wondering about the lives and deaths of the NLF soldiers buried there. Many of the markers lacked such basic infor-

mation as the date or province of the soldier's birth.

I found myself in front of the grave of a man killed in 1968, when I was in Vietnam. I stepped back, and was about to take a picture of this grave when a child's face appeared in my camera lens, out of focus but patient.

Young Vietnam was gently bringing me back to the present. I took her picture, and pictures of her two friends, and was in a far better mood when, in the next hour, we visited part of the harrowing tunnel system in which thousands of Vietnamese lived and suffered to avoid American firepower.

Vietnam today has its troubles, like every other country, but my hope is that Vietnam's historic courage, optimism, and ingenuity will bring them the prosperity and accomplishment that I saw them planning for in 1993.



STEPHEN SOSSAMAN WAS A 9TH INFANTRY DIVISION ARTILLERY FIRE DIRECTION COMPUTER. AN EMERITUS PROFESSOR AT ENGLISH AT WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY IN MASSACHUSETTS, LIVING IN BURBANK.



Hanoi Peace March, July 1993.

Back To The Beginning - The Supposed Necessity of It All

JOHN CRANDELL (REVIEWER)

Embers of War: The Fall of an Empire and the Making of America's Vietnam
by Fredrick Logevall
Random House (2012)

It has been nearly a full decade since Fredrick Logevall's book *Embers of War* was published to instant acclaim and deservedly honored with his receiving the Pulitzer Prize for history in 2013. Presently, amidst news of the homeless, viruses, fake everything from Asteroid Trump, Buffalo, torched Sequoias, floods, and Uvalde, what can one say about such a magnificent book amidst the death of hope that is flung in our faces every day? Why care about or focus attention upon a major work that regards the gestation of a now-distant event, that which gave birth to the predominant era in our memories—the time which ought to have been the best part of our lives.

Save for the time of Germany's Third Reich, no other nation on Earth has ever possessed an anti-intellectual strain in its culture anywhere equal to that of the good 'ol US of A. And the subject of how the American nation found itself mired to its waist in the quagmire of southeast Asia is tied to that strain just as a destroyer with its anchor caught solid in a corpse such as Westmoreland's far down at the bottom of the Mindanao Deep. When the water runs shallow, certainty evaporates into exasperated wonderment as the ship of state plows into the headlands of fate. Steel gives way to granite and we're all still dealing with rust caused by so much political necessity. The preternatural necessity spawned by anti-communist (and anti-bad guy) ideology.

Logevall's work is both long and supernal. *The Fall of An Empire and The Making of America's Vietnam* is the subtitle. It is supported by a vast array of foreign and domestic sources. His end-notes largely serve to support the text rather than extend the discussion. Thus, no need for a bibliography. To course through his notes is an incisive ride with the Valkyries—against rather than for the insanity of war and its delusions. Again and again, while reading his work, one could feel as though they were standing in a red-lit darkroom, staring down into the pan of photo developer and the clarity of causative factors arises.

The cost of his nightly shelter in Paris must have been inordinate given the ten years sequence of events he traces which extends from the end of World War II to France's withdrawal

from Cochin China following the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. A professor of history and international relations at Harvard, Logevall is now at work on a second volume of the life of John F. Kennedy and as well, contemplates producing a reflective work on the entirety of the Vietnam experience. *Embers of War* extends to the inauguration of Kennedy as president. Kennedy's amazingly contradictory positions regarding the war span the decade of the Fifties. What began in skepticism turned to pro-Diem propaganda thanks to necessity and a desire for higher office in a climate dominated by Joe McCarthy. The author's first volume on JFK is a stunning work of biography. The following volume could result in shock waves. Only three weeks separated assassinations—in Saigon and Dallas.

The author gives us ironic insights and visits to Cochin China by a major British novelist and three Kennedy siblings. Separately, they all would socialize with contacts on the rooftop terrace of Saigon's Majestic Hotel. Gunfire on the perimeter of Tan Son Nhut rang out as JFK, RFK, and the future spouse of Peter Lawford deplaned north of Saigon. That was in October of 1951, a year before JFK's first campaign for the Senate. He was provided with dismal analyses of France's situation by officials at the American legation as well as *AP* bureau chief Seymour Topping. The latter described a more dire situation and advised that Ho Chi Minh had captured the heart of the Vietnamese nationalist movement. Then Congressman Kennedy returned to Washington and kept his mouth shut, until after the election of Eisenhower to the presidency and his election to the upper house on Capitol Hill. In Saigon, he had also met with France's high commissioner, General Jean De Tassigny who was responsible for both military and government affairs in the French colony. Both Tassigny and the chief American official became aggravated by Kennedy's incisive questioning. After a side trip to Hanoi, he wrote in his diary: "We are more and more becoming colonialists in the minds of the people," that poverty, disease, injustice, and inequality factored in the insurgency. But he would not stand in the well of the Senate and raise questions until after the presidential election of 1952. In a speech before Boston's Chamber of Commerce, he reported that Ho Chi Minh would win in a free election (which eventually became a mandate within the '54 Geneva Accords, the capstone

to France's involvement in southeast Asia). One month following Kennedy's departure, General Tassigny sent a large contingent of his troops into a disastrous three-month battle in Hoa Binh province north of Hanoi. Meanwhile, he departed to return to Paris due to prostate cancer. Before expiring at Clinique Maillot and ever blind to his own dictatorial ways, he confided to a fellow general: "There is only one thing that upsets me—that I have never completely understood Indochina."


In the era of "who lost China?" with Joseph McCarthy bellowing lies on the floor of the Senate and Douglas MacArthur getting himself fired after having tripped Red Chinese forces into action on the Korean peninsula, Harry Truman retired from politics and the nation's voters elected Dwight Eisenhower. John Foster Dulles took office as secretary of state. And it would be his patrician arch-catholicism and the eternally ordained mandate of necessity in American politics that would combine and set the United States on a path towards tragedy in the exotic land so admired by writer Graham Greene.

And it was Greene who initially took up residence on the city's waterfront in The Majestic, moved on to the nearby Continental Hotel, and then to an apartment on Rue Catinat expressing pro-French and anti-American sentiments at every step. And it was not American advisor Edward Lansdale he would use in picturing a naïve CIA satrap in his 1955 novel *The Quiet American*. The book had already been published by the time of Lansdale's arrival. In reality, however, Lansdale was destined to reach the height of naivete in suggesting that Taiwanese foresters be imported and given arms to chase Viet Minh out of a strategic forested area of Tay Ninh province. As well, he proved to remain indifferent to the corrupt and repressive governance of the Diem brothers. He could never say enough in favor of dictator Ngo Dinh Diem attempting to prevent a coup in the wake of Buddhist bonzes immolating themselves as late as the summer of 1963. By then he'd become ensnared in Robert Kennedy and James Jesus Angleton's tracking of Lee Harvey Oswald and had been mainly involved in the infamous Operation Mongoose, the CIA's effort at terminating Fidel Castro. RFK had also kept a diary of the '51 visit to Vietnam. In it, he scribed "As it stands now we are becoming more and more involved in the war to a point where we can't back out.

It doesn't seem to be a picture with a very bright future." That was written 32 months before Ho's army crushed the French at Dien Bien Phu.

Yet a formidable part of the work, an intricate presentation of negotiations in Geneva forms an exception. Logevall's specialization in international relations predominates here. Despite his clarity and wealth of insights, this portion of the text is a comparative burden to the reader's imagination. It is not equal to the dramatic turns of events of Ho Chi Minh and his chief military assistant. Political calculations in Paris, London, and Washington predominated as America took the reins of power in the wake of Vo Nguyen Giap's epic defeat of the French far west of Hanoi in June 1954. An intricate narrative of international jousting could never sustain one's attention as compared to the story of the indescribable vision, persistence, and courage of the Vietnamese protagonists. The fifth chapter titled *The Warrior Monk* is key to becoming enlightened as to Ho's sway over the peasantry, north, and south.

FDR's position regarding colonialism in general and France's resumption of same following the war in the Pacific is highly scrutinized. There is an anomalous January 1945 response by the White House (previously cited in these pages), that was uncovered by Neil Sheehan rejecting Ho Chi Minh's appeal to Roosevelt for American support in his effort against French intents. Other than this anomaly, Logevall cites repeated Roosevelt statements against both French and British colonialism near the end of his life. Logevall dug far more deep than did Sheehan in the latter's *A Bright Shining Lie* yet he sidestepped the contradiction seemingly in honor of the famous, now departed journalist. Upon publication of Logevall's work in 2012, Sheehan blurbed: "Logevall has gleaned from American, French, and Vietnamese sources a splendid account of France's nine-year war in Indochina and the story of how the American statesmen of the period allowed this country to be drawn into the quagmire." *Embers of War* remains in print and is available in paperback via Amazon.



JOHN CRANDELL ONCE CLERKED
AND CARRIED MAIL IN THE CENTRAL
HIGHLANDS FOR THE 4TH INFANTRY.



San Francisco demonstration - October 14, 1976.

Two Books Are Better Than One

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Marching to a Silent Tune
by **Gerald R. Gioglio**
(ACTA Publications, 2022)

Take This War And Shove It!
by **Gregory Laxer**
(Unbearable Truth Publications, 2021)

I am pleased to report that my summer has been consumed by these two books! They are incredibly similar, which inspired me to combine two reviews into one. These are two memoirs, by two Vietnam-era vets, and they are simply terrific! Be prepared to feel nostalgic, angry, disgusted, and pissed off. Don't get me wrong! They are two very different books, structured differently, but they deliver similar stories from similar perspectives in ways that will bring back a broad spectrum of memories and angst. Both, by the way, were VVAW members at one time.

Gerry Gioglio was raised in a multi-ethnic neighborhood in New Brunswick, New Jersey, where he went to Catholic school and was stigmatized as a "spaghetti bender" in a community where everyone was labeled Mic, Wop, Chink, Spic, or Kraut. Greg Laxer grew up in suburban Syosset, a Long Island bedroom community. A bookworm, he was barely into his teens when he realized that Henry Thoreau and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. were surpassing as an educational tool all the fine lectures in our school system about "liberty and justice for all" and "democracy." He found hope in the fact that the civil rights movement was being reported on TV newscasts. "It wasn't until the early '60s that a black family managed

to purchase a home in Syosset," he notes, and "the house was promptly firebombed." Laxer went to Syracuse University, but stopped going to classes and, when he returned home for Thanksgiving, informed his parents that he was through with school. His father "pretty well went through the roof." Gioglio attended a junior college near his home, but after two years he was bored and quit. Soon after, he got married.

Early on, Gerry Gioglio heard the news of a military conflict in a far-off place called Vietnam and compared it to his religious and political beliefs. He was naively confident that his moral opposition to the war would make him exempt from the Draft.

Soon after leaving college, Greg Laxer was reclassified 1-A. He considered applying as a Conscientious Objector, but he had no history of participation in a church that taught pacifism. He enlisted, stating a preference for assignment to a Medical assignment. "You would be surprised how many of my peers enlisted precisely for this reason, to try to avoid the total crapshoot of being a draftee." No, I wouldn't be surprised. I was one! But Laxer was determined to avoid the war in Vietnam, which he considered immoral and illegal. If he received orders to Vietnam, he would refuse to go!

"Let's be clear," Gerry Gioglio writes. "Like most of us at the time, I was just a child-man who was swept up into a phenomenally disruptive and murderous war being waged in our names. Not a saint, not yet much of a sinner, but a guy out of my league..." On the very next page, he says "I was just a guy who struggled with notions of right and wrong,

Christian nonviolence, patriotism, and masculinity." It was, Gioglio explains, "a time when adolescence would abruptly be stolen from our generation as we, like our parents and grandparents before us, were forced into adulthood at the mercy of a war." He mentions the many peace groups that emerged in the late '60s, along with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), the Black Panthers, and Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). "For the most part, young people like me viewed all this as a celebration of what grass-roots democracy looked like and what so many of us believed in and lived." He neglected to submit the necessary forms to claim exemption from the Draft as a CO and was drafted.

Gerry Gioglio played the system, repeatedly claiming CO status and appealing when his requests were denied. Greg Laxer went AWOL, failing to report for shipment to Vietnam. He took a brief vacation from army life, and turned himself in, fully expecting to go to jail or, as we knew it in those days, "the stockade." And, he repeated this multiple times! Each time, he could not be sent to Vietnam while the legal case was pending, and he often remained free to attend concerts by the most famous rock groups of the time, often with his senses "energized" with LSD. When he was incarcerated, he continued to read, think, and agitate.

Not to be a spoiler, but both of these dudes escaped going to Vietnam. They got out of the military pretty much unscathed, have had careers, and raised families. These are two magnificent books, portraits of all the tension and outrage we experienced during those years, and wonderfully

accurate portraits of the army and its callous, cruel, unthinking treatment of millions of naïve young men during that era. Like Laxer and Gioglio, I hated my time in the military. I am disturbed that these two books made me feel nostalgic about the apprehension I felt about the Draft, and still angered and appalled, absolutely indignant at the way the army treated us! Pardon me, but FTA! Excuse me, I digress! These are two self-published books, extremely well done. The authors won't get rich. You won't see them on TV talk shows, or endorsed by Oprah. They won't have a book tour. If you are a member of VVAW, or if you regularly read *The Veteran* and agree with its long-lived principles and opinions, you should buy these two books. Trust me on this. They go together like salt and pepper, like the Lone Ranger and Tonto! These books are a matched set. I highly recommend you buy both and keep them side-by-side like building blocks in the foundation of the history of the Vietnam-era peace movement. You will applaud the courage of these two guys, back in the day, and their clarity in describing all the emotions of the times. If you believe in what VVAW stands for, go directly to Amazon and buy these books!



