



THE VETERAN

Vietnam Veterans Against the War

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VVAW Library Project Updates - Spring 2023

CHUCK THEUSCH

After pandemic restrictions prevented Chuck Theusch, Founder/CEO of the Library of Vietnam Project from traveling for the past couple of years, he and his wife Khoi finally made it to Vietnam to visit all their library projects, including our two projects.

Construction of VVAW's second library has begun in the courtyard of the Hanh Trung Primary School, Nghia Hanh District, in the Quang Ngai Province of Vietnam.

Saturday, January 7, we had a wonderful groundbreaking ceremony. There is a tradition that this groundbreaking ceremony fits into nicely—the heartfelt belief that rain on the day of commencement is a good sign for a new innovative project—the VVAW Library. We are grateful for this positive coincidence.

The school will now have a free-standing, independent building designated for library use, thanks to VVAW's Small Dream project. All they had before was a lean-to roof with a few books, generally useless in the many months of monsoon weather that Quang Ngai is known for.

On March 2, 2023, Khoi and I made our second visit to the Hanh Trung Small Dream Library Site. There has been substantial progress since our prior visit on February 15.

Monsoon rains have largely subsided. Despite the monsoon work stoppages, the project took advantage of a break in the monsoon weather. Now, as the seasons are turning, spring



Small Dream library in Hanh Trung - March 20, 2023.

and summer construction should allow the library to be completed by May 1, 2023.

On March 2 we visited the first completed VVAW library, next to the Pho Vinh High School, Pho Vinh Village, Duc Pho District, Quang Nga. Ms. Suong, Vice-Headmaster of the school of 395 Students and 28 teachers and administrators, showed me the work she has accomplished: a Facebook page for Pho Vinh and a website.

It turns out Ms. Suong is the daughter of Mr. Suong Le, our contractor on the first library in 2000 and 2001. He did a great job, leading to the many projects we now have across

Southeast Asia. Sadly, he is in poor health. We were unable to see him.

With the completion of VVAW's library, the local authorities contributed support for a swimming pool and physical education facility. Around 2010, several drownings in the nearby ocean and river made learning to swim a priority. Schools throughout Quang Ngai Province are working to acquire swimming pools built for water safety instruction. So VVAW's investment has already led to more resources for the children of Pho Vinh.

We greatly appreciate the funding by VVAW for these projects. So many children at the Pho Vinh and Hanh Trung schools will benefit from these

libraries and the other improvements to the living and learning these libraries make possible.

Hopefully, VVAW will continue its support of both libraries so we can add a computer lab at Hahn Trung and help upgrade the furnishings. Pho Vinh hopes to add some landscaping and an outdoor reading garden. Both libraries can always use more books.



CHUCK THEUSCH IS A VIETNAM VETERAN OF THE US ARMY, 4/3 INFANTRY, 11TH INFANTRY BRIGADE, AMERICAL DIVISION, VIETNAM 1969-70. HE IS THE FOUNDER/CEO OF THE LIBRARY OF VIETNAM PROJECT.

More photos on page 8.

While Comrades Fade, Hard Lessons Remain

BILL BRANSON

From the National Office

From where we are now, there is more in the rearview mirror than looking out the windshield.

As time marches forward, not all of our comrades stay with us. In this issue, a few more obits for folks who have passed - from the nationally known to those known only by their families and VVAW brothers and sisters.

We are especially moved by the loss of VVAW board member Marty Webster. Marty rejoined VVAW in the wake of GWBs invasions. He had the gift of being able to talk to almost anyone and really listen to them. He helped respond to the varied calls that came to the NO, whether someone needed something or just needed a sympathetic ear. He also relished working with the AO kids.

Marty was excited about the children's libraries we are building in Vietnam. He understood the importance of leaving traces of VVAW's legacy behind. He was proud

of the trip he took along the west coast with Barry Romo in 2009 to visit old and new members. His laugh, even at his own bad jokes, was infectious. He was a stand-up comrade and a dedicated VVAW member. Marty, you will be missed.

As we write this, the second VVAW-funded library project is nearing completion. We hope you can help us make our fundraising goal for this library, so maybe we can find the resources to fund another.

Looking back 50 years to 1973, it's amazing how much VVAW accomplished. As we moved forward in our struggle to end the US war in Vietnam we also began to move on issues and campaigns linked to the US imperial might. From helping defend Gary Lawton, to providing support to Wounded Knee to taking over VA offices. One of the metrics of success was the repressive response from our government, which increasingly tried to put VVAW behind bars. We fought all these efforts and often managed to use these battles to build

the organization.

What did we learn from all of this? Plenty. Branching out helped us build key allies who helped defend us. Branching out could also contribute to a lack of focus and a weakening of VVAW's veteran base.

How do these lessons help us and the social justice movements of today? Broadening was important but we realized we needed to keep our focus on veterans and anti-war work clear and primary. We made sure that the struggle to end the war, for a veterans' base and focus, was kept front and center. We could not help other causes if we were not clear on our own mission.

Back in 1951, in his farewell

address, Douglas MacArthur said "Old soldiers never die—they just fade away." We in VVAW honored our forebears in the Bonus Army of the 1930s and the heroes of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade by NOT fading away. We continued their struggles and sacrifices for peace and social justice. The powers that be could not crush our will to fight. We are gray and wizened in appearance. We have lost comrades. However, our will to continue on has not diminished. The spirit found in these pages reflects the promise... we are not just fading away.



BILL BRANSON IS A MEMBER OF THE VVAW BOARD.



Marty Webster, ¡Presente!



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Marty Webster and Annie Bailey at VVAW's 40th Anniversary in 2007. R.I.P. to both of them.



Louie De Benedette and Marty Webster at IVAW's Winter Soldier in 2008. R.I.P. to both of them.