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING MEMOIR ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM, AND ALSO, VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

Remembrances

I remember the scent of the lotus
blossoming under the bridge at

Trang Bang, more than the stench
of the bodies crumpled along the

bank. I remember Lonny waking
from a dream as he lay beside me

on a night listening-post, more than
his half-breaths as he bled out

waiting for the medevac to come.
I remember the leeches I burned off

my legs with a cigarette's ember,
more than the embers of the hootch

I burned with the angry flick of
my hand. If I could fill this body

that each day ferries me through
this world with only the moments

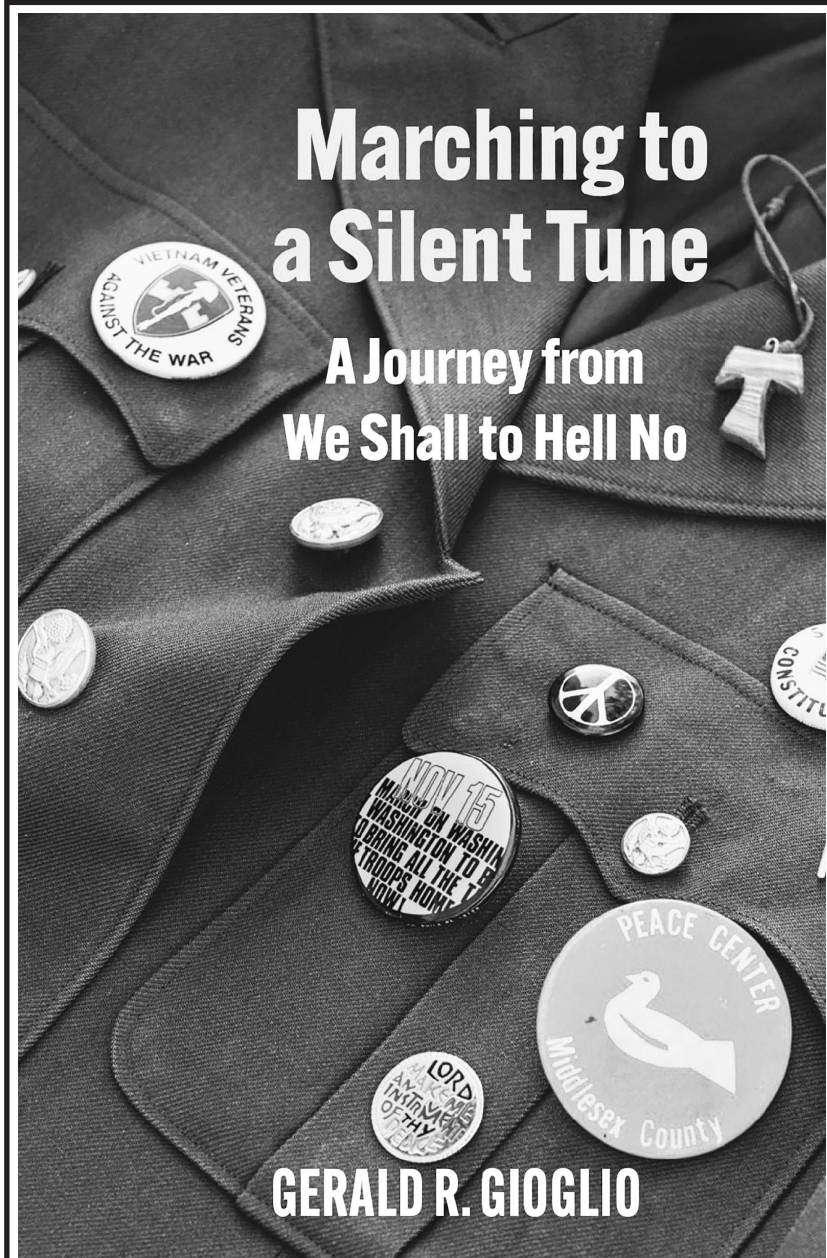
I love, these would be among them.
For my life isn't like a boat, or a river,

but these memories I carry inside me
as I tread upstream or downstream

toward tomorrow—these remembrances
I cherish more than the traumatic ones

that each day I must endeavor to forget.

—rg cantalupo (aka Ross Canton)



Set against the backdrop of the turbulent 1960s, this remarkable memoir details the author's personal experience as a conscript in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. Jerry Gioglio relates with compelling honesty his struggles to understand and embody his working-class upbringing while responding to civil rights challenges, the military draft, and the dehumanizing aspects of military training.

MARCHING TO A SILENT TUNE
A Journey from We Shall to Hell No by Gerald R. Gioglio
ISBN: 978-0-87946-701-2 Paperback 306-pages \$19.95
www.actapublications.com 800-397-2282
Also Available from Booksellers

Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories

MIN WARBURTON (REVIEWER)

Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories
by Donna A. Lowery
(AuthorHouse, 2015)

"In 2003, the faculty of a high school ... invited veterans to come to an event with their military mementos and pictures," writes Kathleen Kennedy, one of the many contributors to Donna Lowery's history of women who served in Vietnam. "I sat with other veterans," she says, "with my combat boots and picture in front of me, talking to students, when the teacher in charge interrupted and called me a fraud. He was so angry with me and told me to leave, but I did not ... About 20 minutes later the teacher came back and apologized for having become so angry. He informed me that Vietnam history had already been written and there was no mention of any uniformed armed forces women having been in Vietnam, only nurses."

Kathleen "Kathy" Kennedy (Fontana)
In-country: April 29, 1968–April 28, 1969
Rank: Specialist 5, US Army
Duty: USARV, G5

Anne Marie Doering was the first woman officer in Vietnam. She retired as a Lieutenant Colonel. Having enlisted in March of 1943, she went to Vietnam in 1962, one of three military women in-country. She entered Vietnam as a Major in the Army and served for a year in Saigon with MACV, as a Combat Intelligence Officer. At that time, the US presence in Vietnam totaled only 5,000 US service members. The other two women were nurses.

There are many books on the women who served as nurses. This book focuses on the military women whose stories have been omitted from history. Women served in Vietnam from 1962 until 1973 and represented four branches of the military: Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marines. Every woman is listed chronologically by name, branch, time in-country, rank when in-country, and duty. Some were there a year; many extended or went back. Some were in Vietnam for as long as three years.

Sample entry:
Mary A. Marsh
Retired as Brigadier General
In-country: April 1968–April 1969
Rank: Captain, US Air Force

Duty: MACV Detachment 10, Air Force Advisory Group, USAF WAF Staff Advisor to the Vietnam Women's Armed Forces Corps

Lowery's book is a team effort. Her team comprised fifteen women who served in Vietnam, four women who served in other locations, and one civilian member. Determined that no woman be left behind, women contacted women who contacted other women. Records, archives, and museums were searched. At the time of publication, Lowery and her team were not able to access many of the records they needed—lost, buried, warehoused—to this day no one is quite sure. Their search for the women, dead or alive, was exhaustive. It continues.

Chapters 4-12 are a year-by-year listing of every military woman known to have served in Vietnam. If a photograph was available, it is included. Some had served in WWII and/or Korea prior to Vietnam. Some enlisted with the sole intention of going to Vietnam. Many enlisted right out of high school. Unlike males who were being drafted, every one of these women chose to serve. They served as clerk-typists, stenographers, intelligence analysts, translators, communications technicians, dental technicians, in finance, supply specialists, doctors, medical records clerks, lab technicians, dietitians and, physical therapists. Many contributed stories and anecdotes, memories both good and bad. In the chapter, *The Consequences of War*, there are stories of PTSD and health issues resulting from Agent Orange (both on them and their children—if they were able to have them). In their time in Vietnam, many women experienced the males they worked with as supportive and protective. Others share stories of abuse, harassment, and rape. Nearly all speak of friendships made with the other women whom they think of as their sisters. Most said they were grateful to have served in Vietnam; others remain conflicted.

Arriving in Vietnam: Often a woman was the only female soldier aboard the plane, usually a C-130. Many women describe wondering if those guys made it home again. Nearly all describe deplaning to sweltering heat and a vile stench, thinking "What have I done!" Some spent their first nights alone, many spent their first

nights experiencing "Incoming." Per orders, they arrived in skirts. None were given weapons training—some managed to get it anyway. "I was so glad I insisted on being qualified on both the M-1 and .38 before I left for Vietnam." Women didn't get weapons training during basic or Officer Training School but had classes in make-up. Within twenty-four hours, nearly every woman had an encounter with rats, cockroaches, geckoes—very big cockroaches—very, very big rats.

In-country: Army women were first billeted at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Tent City B. In 1967, they were moved to Long Binh, into wooden two-story barracks. The Air Force, Marine, and Navy women who came later were billeted in "hotels" in Saigon. Working days were 12-14 hours, seven days a week with a rare day off. A favorite restaurant was Loon Foon. Many became involved with the orphanages—some because they were medical personnel, others because it was a choice they made. Some adopted children. Dogs were also adopted: "... it cost me my whole paycheck to send him back home, but ... I was not going to leave him behind. I was afraid the Vietnamese would eat him." The Saigon Zoo was popular. Drinking was a way to relax, and as the war went on, for many a way to become numb and to survive. The 1968 TET Offensive changed the war for everyone, and for women, wearing fatigues and combat boots became the norm. Mama-sans—the maids or housekeepers—were not always to be trusted. "When our mama-san didn't show up to do laundry or polish boots ... we always seemed to receive incoming rounds from the Vietcong."

Helicopters: Long after the war was over, long after the women were home, they said the sound of the helicopters stayed in their heads.

Photographs reveal that in the earlier years, these young women in uniform arrived with coiffed hair—over time, hair gets shorter and shorter. "One of the first things I did was to cut my hair short, which was done by a Vietnamese barber in the compound."

Rats. More rats. Agent Orange. Stench. Rain. Sleeping under ponchos, soaked. Incoming. Bunkers. Eating at the 24th Evacuation Hospital. Unable to eat at the 24th Evacuation Hospital when witnessing the pain and suffering became unbearable. "The average age of a soldier was 19, my age at the time.

I walked past these gurneys and most soldiers would be moaning in pain. ... I watched many die. When I came back to the World, I brought these men with me. Every day they flash before my eyes. They were my comrades. Someone needs to remember them."

The bright notes: Bob Hope, Martha Raye, Christmas trees from home. Care packages.

Going Home: Being told not to wear uniforms on flights because of protestors. Feeling good about having served, feeling one had done the right thing only to be turned on and called "Uncle Sam's whore, Baby killer." Years of never being welcomed home, never being honored for service, and then being written out of history. "Oh, you were in Vietnam? So you were a nurse?"

Mary Joan Webb, Staff Sergeant, US Air Force worked in the Office of History for a retired Navy Lieutenant Commander and military historian. "... the first thing he told me was he did not approve of women in the military and certainly not in Vietnam ... later [he] told me I had changed his mind about women in the military."

Chapter 18 includes short histories of women's service in the Army, Air Force, Navy and Marines. "... the Women's Army Corps was called upon to shore up the Army as it transitioned to an all-volunteer force when the draft was discontinued in 1973. The number of women serving increased exponentially from 10,000 in 1968, ... to 53,000 by the end of the WAC era in 1984. Much was proven by Army women by their service in Vietnam. They were courageous, professional and dedicated. These women did what was asked of them with pride and selfless service. ... The women who serve today in the Army owe a great debt of gratitude to these Vietnam veterans; they helped ensure quality and opportunity for future service women."

Written history is full of gaps. Lowery's book, *Women Vietnam Veterans: Our Untold Stories*, fills an enormous gap. Kathleen Kennedy speaks for every woman who served when she says, "We were really there!"



MIN WARBURTON, ANNAPOLIS MD.
WRITER, RESEARCHER, ARTIST, AND
SPOUSE OF A RETIRED MILITARY CHAPLAIN,
VICTOR MCINNIS, US NAVY.

50th Anniversary

JIM WOHLGEMUTH

Here I am Joining most Muricans.

This is my fiftieth anniversary of leaving the Navy and ending my Vietnam experience. I don't know about any of you but I suppressed that three years, nine months, and eleven days quickly. The only things that lingered to remind me were bad teeth, which a VA doctor fixed up great, a cough, and a nagging rash of white flaky splotches on my back. Both the rash and cough eventually just disappeared. Oh, I also was very reactive at loud noises, much to the amusement of young friends and a new girlfriend and I guess to me.

However, 50 years on and things have caught up to me. I have finally reached out to the VA for an antidepressant. Why now?

The combination of this 50th anniversary, along with the continuing militarism, (Who among us thought that we would continue intervening where we were not wanted after our Vietnam debacle?). That horrorshow has blended and mixed with militarism on the streets here. Then there is "Thank you for your service" as I watch American flags on poles used to

break windows in the capital. Add to that living in a red state that annually hosts white supremacist groups at our state park, a state that under-funds the education of my grandchildren, avoids vaccines, while eliminating women's rights, LGBT rights, voting rights and denying or avoiding climate change. Here in a state where I see so many of my fellow Vietnam Veterans falling under the MAGA spell as if that is patriotic.

Here I am a veteran, a Vietnam Veteran, who realized that he was complicit in the death of millions back then and now must witness and be complicit in the starvation of children in Yemen, Somalia, and Ethiopia, the occupation and murder of Palestinian people under a fascist regime in Israel, the blockade of Cuba, the endless wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, where the funds that could help alleviate the starvation in Afghanistan are withheld, and then our continued arming of Ukraine so that we can not end the war but only continue it. This along with saber-rattling against China and any other country that does not go along with US hegemony. Did I forget the nuclear apocalypse,

climate catastrophe, not to mention our domestic infrastructure, health care, and social and humanitarian collapse? The "greatest" generation created our American war on Vietnam and either drafted or backed many of us into going. That led to the anti-war protests and all the efforts of so many here to finally bring us home and give Vietnam back to the Vietnamese (damaged as it is). So how in the hell did we let the public forget that or were we just co-opted by the war machine, by the military-industrial, congressional, media complex? After all we experienced, knew, and later learned, how could we let this planetary destruction continue and get worse? How could we let our sons and daughters and grandsons and granddaughters go off to foreign wars? How do I find myself in a state where the lack of awareness, the lack of caring for anything but number one, the voluntary ignorance (of at least 60 percent of voters) is palpable?

With that let me say that I am encouraged and somewhat hopeful by the young people I see in the anti-war movement trying to address and combat all of these issues. I hope we

boomers and Vietnam Vets can either help or just get out of their way.

So with that, as I deal with, as we deal with the moral injury and PTSD of my military service, I now see myself dealing with the moral injury of the everyday. Are we becoming unhinged, going off the rails, losing touch or can we help?

But for now, I just need to get a handle on my anger, depression, worry, and situation. So as the Rolling Stones might say, "oh doctor please, some more of these" as I join Muricans running to the shelter of "grandpas" little helper. Take care, I am off to my 19th nervous breakdown.

Peace, please!



JIM WOHLGEMUTH WAS ON THE USS WESTCHESTER COUNTY LST 1167 FROM 1969 TO 1971. HE WAS ON THE USS POINT DEFIANCE LSD 31 FROM 1971 TO 1972. HE IS A RETIRED FEDERAL EMPLOYEE AND MIDDLE SCHOOL SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHER. HE IS CO-HOST OF THE VETERANS FOR PEACE RADIO HOUR ON RADIO FREE NASHVILLE, SPOTIFY, SOUNDCLOUD AND PACIFICA RADIO.

Watching 'Nam Flicks: The Deer Hunter vs. Apocalypse Now in Particular

JOHN CRANDELL (REVIEWER)

All of these years later and I wake from a Covid dream late in May. I've just wandered through Martin Sheen's cluttered apartment. The floor, the cabinets, walls, and ceiling are all purple haze. I need a shower and the bath is overgrown with blue elephant grass. Stinking, I go into the field instead and pointman Scheppers is blasting a sawed-off shotgun. I grab and aim but never fire. In '81, at his 300-square-foot mansion on Yosemite Drive, he and I argued about the merits of *The Deer Hunter* and *Apocalypse Now*. A decade had already elapsed since we'd been reassigned from Nam to Fort Hood. He was down on both films due to his wont of verisimilitude. I tried to point up the expressive wonders of the latter but to no avail. His Air Cav bud nicknamed Gridsquare once said of him that he'd ate too much raw sauerkraut and no amount of Budweiser would ever make up for it. His parents experienced World War II in situ in Germany. We only knew of that time through the word of elders, by the printed word, and in images. As Rachel Kushner has said, only movies have uncannily preserved, like time travel, the sedimented layers of particular faces, scenes, and crucial events. The sight of Captain Willard's face rising from the waters of the Nung River is equally iconic to that of a flock of slicks blasting Wagner and rockets towards the coastal shoreline. How does that compare with Walken shooting himself or De Niro running bare-assed after that big white Cadillac?

There is that unforgettable sort-of response at Do Lung Bridge way upriver in *Apocalypse*—Roach's

heavy-lidded reply to "Do you know who's in command here?" "Yeah".... In the resulting silence, one wanted to smirk while the pull of gravity seemed to double. Published in 1979, Michael Herr's *Dispatches* informs us that such an incident actually did happen, that that was the response that he was given to receive at one remote outpost. The movie wouldn't be half as good without his voiceover and his book is the finest piece of literature that one has ever encountered. And it is thoroughly impossible to imagine his words spoken by anyone other than Sheen, amidst Hopper's antic channeling of photographer Tim Page, the gonad-fueled brilliance of Duvall, or the severed head of "never get off the boat!" Freddy Forrest. Is there an actor anywhere, more taken for granted than Martin Sheen? His cohorts couldn't bother to nominate him and decade by decade, their lapse appears ever more extreme. Perhaps it is the most overlooked effort by an actor in cinematic history.

Frankly, Kubrick's dystopian *Full Metal Jacket* seems more pertinent to Putin's present doings in Ukraine than *Apocalypse Now's* metaphoric journey through hell. In contrast, It is all horror. We get only what we see with colorless humans depicted as neo-cyborgs. *The Deer Hunter* configured the war as somewhat of a backdrop, a deeper story of individuals living with after effects or consequences of national illusions far more sadly than events revealed in 1946's *The Best Years of Our Lives*. The latter film's central characters are more than victims. In *The Deer Hunter*, we see the thousand-yard stare on the face of a Green Beret adjacent to the scene of a reception



for newly wedded innocents near Pittsburgh, one which lends a whole new dimension to the beseech-full notion of god bless America. (Perhaps Zeus damned America and Lyndon's charlatans took off for Zurich with the goods).

Lunch with the general in *Apocalypse*: just as like the nation at large, Kurtz's methods and ideas became "unsound." Coppola's craft: was it art in the service of barbarism or vice versa—either one or both for the sake of art in a sensational career? Deadpan, Marty stares straight into our camera—having been given cross-border instructions. Thereafter I was constantly picking my jaw off of the carpet viewing the compounded series of montage upon montage, an evanescent propagation of imagery in extreme amplitude—absurd, macabre, and hellish with all colors of the rainbow. A slick lifting a sheep as backdrop to a priest in service to a Christian god while mortars explode inspires comparison to ideas painted by Hieronymous Bosch. One sat in the

dark in the Cinerama Dome and his world blew sideways. The only sanity was the trooper getting back into the slick screaming "I'm not going! I'm not going!"

But to stand and leave was not a problem. With the finale of *The Deer Hunter*, you felt as though you'd just found out your best friend had died. Getting up from that seat near the front row in Westwood's Village Theater was not an easy task—as was each step along a precipice leading back to where one can never forget where they had been situated in life's parking lot.



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



Paths of Dissent

TIMOTHY FARLEY (REVIEWER)

Paths of Dissent: Soldiers Speak Out Against America's Misguided Wars
Edited by Andrew Bacevich and Daniel A. Sjsursen
(Metropolitan Books, 2022)

Don't be fooled by skimming through the writers and seeing West Point come up often. I did that and thought it might be repetitious and too much of the same story. It is just the opposite, as I believe the editors have tried hard to provide the reader with a mix of enlisted men, officers, Black men, white men, and one woman, which is among my favorite pieces.

Another favorite was contributed by Jonathan Hutto Sr., a story of encountering racism in the navy, and figuring out how to deal with it effectively. He writes that every GI has the

right to contact his congressman, and not go through the chain of command. This is valuable advice, I believe, especially for women encountering a "Good Old Boys" club when talking about sexual harassment or attacks.

Buddhika Jayamaha, born in Sri Lanka, is still in the army, dealing with his dissent with humor and humility. Elliot Woods may be the best in this book at relating the war in a concise matter, but he has others coming in second. Gil Barndollar is a prolific writer, who found his service led to a gradual conviction of the meaningless and wastefulness of our occupations in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Kevin Tillman related the true story of how his brother, Pat, was killed by friendly fire, while a fiction was created for the public to cheer for our troops. Too

much time was spent on right-wing radio, as if the sacrifice of a high paid athlete was more important than the sacrifice of young people who had never made much money.

Matthew Hoh is still dealing with being one hundred percent disabled and struggling with his moral injury. Perhaps Daniel Berschinski made the biggest sacrifice in losing both legs. I applaud both heroes for their honesty and sacrifice. Finally, we are led to the best arguments on counter-insurgency from an officer who was part of the problem before studying the history of dealing with a civil war and becoming convinced of its futility.

Space keeps me from mentioning all fifteen stories. Buy the book and find your own unforgettable contributions.

Want a good argument for keeping our military out of wars? This is the right book. If you just want to understand how GIs have dealt with stress and moral injury, leading too often to self-medicating with alcohol and or drugs. This is the right book. Possibly, you just want to give back to the GIs who are truly winter soldiers, from that old quote of Thomas Paine, " The sunshine patriot.... will surely desert his country in time of need." These guys are still sticking around to stick up for us, when it's become a winter of our discontent.



TIMOTHY FARLEY WAS WITH THE 1ST MARINE DIVISION IN VIETNAM FROM NOVEMBER 1967 TO OCTOBER 1969.

Long Shadows

JOHN FOURNELLE (REVIEWER)

Long Shadows: Veterans' Paths to Peace
edited by David Giffey
(Atwood Publishing, 2006)

Madison Wisconsin Veterans for Peace Clarence Kailin Chapter 25 has reprinted this compelling book that presents the personal stories of 19 veterans of 8 wars, from the Spanish Civil war up to Iraq and Afghanistan, including the Yom Kippur war.

"There is an immense literature of war, so any new entry into that formidable body of narratives, commentaries, analyses, and memories needs to be looked at carefully to see if it adds something significant to our knowledge of war and those who are drawn into it. I believe that this book meets that test and informs and touches us in ways that we will not easily forget." These words from Howard Zinn's powerful introduction provide a terse summary of the wars that the United States has perpetrated, going back to the foundation of the United States. Zinn's introduction in itself stands as a terse recap of the USA's wars going back to the

Revolutionary War, with some facts seldom found in our schools' history books, such as desertion and rebellion in Washington's army.

Robert Kimbrough said he became a pacifist the first day on the line in Korea: "I was first put in charge of the light machine gun squad, and my sergeant was showing me the line: the trench lines, the dugouts, the fields of vision, the fields of fire. Suddenly the Chinese side started shooting at me. And I thought to myself, 'Why is anyone shooting at me? They don't have anything against me. I don't have anything against them.' And I suddenly realized, 'Hey, dummy, you're not in your backyard with your fingers playing "boom-boom, you're dead.'" It came home to me "This is not good."

Ten of the veterans were in Vietnam. Will Williams presents a powerful account that starts with growing up as a black man in Jim Crow Mississippi, then to Vietnam. "Vietnam made me. I grew up fast in Vietnam. It made me look at life, at all people, as being sacred. There's the pain that I never shake from it. I know I'll never get rid of it." When

he returned, he said he'd have been living out in the woods if he hadn't had his wife. "I didn't want to be around people. I was dealing with a lot of Vietnam in the 1980s. I was having a lot more flashbacks and nightmares." When Desert Storm happened, he started to get upset about it but didn't see what he could do. But, he says, "September 11 changed that. I just reached a point where I couldn't keep it in any more.... I found out who I was, what I stood for, and that there's nothing on this earth can make me change back. ... That's why I joined the Madison Area Peace Committee. ... I think if I was of the age I am now when the draft was going I would say No. I'd steal my grandkids out of the military."

The lives of all these veterans were touched by war, and all, by one path or another, ended up as activists against war. Their experiences told them that all that they had been told about why war was necessary were all lies. War can never solve problems, only create or perpetuate existing problems.

The editor, David Giffey, is

a Vietnam veteran. He served as a combat journalist and is a member of VFP Clarence Kailin Chapter 25 in Madison, Wisconsin.

Copies of *Long Shadows* are available for purchase. To provide them as a peace resource to teachers, libraries, peace groups and peace-minded-people, Madison VFP is offering them at 50% off the cover price (\$20): only \$10 a copy, plus shipping (\$3.50 media mail, \$7.75 priority mail). (Bulk and low-income discounts available). Contact John Fournelle, jhfour@gmail.com if you are interested.



JOHN FOURNELLE WAS ACTIVE AGAINST THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM IN THE LATE 1960S IN DC. GEN. HERSHEY FOUND HIM "UNFIT FOR MILITARY SERVICE" AT Ft HOLABIRD IN 1971. HE IS AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF MADISON VFP.

Tiger Papa Three

JOHN BROMER (REVIEWER)

Tiger Papa Three: Memoir of a Combined Action Marine in Vietnam
by Edward F. Palm
(McFarland, 2020)

Tiger Papa Three, by Edward F. Palm, is the story of the author's experiences as a corporal in a Marine Corps Combined Action Program unit in Vietnam. He served a thirteen month tour throughout 1967 and returned to the States in January 1968, about three weeks before the Tet offensive. Written when he was 73, the book includes a lot more about his life besides his time in Vietnam; his parents, his life leading up to enlistment, girlfriends, education, his career after his original

enlistment was up, and more.

The Combined Action Program was apparently designed not on a search and destroy basis, but as an effort to send Marines into the countryside to train South Vietnamese Popular Forces and patrol with them. "Winning hearts and minds" was what some enlightened superior officers hoped it could accomplish. Unsurprisingly, neither the villagers in the area nor the PF soldiers wanted to have much to do with the Americans. After some frustrating attempts at joint patrols the Marines ended up patrolling on the "beaucoup VC" side of the river while the PF troops did whatever they did in the safer area. The

author's unit, Tiger Papa Three, did see some action, including instances of friendly fire from Puff the Magic Dragon, a converted AC47 with a Gatling gun firing 6,000 rounds per minute, and a hair-raising VC ambush. But in general their mission and time there seems, to a reader, and I suspect to many of them, poorly defined and ambiguous. The book, especially in the epilogue, shows a deep skepticism about our country's reasons and goals for being in Vietnam in the first place, and the feeling that the enlisted man's main goal is to stay alive and help his fellow soldiers do the same. VVAW and *Veteran* readers, I've seen, share that.

The author had a long career in the military, teaching military affairs at UC Berkeley and English at the Naval Academy, and retired in 1993. The book is full of literary allusions, including to other Vietnam War books, and has way too many repetitions of the phrase "as I related earlier." A good editor would help. But it's an interesting story of a side of the Marine Corps I never imagined.



JOHN BROMER IS A VIETNAM-ERA VETERAN AND LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, WHO LIVES IN WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA.

Cleaned and Oiled

smoothly functioning
like all his machines back home:
the Bridgeport end-mill
the Southbend lathe
the Buffalo drill
the arbor press and vise
he relied upon to make
the parts
for all the other machines
in his care;
that made the gears,
turned, drilled, reamed, honed
countless intricate shapes
that fitted,
by some master design,
together.

he batted a clip home,
worked the slide,
heard the comforting slick-slack
of oiled metal on metal –
and tried only to think
how the brass-jacketed charge
would soon release
an expanding bubble of gas,
pressing a piston
working the action
jacking another round
ready for the next release;
trying never to think
about the master design

—Woody Powell

After We Are The Ones To Survive

after the chill
after the heat
after we have killed but
before we have thoughts of being loved
we sing a manly song
martial and stirring
not low and blue we sing
when and because
we are distanced from the front
a reminder to remember
to forget what we want forgotten
we sing our loud song of silence
we sing again
and again
until it is done
until it is gone

—Larry Kerschner

The Last Full Measure

ALLEN MEECE (REVIEWER)

The Last Full Measure
written and directed by Todd Robinson
(Lionsgate, 2020)

The oddball title of this incredibly good little movie is from US President Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg address of 1863 and it means giving your life away to a cause, even if it's a bad one.