Veteran Staff
Jeff Machota
Bill Branson
Joe Miller

Thanks to Jeff Danziger and Billy Curmano for their cartoons. Thanks to Bill Ehrhart, Nadya Williams, Walt Nygard, Joe Miller, Jeff Motkya, Anne Pearse Hocker, Ellen Pinzur, and others for contributing photos.

VVAW Merchandise



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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 (312) 566-7290 and we will put you in touch with the nearest VVAW member.

VVAW
National Coordinators:

Bill Branson	Joe Miller
Ann Hirschman	Meg Miner
Brian Matarrese	

VVAW
National Staff:

Charlie Branson
Dave "Red" Kettenhofen
Jeff Machota

Memories of Marty

June Svetlovsky

Marty Webster was one of those genuine human beings easy to talk to, even easier-going, and totally appreciative of any small gesture sent his way. Marty loved food (if it was recognizable to him) and at the annual Long Island VVAW barbeque he wasn't above asking to swap his serving of bratwurst or smoked salmon with me because mine looked bigger. He'd also happily go anywhere we took him on the Island (he'd hoped to move back to the area someday). There was the Maritime Seafood Festival where some kids asked if he was a pirate and the kayaking trip to Orient Point where he didn't move all afternoon from the picnic table where we'd left him, just looking at his laptop, watching the ocean and of course devouring a couple of sandwiches.

Long Island and VVAW will have a little less color without you, Marty. Farewell. I'll miss you.

Brian Matarrese

I'm watching the Yankees first spring training game waiting for a call from Marty that will never come. He would always call me during games even though he knew I recorded them so I could fast forward and miss the commercials. It didn't matter if he had to share the pain or exhilaration. Marty's greatest pleasure was the Yankees, equaled by his hatred of the Red Sox and their inbred fans.

While he still was able to travel he would come to Long Island for our annual VVAW/Warrior Princess Birthday BBQ and stay for a week or so. During his time in the Navy, he was stationed at St. Albans Naval Hospital and was very familiar with the island and enjoyed his stay.

One year June Svetlovsky and I took him kayaking with us at Wertheim national refuge, which had just opened its new visitors center. Physically he couldn't kayak, so we dropped him at the center. The staff looked terrified

that we were dumping him there. When we came back later he told us they treated him like royalty. Brought him a chair to sit on the deck and gave him bottled water and binoculars. He loved every minute and the staff was very relieved we showed up to take him home. Years later June and I went back and they still remembered him. So will I, although not the early calls. Goodbye my friend

Ann Hirschman

Marty was a great friend. He was active up to the end but health issues slowed him down in recent days. He used to come in for parties at Brian's where he would schmooze with all the vets and friends. He'd flirt with women in totally appropriate ways and then get serious about the important stuff.

At the IVAW Winter Soldier event Marty was everywhere. Helping vets process stuff. Keeping things safe. Doing the hard stuff so the event went smoothly. Marty didn't like the limelight. He worked in the background. I'll remember going out to eat with him and he would take forever to decide what to order. I miss this guy

Meg Miner

I don't have a detailed memory to



Barry Romo and Marty Webster visiting the West Coast in 2009.

share, but I'm sure the first (maybe only?) time I met Marty in person was at Winter Solder: Iraq and Afghanistan. I'd been on the kitchen crew at Standdown in Chicago a handful of times since joining VVAW, but WS:IA was my first time being surrounded by such a large group of veterans. Marty is present in my memory with skilled barbs—that pointed sense of humor that seems central to any exchange among veterans. The security team at WS:IA excelled at that level of humor and made experiencing the emotions that filled the campus just that much

more bearable.

Jeff Machota

Over the past 15 or so years, Marty and I spent many hours on the phone and texting each other while doing National Office business. For quite a few years, Marty was the go to guy to return phone calls made to the National Office. He did whatever he could to help the people who called us, even if that was only to lend an ear to a fellow vet's troubles. Marty truly enjoyed helping those on the other end of the phone.

When reporting back to me, Marty would find ways to break up the heaviness of some of the stories with his always-on sense of humor. We shared a lot of laughs, while getting the work done. I know as his health declined, he missed being able to make those calls.

Marty loved being part of VVAW. Already miss ya, Marty.



Jeff Machota, Marty Webster, and Ken Neilsen at a security briefing at IVAW's Winter Soldier in 2008.



Marty Webster and his daughter Suzy at IVAW's Winter Soldier in 2008.

Fraggin'

BILL SHUNAS

When I first started writing *Fraggin'* the intent was to make fun (toss a frag grenade) of politicians or military personnel for doing things that were over the top offensive or just plain wrong. That became hard to do because the same people usually were the worst offenders. Like presidents and generals. So this column morphed into commentary about various issues of the day.

I bring this up because we have a public figure most in need of a virtual grenade—Kevin McCarthy. His career in the House, especially the last couple of years, has been most offensive. It's not just that his actions are wrong. It's that he doesn't care. Usually, these people give lip service on a particular issue when they know and we know that they know they're all playing a game. See Mitch McConnell. With McCarthy it's different. He doesn't even play the game because he doesn't care. He's a chameleon and doesn't give a damn who knows it. So he sucks up to the likes of Marjorie Taylor Green, not caring that her elevator doesn't reach

the top floor. Then he releases the tapes of the January 6 insurrection to Tucker Carlson, who enjoys playing the part of an assassin. This is the chameleon at work, doing anything to delay the day that some form of democracy will come to this land.