It stars Sebastian Stan as the deceased and belated Medal of Honor winner Airman First Class William Pitsenbarger. It was directed and realistically written by Tod Robinson.

Wikipedia.org, the peoples' online encyclopedia, says that Tod and his producer, Sidney Sherman, tried for twenty years to find a studio that would film this important untold story and they finally had to write and produce it themselves. Perhaps the poor title is partly why it grossed only 3 million dollars after costing 20 million dollars to make. It is a pity it wasn't more popular as it portrays a terrific lesson in the absurdity of war, especially of THAT war.

The crux of the story is that It took 31 years for a Vietnam veteran to receive his well-deserved Medal of Honor, (MoH), because the Army brass did not want the publicity that an MoH would bring to the shoddy conduct of Operation Abilene in

April of 1966 in Vietnam, Republic of. Protecting the brass's asses was more important than fully rewarding Pitsenbarger's awesome bravery during his helicopter's rescue mission for an undermanned and over-run company of the Army's Big Red One (1st) Division.

The second crucial point the movie made was that the Air Force brass liked to give itself many more MoHs than it gave its enlisted worker class. They gave their fellow officers 11 MoHs during the time of the Vietnam-American War, (as the Vietnamese properly call that "military conflict") and gave only one MoH to an enlisted person, even though there were 4 times as many Air Force enlisted people as officers in the war. (Two Vietnam era heroic airmen were tardily awarded MoHs in the following century. One of them was Airman Pitsenbarger in December of 2000, and the other was Sergeant Etchberger, way later, in September of 2010.) Do you get a sense of reluctance there? All the officers got their Vietnam MoHs DURING the war.

The third and fourth cruxes of the story are the tragic errors that were made at the battle of Xa Cam My village in Vung Tau Province, southeast of Saigon.

Third crux; the 1st Army Divi-

sion's goofy tactician, Major General Bill DePuy, hero of the Normandy Landings in WWII, proudly thought he could ambush a superior Viet Cong force that had been hiding near the village if he could only lure them into his modern Army clutches by sending Charlie Company on an optimistic "Search and Destroy" mission into their stronghold. Wrong. It was the Americans who got ambushed.

Fourth crux; While Charlie Company was being overrun, it radioed incorrect coordinates for artillery fire support and brought the first barrage down on its head, demoralizing itself with friendly fire and killing a number of soldiers. See why the Army brass didn't want any MoH publicity attracting newspapers' attention to DePuy's pathetic Abilene scene?

Then, Alpha and Bravo Companies, who were supposed to be the crushing claws of Depuy's High Tech Modern Army Ambush were too far away and too slow cutting through the dense jungle to reach the firefight that day or night.

Charley Company lost its medics. The injured lay bleeding and dying. What this battle needed was an angel of mercy and into the fray dropped an Air Force medic in clean fatigues, gung ho and ready to go! Airman "Pits"

lowered down and dressed wounds and loaded stretchers until the helicopters were damaged too badly to come back. He shot snipers in the trees until he was shot in the head. Charley Company's 134 men took 80% casualties.

Then came the long night of horror, waiting, along with the dead and the wounded, to be relieved or shot.

This movie indicates that medals, while ostensibly honoring outstanding warriors, are propaganda shows glorifying war and multiple-killing.

That is why Vietnam Veterans Against the War threw their medals onto the steps of the US Capitol in 1971 for the Dewey Canyon III demonstration. They were showing that fighting well for a bad cause is a nonsensical waste of life and resources.

The Last Full Measure is quite a story, so typical of all the insane horror of the ten-year Vietnam War.



ALLEN "SOMERSET" MEECE SERVED ABOARD THE USS EDWARDS, DD950, IN THE TONKIN GULF IN 1964-66. HE WROTE THE NAVAL NOVEL "TIN CAN" WHICH IS AVAILABLE AT AMAZON.COM.

Not Funny

BILL POTVIN

George W. Bush's recent gaffe on Ukraine are not funny to this Vietnam veteran.

Recently, ex-president George W. Bush, who had virtually disappeared from the news for over a decade, rekindled his political presence. Bush's most recent gaffe says it all.

While speaking to the audience at the G.W. Bush Institute, he put his foot in his mouth once again. He was attempting to demonize war criminal Vladimir Putin: "the decision of one man to launch a wholly unjustified and brutal invasion of Iraq... I mean Ukraine." The crowd chuckled as he did, saying "Hey, I'm seventy-five." The video went viral as many people see these "faux-pas" as funny. Hardly. As a Vietnam combat veteran, I saw this clearly as the Freudian slip of the century!

In demonizing Vladimir Putin, Bush slipped and confused the terror being perpetrated on innocent civilians in Ukraine with what he and Dick Cheney had done in Iraq. Perhaps he knows this deep inside and thus the slip. Recall that the preemptive attacks on Iraq were viewed as a form of entertainment by the major media and many watched. It was called Shock and Awe. Buildings exploded

like a fireworks display with very little mention of the persons inside. It was a display of US might, with the military goal of regime change and removal of the evil Saddam Hussein.

Unlike Ukraine, where suffering and destruction are highlighted, there were no sobbing women and children portrayed in our corporate media. We were told that the primary reason for attacks on Iraq was "weapons of mass destruction hidden in bunkers." There were never such weapons. Iraq was never a threat. We were lied into war against the better judgment of nearly all the countries in the world. Before the invasion, more total people protested in major cities than had ever protested before in world history. It proved useless.

We spent billions of our tax dollars while devastating the Iraqi economy and perpetrating a civil war. Over 200,000 civilians were killed and millions made refugees, while "oil-men" like Bush and CEOs like Cheney and Rumsfeld accumulated immense wealth.

It's not a pretty picture and the world has lost respect for us as a nation. Torture was sanctioned by the top leaders of our country (the name was altered to "enhanced interrogation").

Old allies were insulted. Afghanistan only added to the worldwide view, such that we are now looked upon as the most dangerous nation on the planet (from recent polling).

Anti-war veterans are very aware of our thirst for resources and continued endless wars. Very few citizens are aware that we are in over 80 countries with some form of a military base, from Okinawa to Germany to Africa. The general populations of all 80 want us out!

There have been many empires throughout history (Greek, Roman, Ottoman, Dutch, Spanish, and British come to mind) and they all have had many characteristics in common, the main one being they all hollowed out and collapsed due to militarism and overreach. They forgot their people in the perpetual need to expand in violent ways while draining the pocketbooks of taxpayer citizens.

Anti-war veterans see this and make the stands that we do. The connections between war, militarism, and violence at home are clear to us. They are intimately connected. That is why the recent "slip" of G.W. Bush is so significant.

For me, this recently affirmed that the satanic actions of Vladimir

are no worse than what Bush had done in Iraq. Surely Bush knows this deep inside and thus the Freudian slip.

I suggest that we learn from history and re-examine the concept of American Exceptionalism. Rather than see veterans against wars as fringe radicals going against the conventional grain of patriotism, the reality is that anti-war veterans are the true patriots because we care enough for our country to see the dead-end direction that we are headed. We want to try to make a positive contribution, usually requiring dissent.

The great Martin Luther King, Jr. summed it up beautifully when he said in his "Beyond Vietnam" speech in 1967, "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual death."



BILL POTVIN ATTENDED ARTILLERY O.C.S. AT FORT SILL AFTER COLLEGE. HE DROPPED OUT AND WENT TO VIETNAM AS AN E-1, DID ONE TOUR, AND FINISHED AS A SPEC. 5 DEMOLITION SPECIALIST.

Bright White Light

backs to the white bright light
young men wearing goggles
a boy soldier among many
dug into the Nevada desert
sand scoured grey mesquite
secure the area
following orders
he knew no
Korea no
Vietnam no
his was an Eisenhower
time of peace

now his Auschwitz eyes in sunken sockets
this atomic vision
shadowed him
these twenty-five years

sallow grey
against white sheets
death fetid breath
stomach gone to gastric cancer
100 milligrams of morphine each hour
bring
a time of peace

dying
he spoke briefly
of a bright white light

—Larry Kerschner

Warpath

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Warpath: One Veteran's Journey Through War, Disillusionment, Guilt, and Recovery
by A.J. Moore
(Apache Press Books, 2022)

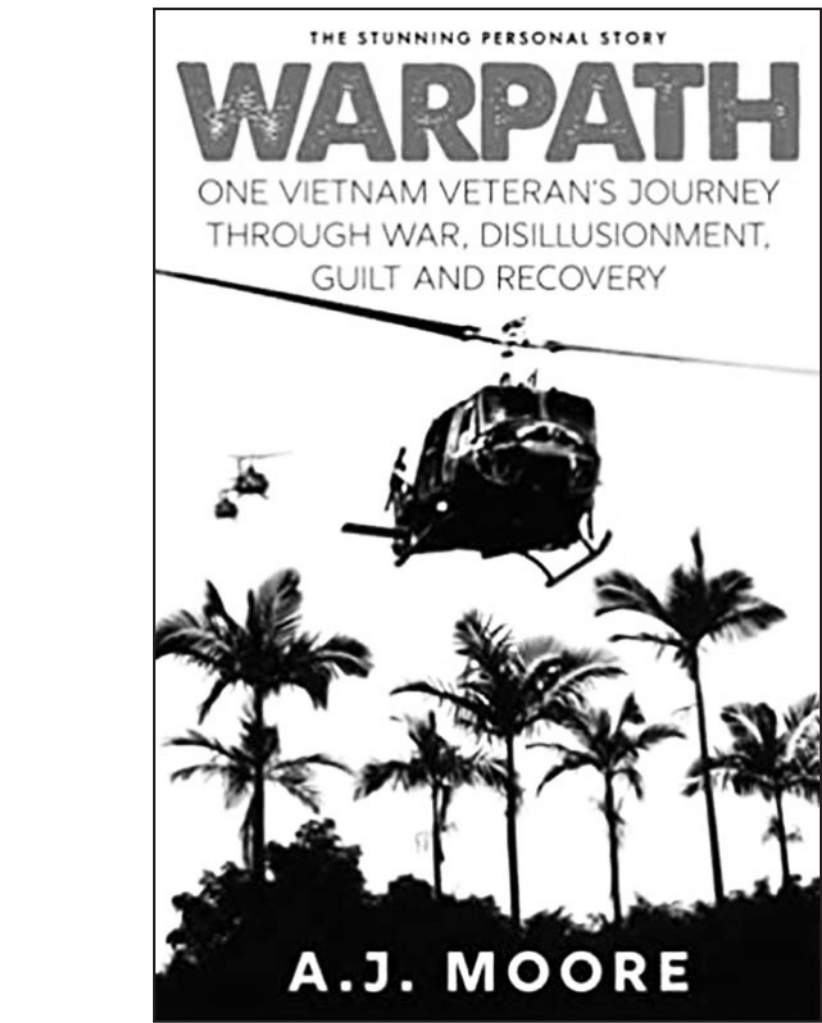
I came to know author A.J., or Al, Moore, when we both agreed to take part in a virtual learning class for senior citizens, put together by fellow authors Mary Reynolds Powell (*A World of Hurt*) and Doug Bradley (*We Gotta Get Out of This Place: The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War*). Al had talked about his upcoming book with understandable enthusiasm, and we were all eager to see it. I'm pleased to report that no one was disappointed.

Warpath will inevitably be compared to Bob Mason's *Chickenhawk*, an unforgettable and landmark book from 1983. Both are memoirs by veterans who fought the Vietnam War from their helicopters. Both became disillusioned with the American conduct of the war, but they overcame their emotions and their consciences to fly day after day. If anything, *Warpath* supports Mason's conclusions about the futility of the American strategies, the abject terror of war, and especially, the crazy daring that was often required to ensure the safe return of their comrades from the most dangerous of missions. Bob Mason was a pilot on a Huey, the iconic aircraft of the ground war in Southeast Asia, while Al Moore was Crew Chief, or observer, on a Loach, a smaller reconnaissance ship with a prominent bubble up front. The Loach was a quick, maneuverable craft, and its job was to act as a scout and find the bad guys. It was equipped with a minigun operated by the pilot, and the Crew Chief's M-16. Loaches flew in pairs, the lead ship and the wing ship hovering above, watching for enemy

activity while the lead ship flew very low and very slow, zig-zagging, while they looked for signs of enemy activity such as trash, discarded equipment, foxholes, booby traps tunnel entrances, remnants of cooking fires, and, although I find this difficult to imagine, footprints! Seems to me they had to be flying really low to see footprints in the jungle, but Moore insists it is true. A key component of the search was learning to judge how old the signs might be. Taking fire was considered a very immediate indication!

In the first seven months of 1969, Al Moore logged 147 hours of combat flight time. As his tour of duty stretched on, he began to recognize the futility of what they were doing. They had witnessed too many instances where the ARVN's (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) lack of aggressiveness or commitment meant a less-successful mission than anticipated. Sometimes, that lack of commitment put our American troops in an especially dangerous situation, or worse. However, the next day the Scout crews were expected to climb aboard their ships and head off looking for action. The lower-ranking men (Moore was an E-5) couldn't help but see that many of their NCOs and officers had no idea what it was like to fly into enemy territory every day in hopes of being shot at, and they didn't want to know. Still, they had rank, which translated to authority, and their orders could put the entire team's lives in jeopardy. As many readers of this newspaper will know, part of the challenge of surviving in Vietnam was to find creative ways to ignore a ranking asshole's orders.

Al Moore rotated out of Vietnam in July of 1969 and was assigned to Fort Knox in Kentucky. He got



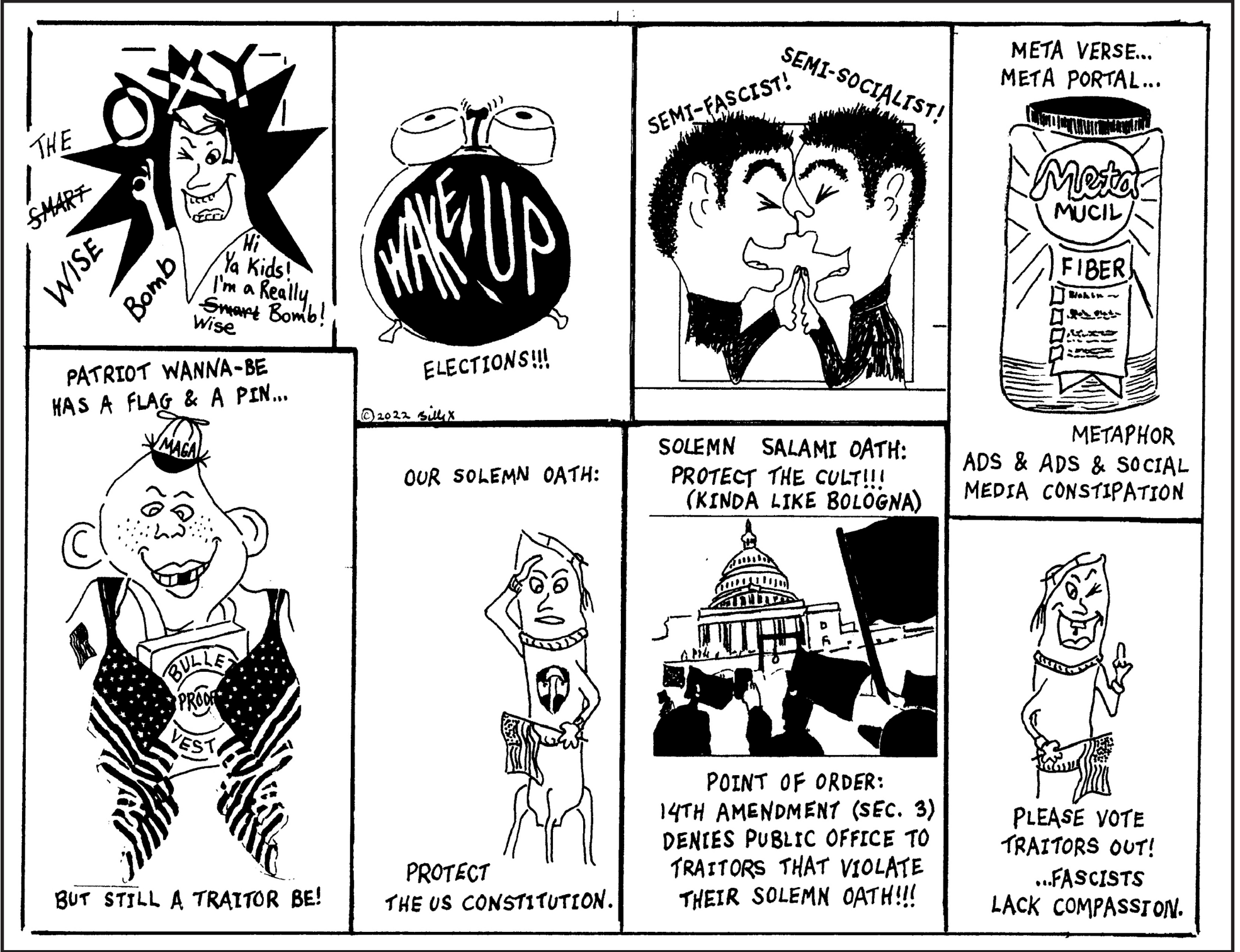
married, lived in an apartment near the base, and worried about his future. And, he refused to re-enlist! "I simply could not tolerate an environment in which rank outweighed competence and where so many of the career soldiers did everything they could to express their lack of respect for their subordinates."

Al Moore earned a college degree and enjoyed a successful career. In addition, he suffered from nightmares and all the other symptoms of PTSD. In writing *Warpath*, he feels he has overcome PTSD. In my opinion, he has created an extremely well-written and very worthwhile book. I have purposefully left out his accounts of desperate combat situations, but they are vivid and realistic. Still, Al Moore's message is one of deep disappointment

in his country's ill-conceived actions in Vietnam and the actions of the army's career professionals. His patriotism was severely wounded in Vietnam, and that is a very worthwhile message. We can only hope a few young people contemplating enlisting in our country's military will read *Warpath* and think it through.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF THE BEST-SELLING MEMOIR ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL: A G.I.'S TRUE STORY OF THE WAR IN VIETNAM, AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

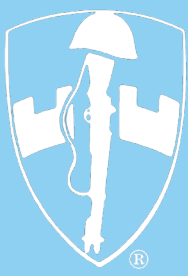


Comments or suggestions? Contact Billy at billyx.net@gmail.com or visit him online at www.billyx.net.

AMENDMENT XIV

Civil Rights

Section 3. No person shall be a Senator or Representative in Congress, or elector of President and Vice-President, or hold any office, civil or military, under the United States, or under any State, who, having previously taken an oath, as a member of Congress, or as an officer of the United States, or as a member of any State legislature, or as an executive or judicial officer of any State, to support the Constitution of the United States, shall have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof. But Congress may by a vote of two-thirds of each House, remove such disability.



Michael Gold (1946-2022): Intrepid Veterans Advocate

EDWARD DAMATO

When Michael Gold passed away on March 30, 2022, our world of veterans lost an intrepid and dedicated advocate. He spent his adult life working tirelessly to improve our lives. His work alone as Director of Veterans Affairs at the City University of New York (CUNY) helped countless student veterans get the proper aid and the support they maybe didn't know was available to them. He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Lorraine Cohen, and his son Jacob Gold. At Michael's memorial service Lorraine said of him, "I miss him terribly...As I look at a shirt he liked, or think about how much he loved chocolate ice cream...I feel his absence. He will remain part of me forever."

Michael was born and raised a Brooklyn boy, or as his son, Jacob Gold said "my father could be all seasons in one day." He attended Wingate High School on Kingston Avenue. He worked as the sports editor of the school newspaper. (He was an avid NY Yankee fan.) After graduation, he went to Brooklyn College (BC) studying political science and history. While at school he joined the growing anti-war movement. He left college after one and a half years to work with his brother on the mayoral campaign of a progressive candidate, John Lindsay, who in 1965 won the first of his two terms as New York City mayor.

Upon losing his Brooklyn College student deferment the ever vigilant and relentless Selective Service System sent him the "Greeting" letter signed by Lyndon Baines Johnson. He was inducted into the US Army on March 28, 1967. He headed south to Ft. Jackson, South Carolina, and realized he wanted something better out of the army so he applied to and was accepted into Officer Candidate School. Michael was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant. He was stationed in Germany where he trained at the USA School Europe in a "Combat Intelligence Officer Course" while assigned to HHB, 2nd Battalion, 3rd Artillery, 3rd Armored Division. He was commissioned a 1st Lieutenant (O2) on March 28, 1968, and was awarded a National Defense Service Medal and a Good Conduct medal. When he was honorably discharged at Drake Kaserne, Frankfurt on March 27, 1969, he did what we all fantasize about, namely, he bought an MG and

toured Europe for a year! (There is no record of his adventures.)

After returning home Michael went back to Brooklyn College (BC) where he began his life's work helping veterans, especially Vietnam-era veterans. In 1970 the BC veterans officially organized as a group. It was also during this time that Michael joined the Vietnam Veterans Against the War and became an active member participating in all its activities until his death. Over the next two years, Brooklyn College vets organized into a university-wide Veterans Action Coalition to elevate veterans' affairs at a central policy level and to promote access to services available. Upon VAC and other's steadfast urging the CUNY Chancellor, Robert Kibbe, a WW2 veteran, authorized a central Office of Veterans Affairs (OVA) in 1973 to coordinate the delivery of federal, state, and city services available to veterans in all their 18 colleges city-wide. In 1974 Michael became the second director, a position he held until 1995.

During his time at OVA, they trained campus counselors, coordinated the veterans' service agencies, and brought CUNY into the struggles to improve and extend the GI bill; win amnesty and discharge upgrades; test, treat and compensate Agent Orange veterans and their survivors; treat post-traumatic stress disorder, and rehabilitate incarcerated vets. In 1995, led by the state's governor, CUNY budgets were slashed. Michael was fired. An ad hoc group of veterans from Vietnam Veterans of America, Black Veterans for Social Justice, and VVAW approached the Board of Trustees to restore funding and keep Michael on as the director; all to no avail. Some cuts were restored but Michael did not continue in his job.

Ironically also in 1995, Michael had surgery for a leaky heart valve. While still recuperating in the hospital the 11th Annual PTSD "Conference on the Still Hidden Client" Committee awarded him for "outstanding work in healing the wounds of war."

In his forced retirement he took to supporting his wife who was able to sustain her high level of political activism with the teacher's union at LaGuardia Community College. He was known for his homemade and famous baked apple pies (which he



Mike Gold in Mexico, 2019.



Mike Gold (r) and his son Jacob.

told me a secret ingredient was lard.)

Personally, it was Michael who made me aware that New York State was paying for veterans' tuition at CUNY colleges. In 1989 I enrolled at NYC Technical College and thanks to him I earned an associate's degree which helped me get a decent job for eighteen years. The last time I saw Michael was just before COVID. We were at a picket line outside the 23rd Street VA Hospital in Manhattan protesting the proposed closure of that hospital and the VA hospital in Brooklyn, among other draconian federal cuts. It was a good reminder to me how important Michael was to all veterans over his long years of dedicated activism. I will miss you, Michael.

Remembrances From Long-Time Comrades

Job Mashariki, founder of Black Veterans for Social Justice

Mike's commitment and resolution were to help his fellow humans and to make this society a better and more decent place for all to work and live as brothers and sisters. His commitment to doing righteous work will guide and remain with me forever. He is a General in the People's Liberation Army."

Frank Toner

I grew close with Michael with our work in the Brooklyn chapter of VVAW. As his wife Lorraine has said, there was a special relationship the chapter members had with one another. He was very active with the Brooklyn chapter but was involved in many more activities, especially with CUNY. I remember how he enjoyed

talking with my daughter after finding out that she graduated from CUNY Law. Many called him Professor. That was probably most appropriate. He enjoyed pointing out the truth. We did not get together too often but when we did it was like we had just seen each other last week.

June Svetlovsky

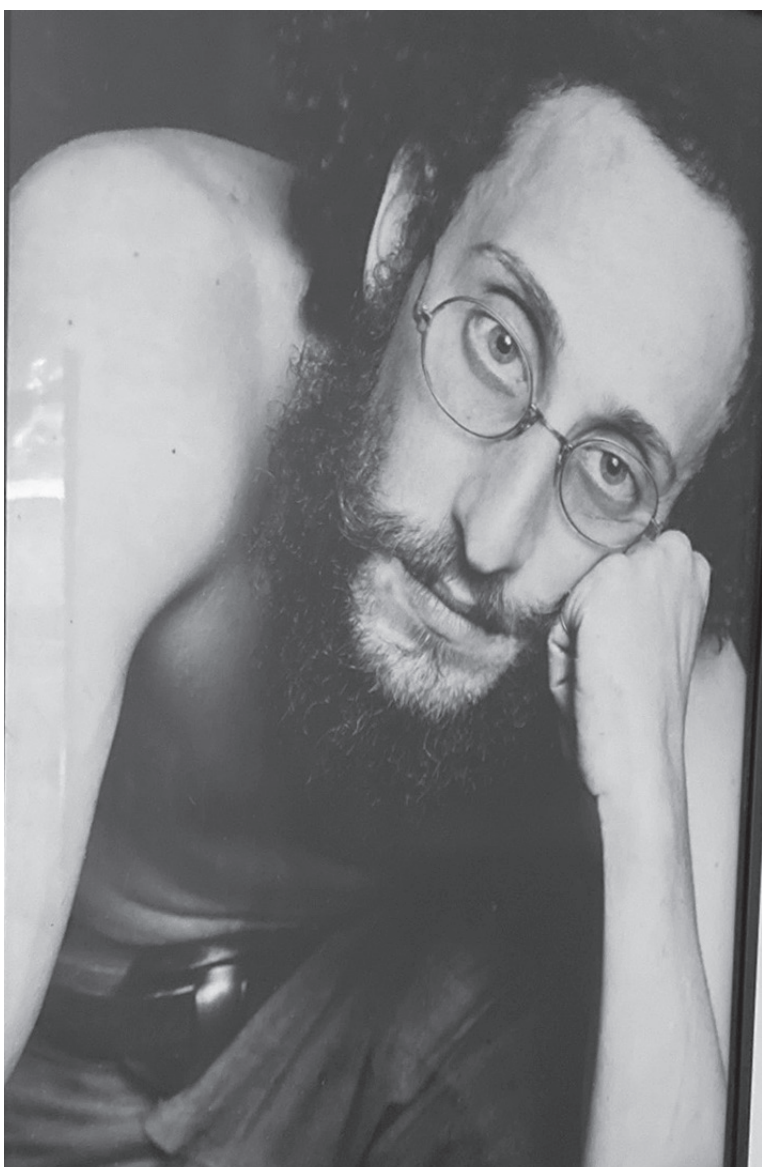
After Memorial Day commemorations at Battery Park, VVAW and Vets for Peace got together in the area for some lunch. Mike had the "perfect place" that was close by.... We kept yelling, "We there yet?" Finally, he stopped in front of what looked like a typical old man's bar, Murphy's Tavern. We had doubts but the bartender was so friendly and receptive to what we were doing that it became the place we went to every Memorial Day for years. You could always count on Mike Gold to come through.