McCarthy knows Carlson is a fake. Most people do. Still, the chameleon turns and gives up the January 6 tapes. Carlson sanitizes the crimes for his audience. The fascists stick together. In the midst of this, the insurrection gets treated as just another event on the day's news—sanitized. No violence was shown in the edited footage McCarthy gave to Carlson. We are lucky that the fascists in this country have been so inept and less bloodthirsty. It is unfortunate that January 6 happened and encouraged lost individuals to sign up with fascist organizations. Who knows if McCarthy has sympathy with those who hope to bring fascism home? Does a chameleon have an ideology?

Someone else is making out well from the political split between red and blue in a different way—Mr.

Joe Biden. That focuses discussion of his work on domestic policy. His Build Back Better is impressive for the way it seems to be helping many people. More are working and there is an improvement in wages. Of course, there are opponents of these policies, and that is where divisions and discussions are focused when it comes to today's politics.

Biden is positioning the US to be confrontational with China. In the many years Biden has been in Washington it is said that he has moved toward more progressive positions. On foreign policy, he must be remembering fondly the cold warriors he served with. Back then they had the Soviet Union to confront. For those who miss those days, we have established China as the new opponent. That's how we are positioning ourselves diplomatically and militarily.

So the Soviets are gone, and the Chinese are taking their place. China has been expanding, diplomatically and militarily. It is like a void being filled in terms of Asia policy and Cold

War operations. Opposing China looks a lot like opposing the Soviet Union years ago. Same excuses, different day. We have to defend our allies. We want justice for the Uyghrs whose situation is horrifying but not our job except in the diplomatic world. And China is expanding its navy and building naval bases. Some of these bases are being built on artificially made islands. I wonder if any of these islands has a gulf called Tonkin?

I don't know if Cold War desires for confrontation are due to having some psychological need or the need for economic hegemony everywhere. Save me the talk about doing the right thing. Nations don't use morality as a guide to foreign policy. We're entering the age of Kevin McCarthy where the goal is to rule without conscience.



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

Updates from Across the Pond

JOHN LINDQUIST

Hello to everyone from the Eastern Front. Wendy and I are back in England but we will return to the US on July 12th. My daughter, grandson, and son-in-law will visit this summer. On Monday, January 23rd, I did a talk and showed a dvd to the Minster Lovell

History Club - Vietnam 1968.

The dvd was from the Wisconsin Vietnam War Museum in Madison. It is Wisconsin Veterans recalling oral history from 1968. We had 60 people show up. I got a haircut and put on my Dress Blues. I started by having all

the Veterans stand up. We are the true 190! I had a table with books, maps, pictures, and Agent Orange material.

It was well received and at times a tear-jerker. After the dvd, we had questions and other veterans related some of their stories. This was the

third one I have done since 2017. I'll have to do one on VVAW next year.

We ended with a raffle.
Semper Fidelis.



JOHN LINDQUIST IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER FROM MILWAUKEE, NOW LIVING IN ENGLAND.

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Going AWOL

RG CANTALUPO

"I can't sign this."
The clerk looked up, puzzled.
"That's your discharge papers."
"It says I'm the same as I was when I was inducted. I'm not."
"What do you mean?"
"I mean, I'm not the same. I was wounded three times. My head's fucked up. My left arm is still half-paralyzed. I have scars and shrapnel through my body. So I'm not the same."
"It's just a formality. If you have disability issues, you can file with the

Veteran's Administration."
"I'm still not signing."
"If you don't sign your discharge papers, you can't be discharged."
I handed him back the stack of papers and started to walk out.
"Where are you going?"
"Home."
"You can't leave until you sign your discharge papers."
Now I was angry.
"Look, the Army drafted me for two years. My two years are up today,

so I'm going home."
We drove up to Monterey where we'd spent our honeymoon two years before.
I was quiet on the drive.
I don't like being followed.
And I don't like anyone listening in on my conversations.
Especially the FBI.
Yesterday my photograph was on the front page of the Monterey Herald. I was holding a billy club poised to smash down on the head of the police

officer in a crumpled heap at my feet.



RG CANTALUPO (ROSS CANTON) WAS AN RTO (RADIO OPERATOR) FOR AN INFANTRY COMPANY IN THE 25TH INFANTRY DIVISION, 1968-69. HE WAS AWARDED THREE PURPLE HEARTS AND A BRONZE STAR WITH A COMBAT V FOR VALOR FOR COURAGE UNDER FIRE.

Mekong Medicine

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Mekong Medicine: A U.S. Doctor's Year Treating Vietnam's Forgotten Victims
by **Richard W. Carlson, M.D.**
(McFarland & Company, Inc, 2022)

This is a well-written book by a doctor who spent his year in Vietnam treating civilians at a crude Vietnamese hospital in the Mekong delta. Dr. Carlson was actually in the army, but assigned to a USAID program called MILPHAP. Curiously, I have a friend who was a USAID registered nurse (RN) at a hospital in Danang in 1967-'68, and she is not familiar with MILPHAP or the assignment of active-duty military doctors to civilian hospitals. Dr. Carlson does not give a specific date for his arrival in Vietnam, but he leaves on October 26, 1967, the day John McCain was shot down and captured. Throughout the book, he works with three young American nurses, also from USAID. I was surprised to find that the nurses had been made familiar with the Vietnamese language. I certainly don't remember that from my friend's book. Once again, the more you think you know about our war in Vietnam, the more you discover that you didn't know previously. I will point out that the doctors, as commissioned officers in the US military, came away with the

full array of veterans' benefits, but the nurses and other workers who were in Vietnam via USAID and other, similar non-military programs are not eligible for any care or benefits whatsoever. This book is fairly standard doctor-in-Vietnam fare, except that the sick and wounded are primarily Vietnamese civilians, impoverished peasants. Some are Viet Cong, but most are just rice farmers who have been caught in the middle of a firefight, civilians who step on a mine or are torn apart by shrapnel, or sick people suffering from Tuberculosis, Malaria, Dengue Fever, Plague, Leprosy, snake bites, or other maladies. The hospital also treated pregnancy, venereal diseases, and drug addiction. The facilities were crude, and supplies were scarce, but Dr. Vinh, the Vietnamese Head Doctor, is described as a very skilled surgeon and a good human being. Throughout the book, Dr. Carlson writes about the grave shortages of medicines, equipment, even blood plasma. All of the staff at the hospital, Vietnamese or American, gave blood regularly to give their patients a chance of survival. Of course, their efforts were often in vain. This is a heart-rending story, but it is far from unique. Other books revealing a variety of doctors' stories about the terrible wounds and diseases

they faced in Vietnam were common a few years back, and it's good to see this one appear at this moment. The American reading public needs to be reminded how indiscriminate and terrible are the wounds of war, and how poignant is the suffering of innocent civilians trying to survive in a war zone. Yes, there have been other books by doctors, but the American public still hasn't got the message. Our government, our military, the vast majority of our corporate-owned media, and the 650,000 companies with defense contracts all seek to convince us that war is an inevitable and necessary thing, but every once in a while, a book like *Mekong Medicine* finds its way into print and reminds us how inhuman modern warfare had become half a century before. Hopefully, a lot of readers will begin to imagine how weapons have evolved over those years, and the indescribable wounds that are inflicted in today's conflicts. The damage done to minds among those who have witnessed modern combat has coined a new phrase among those professionals who are trying to help our traumatized, emotionally devastated soldiers. Today we recognize moral injury, or moral damage, from war, and the sad fact that many of our soldiers carry

that baggage with them for the rest of their lives. Today, parents admit that they expect their sons and daughters to come home from their military experiences "changed." That they accept this is a great mystery to me, and the fact that many of them still go to church on Sunday and accept the mammoth flags and fighter jet flyovers at the start of football games, strikes me as proof of brainwashing on a colossal scale. About a decade ago, author Nick Turse suggested that more than 30,000 books had been published about the war in Vietnam. Today, the number must be far higher. *Mekong Medicine* is a very welcome addition to the list. Doctor Carlson should be proud that he helped so many wounded and sick peasants trapped in the deadly environment that was Vietnam during the American war. He has told his incredible story in an extremely well written book, and I hope lots of Americans will read it and think.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF ... AND A HARD RAIN FELL, AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

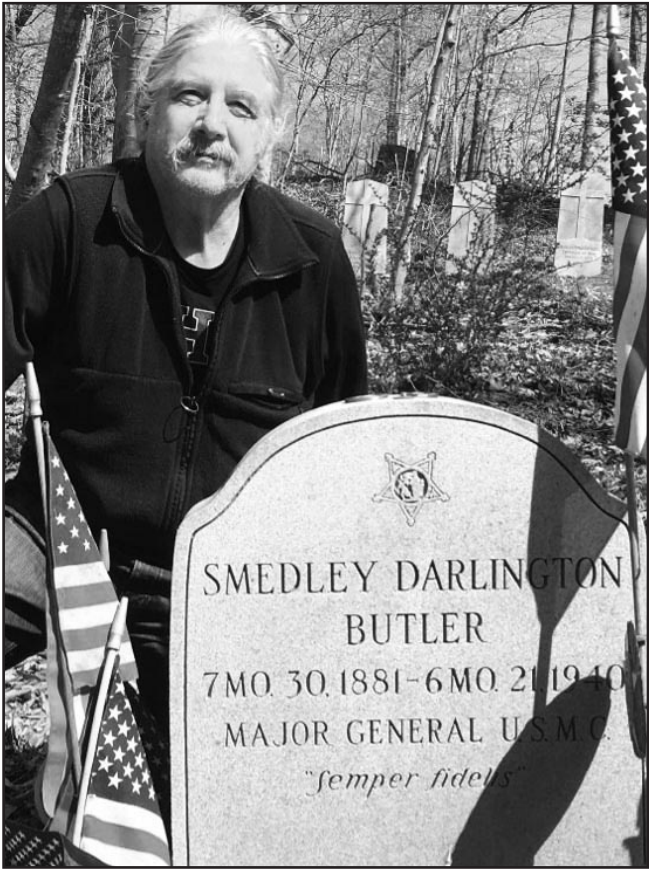
At Smedley Butler's Grave

Oaklands Cemetery
West Chester, PA

So here I am with Smedley Butler, major general, Maverick Marine, Old Gimlet Eye, the Stormy Petrel, two-time Medal of Honor winner; me a sergeant with a Purple Heart for doing nothing but getting hit. (Don't kid yourself, there's nothing heroic in that; just bad luck.)

Yet here I am at Butler's grave. But why? Well, we were both Marines, there's that. And he graduated in 1898 from the school where I taught decades later for 18 years. And he wrote a book called War Is a Racket in which he concluded, "To Hell with War!" How can you not love the guy for that?

—W. D. Ehrhart



Afterwards

The brown ball spun idly in place where it had always been, third planet from the sun, now baked to a hard crust of shattered dreams.

It took millennia, before the crust began to soften, allowing a glint of iridescent blue to shimmer at the edges of continental masses beginning to wreathe in shifting patterns.

A deep green spread, interrupted by vast yellow and dusky orange intrusions, holding back the verdant sprawl, creating domains soon to be resplendent in a cloak of life-giving gases.

She was done, completed, and sounding a silent (siren?) song of invitation: please come back, accept my forgiveness, I know you didn't mean to destroy me, please come back and make a home here.

—Woody Powell

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 libraries 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.

Dan Ellsberg: A Personal Reflection

W. D. EHRHART

I enlisted in the US Marines when I was 17 years old. When the Marine Corps sent me to a helicopter base in North Carolina after boot camp instead of to Vietnam, I complained repeatedly until they finally did send me to Vietnam.