James Noonan

Although 50 or so years can fog up memories, I am positive that the first thing I ever heard Mike say was, "Sorry I'm late." At Brooklyn College, Mike and I were part of the same groups on campus and he was always late. He would come in with his impish smile, his apology, the world's most overstuffed briefcase and it was OK. It was just Mike. Dedicated, constantly running to keep up with all that had to be done and caring deeply for all of us. Rest in Peace, my brother.



EDWARD DAMATO HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE 1970 AND LIVES IN NEW YORK.



Mike Gold, around 1980, photo by Bernie Edelman.

An Extraordinary Veteran and Life: A Daughter Remembers Ashby Leach

JANET LYNN LEACH KELLY

Ashby Leach passed away on August 13, 2022, at home with his daughter Janet Lynn. He died from complications of Agent Orange at the age of 76. Ashby was a lifetime member, Officer, and Honor Guard member of American Legion Post 93, Ceredo, West Virginia. He was a lifetime member and past Commander of the Daniel Edwards VFW Post in Ceredo. He was also a lifetime member of the Huntington chapter of the DAV. Advocating for, and supporting, Veterans and Veterans' organizations were his lifelong passions despite the invisible wounds of war, the memories that tormented him, and the PTSD that defied cure. His service as an LPN at the Woody Williams VA Medical Center in Huntington, West Virginia, continues to live on.

While Ashby was honored with a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star for his service during Vietnam, he forever maintained these accolades were "no big deal." "It was a war zone," he would say. "I was only doing what I was trained to do." His "No Big Deal" approach to helping others survive extended to his dedication to the American Red Cross where he was a 100-gallon lifetime blood donor. Even at his Celebration of Life, the stories continued of how, as a Navy corpsman, Ashby saved lives on the battlefield, and volunteered for everything coming and going, always without fanfare.

His most touching legacy to a stranger in need was when he had a compelling nudge to donate his bone marrow. It proved a perfect match for a child with a rare and hopeless immune deficiency 1,000 miles away. The Bone Marrow Transplant Center remembered that Ashby was "one of a kind," their first donor who didn't stay in the hospital overnight. He just handed the staff a letter to take on the flight with the marrow, in which he wrote about being a Vietnam Veteran. "To him it is only a little inconvenience he would do for anyone," they said. "It was no big deal. But it was a very big deal."

That wasn't the only mystery, however. The boy's adoring grandfather, an artist, was so moved by the gift, he had to learn more about the donor. When he discovered it was a fellow Veteran who had served with

him at the same time in Vietnam, he gifted him with a wood sculpture he'd designed featuring a soldier protecting a little boy. His grandson, the recipient of Ashby's priceless gift, was pronounced a total cure. He grew into a tender, gentle child with distinctive caring qualities and tremendous creativity.

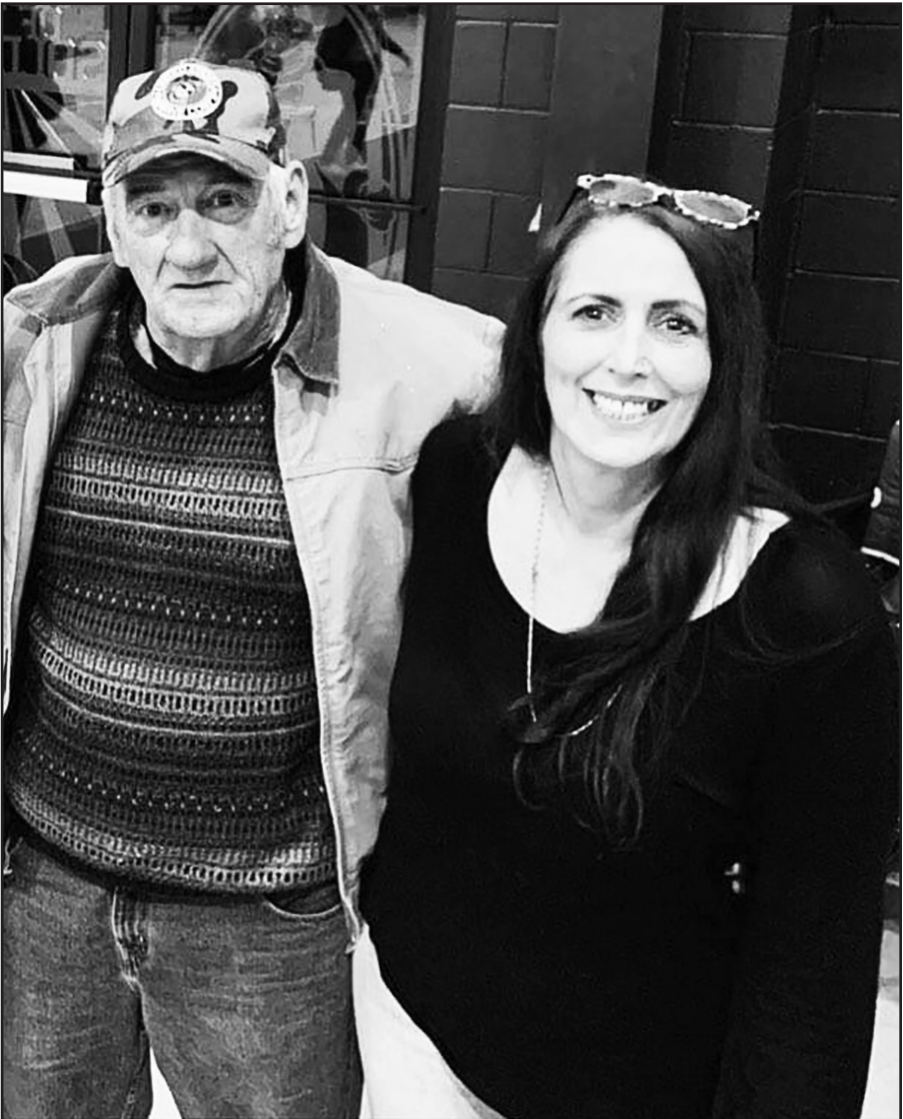
The comrade's sculpture is a story of lives changed by art... a gift created by artistic hands that were no stranger to suffering. The unselfishness of Vietnam Veteran Ashby Leach who paid a dear price not only in Southeast Asia but on the homefront standing up for what he believed in. And the art of living that joined two soldiers and a child in the battle for his life.

The joy of the boy's mother was so marrow-deep, she also pursued a nursing career. "Vietnam Veterans may not have received a Welcome Home parade," she said. "But Ashby Leach is our family's hero." He gave her son a life, enabling him to exchange hospitals and ventilators for friends and birthday parties at Circus Pizza. Ordinary moments of childhood elevated to the extraordinary.

The Veteran grandfather's creation was a comforting presence by Ashby's bed when he died, and fueled his daughter Janet's passion and pride in caring for him. Her quiet-hero dad deserved no less than the care he had bestowed on so many others. It recalls the sentiment that sums up Ashby's life and consummate calling. To defend all he held dear no matter the cost: "I'd rather be rejected for who I am," he once said, "than revered for who you want me to be."



JANET LYNN LEACH KELLY, THE OLDEST DAUGHTER OF ASHBY LEACH, HAS ALWAYS BEEN HER FATHER'S KEEPER. FROM THE TIME SHE WAS FIVE YEARS OLD, SUPPORTING HER DAD IN THE CLEVELAND SIEGE, TO THE NURSE CARING FOR HIM DURING HIS FINAL MOMENTS ON EARTH, SHE NEVER STOPPED BEING HIS ADVOCATE. "EARLY ON, DAD TAUGHT ME BY EXAMPLE THAT ONE PERSON REALLY CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE," SHE SAYS. "TO NEVER GIVE UP, REGARDLESS OF YOUR AGE OR STATION IN LIFE." THOSE LESSONS WILL FOREVER BE A SOURCE OF HER STRENGTH.



Ashby Leach with daughter Janet Lynn, February 2020.



Sculpture created by fellow Vietnam Veteran in gratitude for Ashby Leach's bone marrow donation that saved his grandson's life. Framed photo of Ashby Leach in Vietnam, 1968.

Vet Battles For Better Life: Free Ashby Leach

VVAW

Reprinted from the October 1976 issue of The Veteran.

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

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

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

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

And he did. But, after he was finished, despite their guarantees, the Chessie system refused to give him his job back. All during this time and after, Ashby had written to company and government officials to protest the kind of mistreatment he was getting.

His letters were ignored. Nevertheless, he persisted. This summer he even wrote to each one of the members of Congress; still there was no action on his plight.

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

After 9 hours, Ashby released all the hostages unharmed after McGowan promised that GI benefits would be extended to Vietnam veterans employed by Chessie and that Vietnam veterans who worked for Chessie would be reimbursed for GI benefits. Ashby also demanded media coverage for the demands in order to get the situation of veterans—not just those in the Chessie system, but all Vietnam vets—in front of the American people.

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

Many of Ashby's friends had died on the battlefield. Others, returning to the states, their lives ruined, turned to dope and crime. But most came back

seeing that they had a battle to wage right here at home, whether it be in the factories, unemployment lines, schools or VA hospitals.

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



Ashby Leach in Cleveland, 1976.

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

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



Ashby Leach demonstration in Cleveland, 1976.

Second Veteran Art Triennial Dives Into the Meaning of the Long Wars

RACHEL DUKES AND AARON HUGHES

When you center the resistance of indigenous and the enslaved, and other victims of US counterinsurgency interventions and wars around the world, you're in fact doing US history. And everything you thought you knew or theorized about the present and possible future melts into the air. The United States is a military state with an informally armed citizenry. — Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, *Surviving the Long Wars, Scholarly Seminar, 2022.*

This experience and realization is all too familiar to communities impacted globally by US warfare and many veterans who served in those wars. For those veterans, this realization creates conflict, particularly for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) veterans who often embody contested identities that uphold Dunbar-Ortiz's point and the contradictions of American Exceptionalism. In response to this internal conflict, many have turned to creative expression as a tool to process, examine, and hold space for their involvement in military operations. This work creates opportunities for solidarity across differences and makes connections between visions of peace, healing, and justice.

An example of this is the collaborative work presented by Iraqi artists Wafaa Bilal and veteran artists Drew Cameron and Alicia Dietz in the Conflict Exchange (CX) installation at the first Veteran Art Triennial and Summit

(VATS) in 2019. In this work they used military uniforms transformed into paper to help rebuild the University of Baghdad's art library. *Surviving the Long Wars*, the second Veteran Art Triennial and Summit set for Spring 2023, builds on this work and creates space for veterans to examine these complex identities, internalized contradictions, and histories represented in the space of art and culture. It also allows for dialogue with other, potentially more directly, impacted artists.

From the US "Indian Wars" to the "Global War on Terror," *Surviving the Long Wars* explores the multiple, overlapping histories that shape our understanding of warfare and visions of healing. The second VATS, is inspired by the powerful work, both historical and present, of Native American artists responding to the US "Indian Wars" and artists of the Greater Middle East reacting to the "Global War on Terror." It focuses on how these cultural responses complicate and entangle with the artistic practices of veterans.

For example, in an article in *American Indian Magazine*, the work of the legendary Native American artist and Vietnam war Veteran T.C. Cannon (Kiowa) was profiled. Cannon's dynamic 1970 figurative oil painting entitled *Soldiers* depicts one soldier split in two halves: one side of the soldier is illustrated in an army uniform and the other in indigenous warrior dress. In the magazine's esti-

mation, the painting "shows just how divided Cannon felt about fighting in a war, with one half being the Native warrior and the other the colonizing soldier who oppressed his people."

Another example is Iraqi-American artist Michael Rakowitz, who in his piece *The Invisible Enemy Should Not Exist* uses Middle Eastern food packages, glue, and cardboard on wooden structures to paint an image that constructs reappearances of relief sculptures that were historically looted and destroyed by war and colonialism that lined the walls of the ancient Assyrian Palace of Nimrud (present day Mosul, Iraq).

These pieces of art address both the personal and collective transformations required to dismantle the "military state."

Through *Surviving the Long Wars*, the second Veteran Art Triennial and Summit creates dialogue around the conflicts, connections, and, most importantly, the unexpected solidarities that emerge when the artistic responses to the US "Indian Wars" and "Global War on Terror" are placed in conversation. Within this history, art and activism have long been linked with a tradition of peace and justice movements that are still apparent in the work of veteran artists today. Specifically, *Surviving the Long Wars* highlights the way BIPOC veterans have made art about their military experiences that challenge stereotypes, politics, and dominant

media portrayals all while pointing to alternative futures.

Surviving the Long Wars encourages veterans, academics, and community members to think through the malleable symbolic and material parallels between the current "Global War on Terror" and the US "Indian Wars." The project begins with a virtual scholarly seminar series at the nexus of critical ethnic studies, Native/Indigenous studies, and Middle Eastern Studies. With a focus on the histories and futures of Native rebellion alongside contemporary US militarism and warfare. The first featured scholar is Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and additional scholars include Kyle T. Mays, Laleh Khalili, Harsha Walia, Nick C. Estes, Tiffany King, and Kelly Hayes. The project culminates in the second Veteran Art Triennial and Summit, in Spring 2023, at the Chicago Cultural Center, Hyde Park Art Center, and Newberry Library.

To learn more, visit us at www.survivingthelongwars.online.

Surviving the Long Wars is organized by Aaron Hughes, Ronak K. Kapadia, Therese Quinn, Joseph Lefthand, and Amber Zora.



RACHEL DUKES IS A MUSEUM AND EXHIBITION STUDIES GRADUATE STUDENT AT UIC. SHE SERVES AS THE PROJECT COORDINATOR FOR SURVIVING THE LONG WARS.

the second Veteran Art Triennial and Summit

SURVIVING THE LONG WARS

SAVE THE DATE VETERAN ART SUMMIT IN CHICAGO — MARCH 16-19, 2023

From the US “Indian Wars” to the “Global War on Terror,” **SURVIVING THE LONG WARS** explores the multiple, overlapping histories that shape our understanding of warfare, as well as alternative visions of peace, healing, and justice generated by diverse communities impacted by war.