What I found there was not at all what I'd expected to find. I've written about this extensively elsewhere, so I won't repeat myself here. Suffice it to say that I had expected to be fighting to save the Vietnamese from communism, but instead found myself the modern equivalent of a British Redcoat in the American colonies. I was the enemy, not the people who were fighting me.

I came back from Vietnam a broken and confused young man. I spent the next two years trying to imagine that whatever the heck was going on in Vietnam no longer had anything to do with me. It was not my problem anymore.

And then in May 1970, the Ohio National Guard murdered four kids—college students like me—at an anti-war demonstration at Kent State University. And when I saw that famous photo of the dead boy and the hysterical young girl kneeling beside him, I finally realized that the American War in Vietnam was still my problem.

I began to speak out against the war, getting involved in the anti-war movement at Swarthmore College where I was then a first-year student. At local Rotary Club meetings, and while leafleting war industries like Westinghouse, I argued that the United States had meant well, had tried to do the right thing in Vietnam, but that something had gone terribly wrong, and we now found ourselves in an untenable situation from which we had to extract ourselves and get the country back on the right track.

I fully believed that. How could I believe otherwise?

And then in June 1971, at the end of my sophomore year of college, the *Pentagon Papers* began to appear in the public domain, first with one newspaper, and when Richard Nixon muzzled that paper, another paper took it up, and then another and another until at last Nixon gave up. Here is what I wrote in *Passing Time: Memoir of a Vietnam Veteran Against the War* about the impact the Pentagon Papers had on me when I was 22 years old:

"In late June, thanks to a man named Daniel Ellsberg, the *Pentagon Papers* found the light of day; I'd bought a paperback copy of the *New York Times* edition and read it cover-to-cover.

"It had been a journey through an unholy house of horrors where all one's worst fears and darkest nightmares had suddenly become reality, hard, cold, and immutable; where all of the ugliest questions that had first arisen in the rice fields and jungles of Vietnam had suddenly been answered in the starkest and most unmerciful terms; where everything I had believed in for eighteen years and had desperately tried to cling to through four more years of pestilence and famine had suddenly crumbled to ashes—ashes so thick you could hardly breathe, bitter, dry, and suffocating.

"A mistake? Vietnam a mistake? My God, it had been a calculated, deliberate attempt to hammer the world by brute force into the shape perceived by vain, duplicitous powerbrokers. And the depths to which they had sunk, dragging us all down with them, were almost unfathomable.

"Everywhere I looked, there were ghosts all around me. Ross. Bylinoksi. Murphy. Worman. All dead. Kenny with his arm gone. Gerry with his

knee smashed. Captain B with both thigh bones shattered by a fifty-caliber machine gun bullet. Staff Sergeant Trinh with his father dead from a Japanese bullet, and his sister dead from a French mine, and his mother dead from an American artillery shell, and his beloved Vietnam in blistering ruins, and his heart broken forever. The forests were stripped of their leaves, the fields stripped of their rice, the villages drowned in billowing orange-black clouds of napalm. For what? And the old woman in the ricefield, and the old man on Barrier Island, and the small boy in the market place in Hoi An: dead. All of them dead.

"And for what? For what? For a pack of dissembling criminals who'd defined morality as whatever they could get away with. For a bunch of cold-blooded murdering liars in three-piece suits and uniforms with stars who'd dined on fine white porcelain plates while year after year they'd sent the children of the gullible halfway around the world to wage war on a nation of peasant rice farmers and fisherpeople who had never wanted anything but their own country free of foreigners, who had wanted only to grow their crops and catch their fish and live. If only I'd known when it mattered.

"Oh, it was all here in the *Pentagon Papers*. All of it, and much more. Page after page after endless page of it. Vile. Immoral. Despicable. Obscene. Never once in all those years had they questioned their ultimate aims. Never once had they considered that the Vietnamese might not be malleable enough to conform to their blind, willful fantasies. Never once had they told the truth—to me, or to anyone.

"I'd been a fool, ignorant and naïve. A sucker. For such men, I had become a murderer. For such men, I had forfeited my honor, my self-respect, and my humanity. For such men, I had been willing to lay down my life. And I had been nothing more to them than a hired gun, a trigger-man, a stooge, a tool to be used and discarded, an insignificant statistic. Even as the years since I'd left Vietnam had passed, even as the doubts had grown, I had never imagined that the truth could be so ugly. Yet here it was—not some rhetorical diatribe from the Weathermen, nor some anti-war pamphlet from the Quakers, but the government's own account, commissioned by Robert Strange McNamara, secretary of defense for presidents Kennedy and Johnson. Christ in heaven, if there was one single shred of justice left anywhere in the universe, may all their stone-cold bloodless hearts roast in hell forever."

Need I say that the *Pentagon Papers* permanently changed my life? And Daniel Ellsberg, who risked life in prison to make those documents public, became a hero of mine, a man whose courage and decency have inspired me ever since. The man Henry Kissinger had described as "the most dangerous man in America." (There's a terrible irony in that, coming from Henry the K, but we'll not go down that rabbit hole.)

Many years later, it must have been about 2002 or 2003—I was teaching at the Haverford School for Boys at the time—I came home from school, and my wife told me that Daniel Ellsberg had called and wanted me to call him back.

Say what?! Who? Seriously?

Ellsberg had just published his memoir *Secrets*, and in a review of the book, H. Bruce Franklin—who was familiar with my writing—had related the impact the *Pentagon Papers* had had on me. Ellsberg wanted to talk with me because he'd never in all those

years heard what the impact of his actions had meant to a veteran of the war. We had a pleasant conversation—all the while I'm thinking, "Geez, I'm talking to Daniel Ellsberg! He actually called me up"—a once-in-a-lifetime experience, but the call ended, and that was that.

Years later, in 2015, I opened a conference in Washington, DC, called "Vietnam: The Power of Protest" with a poem of mine called "Beautiful Wreckage" (www.youtube.com/watch?v=bivsYxQtmLM). The conference was like Space Cowboys of the Anti-Vietnam War Movement. Staunton Lynd was there. Julian Bond (his last public appearance before he died), Barbara Lee, Cora Weiss, David McReynolds, Ron Dellums, Tom Hayden, Susan Schnall . . . and Daniel Ellsberg.

Even before I recited my poem, Ellsberg came up to me and said, "You're the poet guy, aren't you? We talked on the telephone once." I was surprised that he remembered me.

A few months later, I received an email from Ellsberg. He had read a collection of my poems called *The Bodies Beneath the Table*, and he said, "Terrific book of poetry. I love it! I was thinking I'd mention to you the ones I particularly liked, and then as I leaf through it again just now, I find that it's nearly every one.

Right at the beginning, second page, I'm caught by 'the smell of burning leaves.' Jeez, I loved that smell. I would have thought you were too young to remember that! Your boyhood, and life, was different from mine. But somehow not that different. Your war, likewise."

He goes on to say that he's ordered four more books of mine, and closes by saying, "Love, Dan."

Two weeks later, he wrote again to say, "I've just read through *The Distance We Travel*. Lying in bed, this Saturday morning. Amazing; just amazing. So the war found its Wilfred Owen. Does that, to some small degree, redeem it? No. Of course not. It just means, I guess, that nothing is perfect, not even evil, horror, murder, chaos. Thank you, for what you write, for what you remember. Love, Dan."

From that point on, Dan and I have maintained a lively friendship by email and telephone. In 2017, he agreed to give the annual Parker History Lecture at the Haverford School, where I was still teaching. He spoke to a standing-room-only public audience for an hour and a half without notes in the evening, then the next day spoke for nearly as long to 400 students, followed by a Q/A with a smaller group for another hour, and then lunch for an even smaller group of kids, at which he continued to answer questions. It would have been a marathon performance for any speaker, and this one happened to be 86.

When he was writing *The Doomsday Machine*, he would send me chapters, soliciting my comments. I'm sure he sent this material to dozens of others as well. Nevertheless, Holy Cow! In 2021, the University of Massachusetts historian Christian Appy invited me to participate in a Zoom conference called "Truth, Dissent, and the Legacy of Daniel Ellsberg." I thanked him for asking me, but said that I don't do Zoom because it reminds me too much of Max Headroom, Blank Reg, Bigtime Television, and 20 Minutes into the Future. About 20 minutes later, Dan called and said he'd really like me to participate. That settled that, Max Headroom or not.

Just last December 2022, I was on a Zoom panel with Dan dealing with the Vietnam War-era anti-war

movement as part of the Feinberg Series at UMass-Amherst.

All of this is a wonder to me. It must be what a rookie hockey player feels like when he finds himself on a line with Gordie Howe. Daniel Ellsberg is a giant. A major figure in American history. And a true hero of mine ever since I was 22 years old. That he has made time and space for me in his life speaks to his great heart and generosity of spirit.

The last time he called, to talk about an interview I'd done on the war for *Current Affairs* (www.currentaffairs.org/2023/01/what-americans-still-dont-know-about-the-vietnam-war), he put his wife Patricia on as well, another first. I'd never spoken with her before. This was maybe a month ago, in 2023.

And then I got his email saying that he has pancreatic cancer, and there's no point in trying to treat it because the result is inevitable. I certainly can't say I'm surprised: The man turns 92 in April. As he wrote, "I feel lucky and grateful that I've had a wonderful life far beyond the proverbial three-score years and ten. I feel the very same about having a few months more to enjoy life with my wife and family—[but then goes on to say]—and in which to continue to pursue the urgent goal of working with others to avert nuclear war in Ukraine or Taiwan (or anywhere else)."

Ellsberg then goes on for seven more paragraphs—another full page—to argue the dangers of nuclear holocaust and what we all need to be doing to try to prevent it. "Since my diagnosis," he writes, "I've done several interviews and webinars on Ukraine, nuclear weapons, and first amendment issues, and I have more scheduled."

This man is terminally ill, facing the end of his life, and yet he is still fully engaged in working for peace and justice, human dignity and decency, and sanity among nations. Incredible.

There will, of course, be a massive worldwide outpouring of appreciation and admiration for Daniel Ellsberg. Already, news of his pancreatic cancer and impending departure from our midst has been reported in hundreds of media outlets from print newspapers like the *San Diego Union-Tribune* and the *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix* to magazines like *U.S. News & World Report* to websites like *Common Dreams* and *The Hindu* and *Alarabiya News* to *Reuters*, *Agence France-Presse*, *AP*, *NPR*, and *PBS*, and even off-beat niche sources like *California Healthline*.

I am fully aware that my place in Ellsberg's life is very small. But Dan's place in my life has been monumental. Without the *Pentagon Papers*, I surely would have lived a very different life than the one I've actually had.

I might have gone on believing in American Exceptionalism. I might have gone on thinking that any country that opposed the United States of America was wrongheaded, deluded, and evil. I might have taken the job I was offered as Project Safety Analysis Coordinator for a nuclear power plant being built by the Bechtel Corporation (employer of Caspar Weinberger and George Shultz among other luminaries).

So thank you, Dan, for being who you are and what you've meant to me and so many, many others. The world is a better place because you were in it, and will be an emptier place once you are gone. I love you. Farewell.