SURVIVINGTHELONGWARS.ONLINE

TRIENNIAL EXHIBITIONS
SPRING 2023

Chicago Cultural Center,
Hyde Park Art Center,
and Newberry Library



Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.



Memories of My Time in RVN

PAUL BYRNES

Memories of a grunt serving in RVN with B Company 1st 327th (Abn) Infantry, 1st Brigade 101st Airborne from June 1967 through April 1968.

I still remember after the first fire-fight with the NVA that I was in (took place outside of a little hooch complex somewhere near Duc Pho/Chu Lai), being ordered to take one of the corners of the poncho the body of our point man had been placed in after we recovered it, and carrying his remains while what remained of his brains leaked out the hole an AK round had punched through his steel pot and his head on the way to where dust-offs could come in and take the WIAs and KIAs out (found out later that he was only 18 years old when he died).

I still remember several days after that first firefight, walking point as we came off RON and then switching squads when we took a break to rest and eat some C-rats after humping half the day; finding out after the firefight that took place shortly thereafter was over that the guy who took over walking point from me was the first person killed when he walked into an NVA ambush: one hour earlier and I would have been walking point when we made contact.

I still remember, after being assigned as RTO to our platoon leader, watching as he and our Vietnamese interpreter butt-stroked half to death a military-age Vietnamese man we had taken prisoner along with what we assumed was the rest of his family (including a very pregnant Vietnamese woman we assumed was his "wife") all of whom seemed to be living in a small, isolated hooch complex. The savage beating of the prisoner occurred because the lieutenant didn't like the answers the interpreter was translating

into English to questions posed to the suspected guerilla fighter through the translator. After the interrogation was over, we left the young children and an elderly woman behind while we took the man and his "wife" with us as we left the area; they were both shot and killed about ten minutes after we left.

I still remember word being passed back through the column after we heard the gunfire that killed the male prisoner to kill the woman and passing the word to the guy behind me who had "custody" of the woman. I also remember watching him kick the poor pregnant bound and gagged Vietnamese woman off the trail and then put a full magazine of 5.56 into her head (causing it to expand like a water balloon before literally exploding).

I still remember being sent on a canteen (water) run and stopping when the buck sergeant in charge of the mission (a few years older than us 18-19 year old kids) spotted a young Vietnamese woman standing by herself and watching us. He ordered us to set up a perimeter while he took her at gunpoint to a nearby hooch. I can still see him come out of the hooch alone several minutes later as he pulled his fatigue pants up and grabbed his LBE.

I still remember humping down from the high ground after RON and seeing my platoon leader (who as platoon RTO, I was right behind in the column) for no reason, just stop and shoot an unarmed elderly Vietnamese man who was in a rice paddy about 50 meters away from the trail we were on. The Vietnamese peasant was walking behind a water buffalo pulling the plow, peacefully working his rice paddy when the lieutenant killed him. I also remember a Vietnamese woman running out, screaming in what I assume was anguish as she saw the

body lying in the mud and water.

I still remember humping through the woods for several weeks looking to make contact and setting up on the side of a hill for what turned into several days (at least one day too long) and getting concerned because we had been in one place for too long. Our concerns were proven when an NVA mortar team lobbed about 30 shells at us from so close by that we could hear the popping sound each time a mortar round left the tube. After the attack was over, we realized that but for the presence of a large tree next to our position, at least one of the mortar rounds would have taken out me and the other guy I was sharing a position with.

I still remember having an airstrike dropped on us by "mistake" shortly after we had CA'd onto a hill between Phu Bai and the A Shau Valley. As I recall, the "friendly" airstrike occurred early one morning about four or five days after we had occupied the hill, while we were fortifying the perimeter of what would later be designated FSB Birmingham; building the sandbags and engineer stakes fighting positions that would be where the grunts kept guard from inside the wire. It was while filling sandbags and putting them on the roof of our bunker, that I and the other guy assigned to this position were blown off the bunker and knocked out. I also remember coming back to consciousness in a gray fog of dust, with everything around us obscured by blinding, choking clouds of dust.

I still remember that, although we never received an "official" explanation as to what had just happened, we later heard that an American plane flying above the low-hanging clouds that hid us from view had dropped three 500lb bombs

on the hill. As we searched the side of the hill for WIAs (none were found), we saw that one of the bombs had detonated directly below my position (presumably the blast of which blew us off the bunker roof), a second one which landed right next to our platoon CP (killing everyone at the CP), and the last one a direct hit on the artillery FDC bunker: splintering 12" x 12" timbers and killing about 10 of the artillery guys. I later came to realize that if the slope of the hill below us hadn't directed the bomb blast out and away from us, we would have been killed instantly.

I still remember after the "dust literally settled" from the "friendly" airstrike, being ordered to go around the outside of the perimeter with empty sandbags, tasked with picking up any human remains we found (most of the remains found were lodged in what was left of the trees and other vegetation on the side of the hill) blown out there by the force of the bombs.

I still remember one cold, rainy day during the monsoons as a buck sergeant in our platoon was called to the CP and told that the TOC had just radioed in that this sergeant's wife had given birth to a little girl and then finding out after the firefight that occurred shortly thereafter that the sergeant had been killed. Once in a while, I wonder what it was like for that little girl, growing up without ever getting to see her father.



PAUL BYRNES WAS A SGT. (E-5): B Co., 1st BATTALION 327TH (ABN) INFANTRY 1st BRIGADE 101st AIRBORNE: SPURS EARNED IN COMBAT: NOT BOUGHT AND PAID FOR BY DADDY FRED TRUMP.

Remembering Olongapo

AL WELLMAN

Subic Bay, on the seaward side of the Bataan Peninsula which separates Manila Bay from the South China Sea, was the forward base of the United States Navy through the Vietnam war, where sailors could spend a month's pay in a few days ashore between weeks afloat off the coast of Vietnam.

Navy veterans of the Vietnam war remember Olongapo's main street of nightclubs with inexpensive San Miguel beer and talented Filipino musicians. Walking along the concrete sidewalk adjacent to the street which was dusty in dry weather, or muddy in wet weather, one might hear the familiar melody of *The Ballad of the Green Berets*, but the lyrics were different:

*Sailors gazed upon her chest.
She'd go short-time with America's best.
Four hundred miles they'd sailed today
to **** the girls of Subic Bay.*

The nightclubs were used as dating sites by Filipina women hoping to marry one of those sailors who

seemed so wealthy in comparison to life in the former American colony. Nightclub owners required payment from these women, but that payment was usually in the form of drinks (weak tea pretended to be expensive liquor) purchased for the women by the sailors enjoying their companionship. Most nightclubs offered rooms for sexual encounters, but the women often invited the sailors home with them to avoid the cost of those rooms.

Subic Bay had been a naval base since Spanish rule. The mouth of the bay was sheltered from the South China Sea by Grande Island. The United States Army built Fort Wint on Grande Island following the Spanish-American war, but the ruins of the base required major rebuilding following the scorched-earth retreats of American, and then Japanese, occupiers during the second world war. The Navy retained that piece of real estate when the remainder of the Philippines became independent in 1946, with the promise of jobs for Filipinos preserving the local community's dependence on colonial economic relationships.

The rebuilt base facilities included a community with water, telephone, and electrical utilities as housing for Filipino civilian employees at the base. This housing area, which became the city of Olongapo, was separated from the remainder of the base by a tidal estuary known to naval personnel as Shit River for its prevailing odor of untreated sewage. Olongapo was part of the naval base until 1959. The Korean war demonstrated Subic Bay was too distant from Clark Field for efficient air transport logistics, so the Cubi Point Naval Air Station was built nearby. The Cubi Point runway alignment required razing the Philippine village of Banicain. Displaced Banicain residents were relocated to homes in Olongapo, where they chafed under the restrictions of living on base without the economic support of base jobs.

Olongapo became a focal point for the perceived continuation of US colonial practices. The issue reached national proportions when an American sentry at the Naval Supply Depot shot a Filipino and the Navy failed to put the sentry on trial. In response, the mayor of Manila announced in July 1955 that American servicemen accused of crimes in Manila would be tried in Philippine courts rather than released to military authorities. Martial law was declared in Olongapo when the American owner of an Olongapo auto parts store was murdered in October 1959.

Although Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay (for whom Olongapo's main street of notorious nightclubs was named) had ended the Hukbalahap (Huk) rebellion in 1954, the murder was attributed to the Huks when the town of Olongapo was turned over to the Philippine government

in December 1959. Official sources typically attributed all anti-American violence near the base to the allegedly communist Huks through the Vietnam war while Olongapo became home to three political parties; the party controlling local government incarcerated the other two as outlaw gangs.

By the 1970s the back wall of the Olongapo jail was a line of three cells separated by bars. The place was illuminated by a single naked bulb dangling by an electrical wire from the ceiling in front of the center cell. Each cell was standing room only with a bucket serving as a toilet. Male members of the two gangs were in the two outer cells to prevent them from injuring each other through the bars. The center cell was for female prisoners. There was a small crowd of visiting friends outside the cells bringing food to the prisoners since none was provided otherwise. The crowd was generally attired in shorts, tee-shirts, and shower sandals, while the immaculately groomed police wore crisply pressed military-style khaki uniforms and carried M16 rifles.

Further incidents of privileged Americans shooting impoverished Filipinos were addressed by base security teams of an unarmed American guard accompanied by a Filipino with an M16 rifle who would presumably follow the American's directions. Readers may be interested in Gerald Anderson's book entitled *Subic Bay from Magellan to Pinatubo*.



AL WELLMAN WAS A SECOND-GENERATION UNITED STATES NAVAL OFFICER WHOSE COMBAT PARTICIPATION WAS LIMITED TO LAUNCHING GUIDED MISSILES AT RADAR IMAGES



VVAW in Nicaragua - April 14, 1986.

China Beach Surf Club - Part 2

JOSEPH GIANNINI

*Off the Republic of South Vietnam
Onboard the USS Duluth
September 12, 1967
0300 hours*

Still restless and anxious. Since I joined 1/3 we have been on seven operations in four provinces. Covered the length of the I Corps area, from the DMZ down to the Que Son Valley southwest of Da Nang, about 250 miles. 1/3 is constantly on the move. Always going into a new dangerous place. Then leaving it for another. We move at a killing pace, returning to our ships for a brief stand-down and to re-outfit for the next operation. We've been back on the ship for three days. After the beach party, we'll get one day to recuperate. Then we're going back up North to Quang Tri Province, just below the DMZ, for Operation Freemont.

While on board I wrote up medal citations for seven Marines. Five for Medals of Honor and two for Silver Stars, for bravery during a vicious fight, to hold a hill in the Valley of the Walking Dead.

One day after our last beach party, 1/3 hit the beach in Quang Nam Province. The fighting was mostly hit-and-run. The Viet Cong harassed us with small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades. We called in air strikes and arty and the VC ran.

Several days later, 1/3 choppered inland to An Hoi, Happy Valley. While moving in the Valley, my First Squad Leader, Cpl. Andenora, was shot in the right shoulder by a VC sniper. We found the sniper's position on a high hill. He hadn't taken the time to collect his shell casings.

A few nights later, machine gunner Cpl. Listorti was killed. He had completed his tour and was due to rotate on the next chopper out. Watching him being wrapped in his own poncho, I thought about his parents, back home waiting for their

son. As the medevac rose and Cpl. Listorti started his journey home, my right eye started to twitch.

*Que Son Valley
August 16, 1967
1400 hours*

Early this morning we left Happy Valley and choppered into the Valley of the Walking Dead. Though this valley is being hotly contested by the NVA, we came into a cold LZ. 1/3 is on a Fix and Destroy Operation. We're looking for two NVA regiments that have been fucking with the First Battalion Fifth Marines.

We move west over small brown scrub-covered hills. The morning passes without incident. It's sunny and hot. Over 100 degrees. Not a bit of shade anywhere.

I move Bravo One onto the crest of a small hill, not more than 15 meters high. From there I see the point platoon of Charlie Company. They're moving across a large dry paddy. At least 400 meters wide. They're heading toward a very large hill covered with dense jungle.

A storm of small-arms fire and rocket-propelled grenades slams into them. They all go down. Hit or scrambling for cover. They're fucked. Caught in the open on the other side.

From this side, Charlie Company opens up, providing cover fire. The NVA responds. Rounds start hitting the hill and whizzing by. We move back a bit. Get low, sit tight, and wait. We're not in this fight yet.

Our support kicks in: Fighters scream over, dropping bombs and napalm on the NVA positions. Between bombing runs, artillery and mortar rounds pound the NVA. But the fire from the hill is incessant. Charlie Company can't go out to help their stranded platoon. They'll have to pull back on their own.

The fight continues through the

blistering afternoon. It's a standoff. The word comes down that some from the point platoon have made it back. As evening approaches, the enemy fire starts to trail off. There are wounded and dead Marines out there. Charlie Company, under the cover of dark, will have to go out and get them. I get a radio call from Bravo Six, Company Commander Captain Landes, requesting me to come up for his nightly briefing. I call up my Platoon Sergeant, Sgt. Head.

"Sarge, I'm going over to see Six. Set in the First Squad and one machine gun on the hill. I'll be back. I'm staying on the hill. Tell the Second and Third Squads to stand by. I think they'll have to dig in across the paddy behind us with the rest of Bravo Company."

"Okay, Lieutenant." I go down the hill. Cross a narrow dry paddy. Spot the Captain with the other Platoon Leaders and our Forward Observer, Ron, a Marine Pilot assigned to Bravo. They're in a large ville just across from the hill. We're squatting in a small circle as Captain Landes begins. "Listen up."

It's pitch black as I make my way back to the crest of the hill after the briefing. A Night Attack. My first. Fuck, attacking across that paddy is crazy. It's too wide and there's no cover. They'll hear us coming and cut us to pieces. I reach the top and locate Platoon Sergeant Head.

"Sargeant Head, call up the Platoon Guide, Squad Leaders and Gun Team Leaders."