W. D. EHRHART IS A LONG-TIME VVAW MEMBER, POET, AND AUTHOR.

Ninth Solidarity Tour to Vietnam by Veterans of the American War

NADYA WILLIAMS

Countless veterans of the Vietnam war have returned to that country to heal and make amends. Since 2012, Veterans For Peace (VFP) has mounted annual trips back with a specific purpose—a donation of at least \$1,000 from each tour participant to benefit well-established humanitarian organizations there. The collective funds are divided up at the end of the two-week trip by tour members (vets, spouses, and ordinary citizens) to be dispersed to aid: Agent Orange/Dioxin victims, a UXO (unexploded ordnance) removal project, disabled people, orphanages, etc. All of the recipient organizations are visited during the length of the tour. The pandemic halted the vets'

delegations from 2019 through 2022, but this October 14th to 29th will see the first revival and the resumption of annual trips. Tour leaders are all officers of the Hoa Binh (Peace) Chapter 160 of VFP—all American vets who have been living full-time in Vietnam for many years. Group sizes have varied from 8 to 40—the largest being the 50th Commemoration of the March 16, 1968, My Lai Massacre (group in photo). The October 2023 group will likely be around 12 to 15. Solidarity work did not stop with the pandemic. Funding in the many thousands of dollars has gone to a Blind Center (for farmers who were blinded by UXOs), annual scholarships to poor girls and young

women (after 2020, specifically given to those who lost one or both parents to COVID), a playground (named after an American Veteran who devoted his life to Vietnam), a bridge for a farming community, a food program during the height of the pandemic, many hundreds of bicycles (for rural children to get to school), and more. VFP 160 works as well with the newly-built VVAW libraries to educate the children about the dangers of unexploded ordnance—especially cluster munitions. The itinerary includes nice aspects of Vietnamese culture, natural beauty, and the resilience of the people to build back. The tours have produced some

excellent films, and it is worthwhile to put this in your Search Box: www.youtube.com/watch?v=edO-lSiJbCY It is a unique 36-minute film made of the March 2018 tour by the Film Department of the Army of Vietnam—all in English, with an American sound track—quite remarkable! All tour information can be found at: www.vfp160.org



NADYA WILLIAMS IS A 20-YEAR ASSOCIATE MEMBER OF VETERANS FOR PEACE AND DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, SAN FRANCISCO CHAPTER 69; AND BOARD MEMBER, VFP VIETNAM CH. 160 [WWW.VFP160.ORG](http://www.vfp160.org)



Please Come to Chicago: Notes on the 2023 Veteran Art Triennial & Summit

WALTER NYGARD

I have to admit, I was skeptical when Frontline Paper accepted an invitation to do a one-hour-and-a-half papermaking workshop at the four-day Triennial. A 787-mile ride with a vanload of gear to an unpaid gig? Fortunately, over the eleven-plus years we've been in operation, we've gotten good at road trips. Even at the end of winter, Chicago sounded good. Formerly known as Combat Paper, N.J., we'd renamed Frontline Arts to take over what was then the New Jersey Printmaking Center. Frontline Paper continued the veterans' project of deconstructing US military uniforms, reclaiming them as paper, and using that paper to communicate our stories through art. So in the dark morning hours of March 15th, Ron Erickson, James Teichman, and I set out for the Windy City. Three former US Marines bound for SURVIVING THE LONG WARS

(STLW), the trilogy of art exhibits that would frame and define the Veterans Art Triennial & Summit. The Summit opened at the Hyde Park Art Center on Chicago's South Side. Welcome and Grounding Ceremonies were followed by two full days of diverse workshops, many focused on Black, Indigenous, and Middle Eastern studies. Humanities and community health discussions, monoprint, quilting, writing, and our papermaking workshop were held in well-equipped studios, performance spaces, and meeting rooms. Upstairs, their gallery is home to "Unlikely Entanglements," the first of the three exhibits collectively known as STLW. Through the American Indians Wars and the Global War on Terror, the exhibits "explore the multiple overlapping histories that shape our understanding of warfare, as well as the alternative visions of



Walter Nygard.

peace, healing and justice generated by diverse communities impacted by war." The second exhibit, "Residues and Rebellions," is at the Newberry Library. Located on the Near Northside, the Newberry is a stately and world-famous research library dating from 1893. The exhibit seemed to parallel the mission of the Library, offering moments in our history from 19th-century American Indian art to poignant modern drawings by an incarcerated veteran artist. With "Reckon and Reimagine," the third installment of STLW, a denouement is achieved in work ranging from exquisite dignity to damning indictment. The wonderful ink drawings of Indian men and women on US Cavalry recruitment paper contrast starkly with burnt canvas images, laser-cut brass plaques, and haunting watercolors of Iraqi people, men, women, and many, many children who died in US bombings. "Reckon and Reimagine" is at the Chicago Cultural Center, where Ron,

James, and I spent the last two days of the Summit. In the magnificent Grand Army of the Republic Room, we tabled for Frontline Paper, made new friends, and rekindled some older ones. The Summit was ending, and it was time for us to head back to Jersey. The exhibits are still available, through May, June, and July. The three of us were reenergized and inspired by the Triennial and the important art. An experience of seeing art in any setting or situation can be—should be—transformative. The work we saw is alive right now. Implications and messages come point blank. They are there for us and will be in the future when history notes how well we listened.