When all are present, I start my briefing. "Battalion is sending out a Recon Patrol. I'm going out with it. When the Patrol returns, 1/3 is going into a Night Attack. Bravo Company will be Point for Battalion. Bravo One will be Point for Bravo Company. Alpha on our left. Delta on our right. Charlie and Headquarters behind. We'll move in a wedge formation. First Squad will take Point. Second,

our left flank and Third, the right. Guns will move with Second and Third Squads. I'll move with the First Squad. Sergeant Head will move with the Second Squad. Platoon Guide with the Third. For now, First Squad stays in place. Sergeant Head, you stay on the hill with my Radio Operator until I return. Second and Third Squads will saddle up and follow me to Bravo's lines to set in. Any questions?"

Sergeant King, my First Squad Leader, speaks up. "Lieutenant, did Captain Landes volunteer Bravo for Point?"

"Sarge, how the fuck would I know? Anything else?" No response. "Get back to your men and pass the word."

Just before leaving I go over to Sergeant Head. "Sarge, we'll be moving out as soon as I return. Make sure everyone stays awake, alert and ready to go."

"Lieutenant, we'll be ready and waiting."

"Second Squad, Third Squad, let's go, follow me."

We move in single file down the hill and across the paddy that separates the hill from Bravo's position. I set in each squad, put a machine gun team with the Second Squad. Both squads are facing the hill. While they're digging in, I go over to each Squad Leader. Tell them to keep their men awake, alert, and ready to go. Move off to rendezvous with the other members of the Recon Patrol, gathering nearby.



To be continued next issue.

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

Reflecting on Returning to Vietnam

FRED PTUCHA

October 23, 2002

I served four tours of duty during the Vietnam War as a LT in the US Navy. As an intelligence officer with Top Secret Crypto Clearance I was privy to many of the "dirty secrets" of American policy and became increasingly convinced that the war was a terrible mistake and that we should never have been involved in Vietnam. I've carried a lingering sense of guilt about my participation in an immoral and unjust war since my return to civilian life in 1970 over 52 years ago.

As part of the Veterans Vietnam Restoration Project, we went to Dong Ha in Quang Tri province in 2002.

The primary humanitarian aspect of the work we did was to provide the money and some token/symbolic labor to build 12 houses for disabled Vietnamese Veterans. The 12 veterans had all suffered major wounds such as the loss of an arm, a leg, an eye, etc. In addition, their homes and sometimes their entire village had been destroyed by American forces during the war. They had all lost one or more close family members in the war such as a child, a wife, parents, brothers and sisters, etc. Three vets had also suffered wounds or had family members who had been wounded, after the war was over, by landmines America left behind.

Yet, despite this, we were treated

as honored guests at each home site. After an opening ceremony and a small amount of physical work they would have a big feast with the veterans' extended family and the leaders of the village with many toasts of rice wine to "Peace and Friendship between the Vietnamese and American People." I never felt any hatred, anger or resentment, from any of the Vietnamese people we met, about the terrible destruction we caused to their country and to their individual families. They were unbelievably warm, forgiving and gracious hosts.

Suppose the situation was reversed and Vietnam had invaded America, bombed my city, destroyed my home, and killed some of my

immediate family and left me disabled. Then some Vietnamese Vets showed up some 30 years later and said, "We are going to pay for a new house and help you build it." I wonder if I could be so forgiving and gracious. I doubt it.

Finally I realized that if these Vietnamese Veterans who had suffered so much could forgive me then maybe it was OK for me to forgive myself. That release of guilt and forgiveness has been a wonderful gift. Now I can finally see Vietnam as a beautiful country with warm, gracious, forgiving people and not as a war.



FRED PTUCHA IS A PEACE AND JUSTICE ADVOCATE IN SANTA ROSA, CALIFORNIA.



Dewey Canyon IV, Washington, DC, May 1982.

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 _____

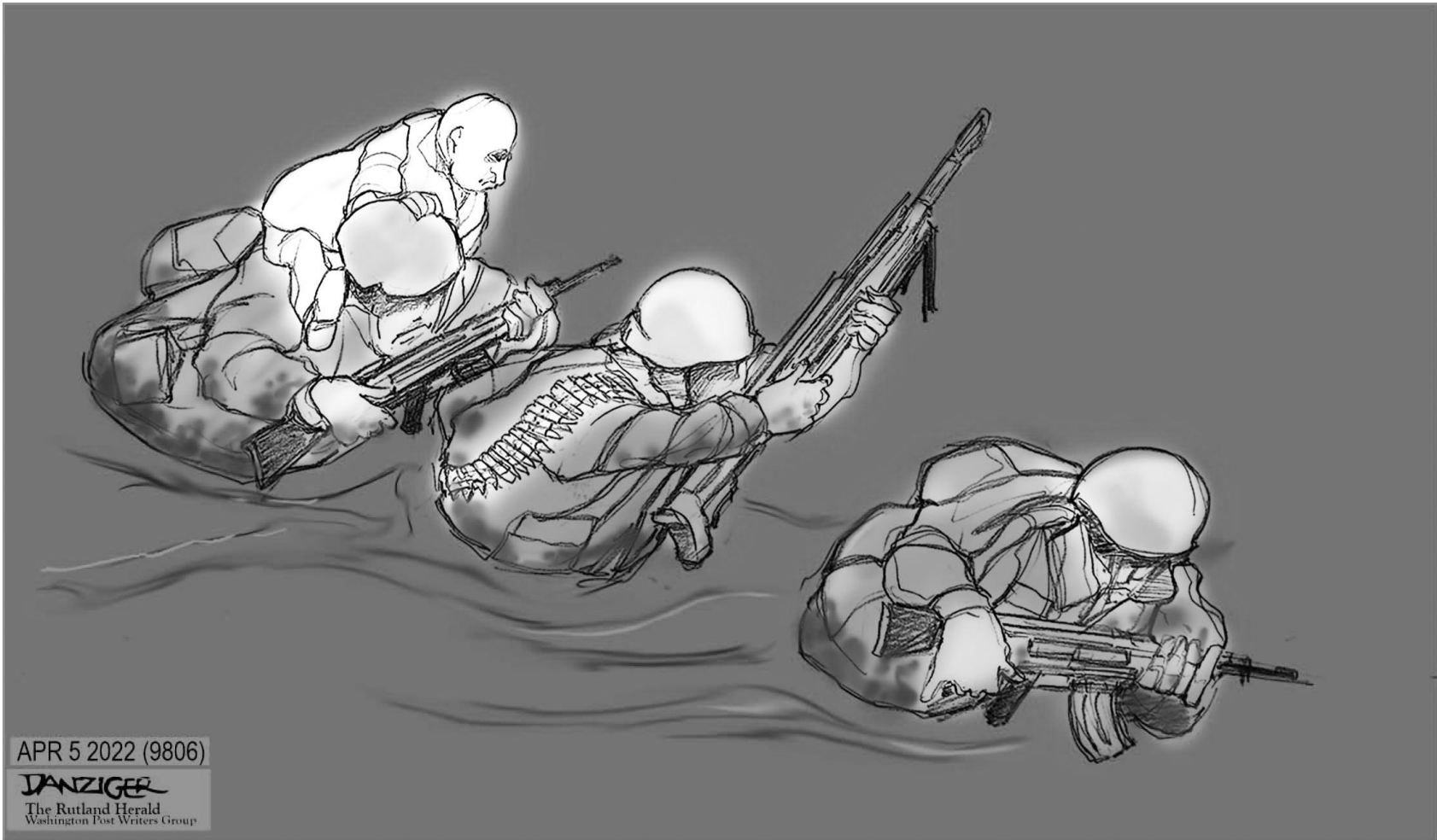
- ☐ Yes, add me to the VVAW email list.
☐ I do not wish to join, but wish to make a donation to the work of VVAW.
☐ Sign me up for a lifetime membership in VVAW. \$250 is enclosed.

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.

Russia. Waist-deep in the Big Bloody*



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

RECOLLECTIONS

Tear by Tear

MICHAEL ORANGE

There is a sacredness in tears. They are not the mark of weakness, but of power. They speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues. They are the messengers of overwhelming grief, of deep contrition, and of unspeakable love.—Washington Irving

Years ago, I recall trying to describe to a college student what a search and destroy mission felt like. I asked him to take an imaginary trip the next time he was in a sauna. "Picture yourself dressed from head to toe in clothes including a heavy armored vest, boots, and a steel helmet. Now add sixty pounds of gear, ammo, and a rifle. That's about twice the normal weight for a backpacking trip. Now imagine stepping up and down off of the sauna bench to approximate the energy needed to fight your way through the thick mud and triple canopy jungles. After you've done this for two hours, take a twenty-minute rest. After a day of this, imagine digging a hole in which you will sleep for four hours and stand guard for another two. Then repeat." I paused, then added, "Oh, I forgot to mention that while mosquitoes, spiders, ants, centipedes, and snakes are driving you crazy, the well-armed locals will be trying to kill you with ambushes and booby traps." I think he got the picture.

The mid-August temperature topped a hundred degrees in St. Paul a few years ago but the evening's deluge relieved the atmosphere's pent-up energy. I donned my poncho and settled in on a lawn chair in the middle of our backyard patio. The rain splashed into the night's second brandy.

The splatter echoing within my hood triggered a flood of emotive memories of nights on patrol. I vividly recalled the exhaustion of humping through tropical heat so stifling I could feel sweat boil out of my skin. How sweat couldn't cool; it could only salt the meal for the mosquitoes and

flies. How the smell of my rotting feet matched what oozed from fetid paddy muck. How the foxhole I carved out of Vietnam's red soil was just large enough for a cross-legged crouch with my M16 across my lap. How the memories never fade.

A Minnesota thunderstorm is no match for Vietnam's. The roar of a Vietnam downpour could drown out all but a shout between our perimeter foxholes.

Sitting in a comfortable chair within the security of my back yard, a shiver coursed down from my shoulders and I recalled the bone-rattling cold of nights sitting half-submerged in a hole. But I knew that my enemy had it worse and that the rain made an attack unlikely. An uncomfortable protector.

I finished my brandy and came inside to the non-judging acceptance of my befuddling behaviors from my loving wife, Cynthia, profoundly appreciative of the preciousness of my life and the opportunity to love and be loved.

I completed PTSD therapy in 2004. Embedded in the word re-cover is the implication that covering over emotional experiences again is a good thing. We need a better word. I suggest embrace. A friend who also suffered from PTSD told me about the advice from the group therapist at the VA. He used driving a bus as a metaphor for staying alive. "Don't turn around, just keep driving; and, whatever you do, don't get off the bus." The patients are not to figuratively turn around because behind them riding on the bus are the ghosts that are their PTSD sources. "Getting off the bus" is code for suicide. Based on my PTSD therapy, I'd give very different advice. I'd tell them to stop the bus and not start again until they had gotten to know every one of their ghosts and embraced them as their teachers.

Claude Anshin Thomas confirms this advice in his book, *At Hell's Gate*:

A Soldier's Journey from War to Peace: "Healing is not the absence of suffering. What happens is that through this process of being more present to my own life, I stop attempting to reject suffering. This is healing and transformation ... I breathe in and breathe out, and I am grateful to be free to touch these emotions, to establish a different relationship with them, to be able to have the possibility to make different choices in my life."

My therapist, Thomas, asked if there was a key thing that would keep me on track. It was the easiest question he'd asked. "Cynthia," I said; "My relationship with Cynthia." More important than Thomas, my retreat with Thich Nhat Hahn, the books I read, and all of the friends and family who helped me, were the decades of non-judgmental love, patience, compassion, and acceptance from Cynthia. She has stood by me since 1973 when we married. With saint-like patience and wisdom, she listened intently to my descriptions of every one of my forty-four sessions with Thomas. She has a gift. With silence—almost stillness—she drew me out before I learned how much she saw all along. She anticipated my needs, served as my advocate for my medical leave of absence from my job, and offered her wisdom and love as the healing balm for my wounds and inadequacies. For every hour I spent in a chair opposite Thomas in his office, I spent one or more at home opposite Cynthia sharing the experience of my therapy, my reading, and my writing.

The tremendous burden of it all for Cynthia far outweighed the sum of the hours spent listening, absorbing, sorting, remembering, suggesting, and controlling her own emotional reactions. There is a special burden of carrying the whole, as one friend put it. My therapy and my PTSD were unwelcome presences that crowded our relationship. For those nine months, the default setting of

my brain when it wasn't engaged in something else was PTSD, therapy, and writing. It generated a primordial low rumble that vibrated beneath my thoughts and dreams. It was a toothache that refused to recede into the background noise of everyday pains. She never complained although I'm sure compassion fatigue was very real for her. Like an alchemist, she continues to help me transform the poison of war into an alloy that makes me stronger; that makes us stronger.

I could have been drawn down the same suicidal path two of my fellow Marines took. After nearly five decades of marriage, during which she bore the brunt of my PTSD symptoms, she had the incredible patience to hold my hand every step of the way as I waded back through the jungle muck; the exploded bodies; and the betrayals by parents, church, and country. I know it was exhausting work for her.

PTSD poses serious tests to a relationship. Considering all of the attention we pay to honor the sacrifices of our soldiers and veterans, why is there no national holiday or marble monument to commemorate their loved ones who help repair the damage and who cope with the loss?

Thomas said it well, "Cynthia's such an important person for you, helping you home finally from Vietnam, tear by tear."



MICHAEL ORANGE'S BOOK, *FIRE IN THE HOLE: A MORTARMAN IN VIETNAM* (2001), DESCRIBED HIS WARTIME EXPERIENCES AS A MARINE. HIS NEW BOOK, *EMBRACING THE GHOSTS: PTSD AND THE VIETNAM QUAGMIRE* (2021), DESCRIBES THE LESSONS HE GLEANED FROM THE PTSD THERAPY HE COMPLETED THREE DECADES AFTER COMING HOME.

Russian Troops May Be Giving Putin Untrue Battle Reports from Ukraine



Mar 31 2022 (9805)
DANZIGER The Rutland Herald
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