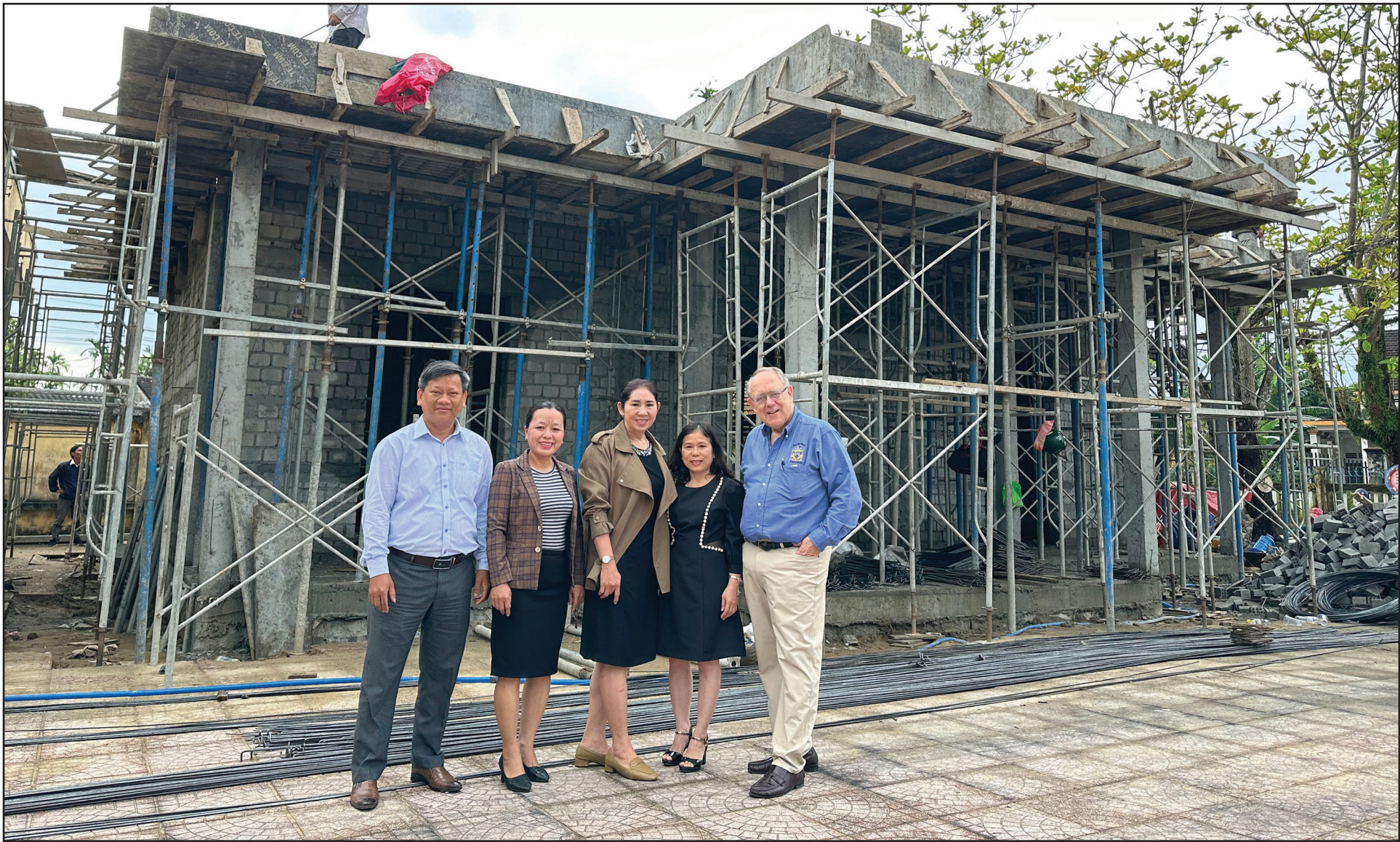
WALTER NYGARD WAS BORN IN PORTLAND, OREGON, USMC, VIETNAM, OKINAWA, PHILIPPINES, 1969-70, THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO, GRAD, ENGLISH/ART. CURRENTLY STUDIO MANAGER, FRONTLINE PAPER, BRANCHBURG, NJ.



VVAW Library Project Updates



Ms. Van, Headmaster, Hanh Trung School and Chuck Theusch, Founder/CEO Library of Vietnam Library Project at groundbreaking of VVAW's Small Dream Library, January 7, 2023, Nghia An District, Quang Ngai Province, Vietnam.



Mr. Long, Hanh Trung Teacher Ms. Tu, Headmaster Ms. Van, Khoi, and Chuck at Small Dream construction site, March 2, 2023.



Khoi & Ms. Suong, Vice-Headmaster, at the VVAW Library at Pho Vinh High School, Pho Vinh Village, Duc Pho District, Quang Ngai, Vietnam, March 2, 2023.



Chuck and Ms. Suong's computer kids looking at the VVAW donated computers in the VVAW Library, Pho Vinh Village, Duc Pho District, Quang Ngai Province, March 1, 2023.



THE VETERAN

SECTION B

Volume 53, Number 1

Spring 2023

Passing Time: Memoir of a Vietnam Veteran Against the War

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Passing Time: Memoir of a Vietnam Veteran Against the War
by **W.D. Ehrhart**
(McFarland; Revised edition, 2022)

Right up front: I am a W.D. Ehrhart fan, although I know him as Bill. About 36 years ago, after reading his incredible book *Vietnam-Perkasie*, I attended a conference at Gettysburg College specifically because he was scheduled to be there, and we met and have been friends ever since. Somewhere, back in the mists of time when I was scheduled to be in the Philadelphia area on business, Bill and his wife Anne invited me to dinner at their home. We have run into each other many times since, at various anti-war events. I have often described Bill Ehrhart as "the most articulate of all the Vietnam veteran writers."

Originally published in 1986 as *Marking Time*, the current edition of *Passing Time* is a landmark piece of work. McFarland & Company has purchased the rights and re-issued *Vietnam-Perkasie* and *Busted*, both memoirs by Ehrhart, and now they have re-published *Passing Time*, a third memoir. Also, it must be noted that in 2019, they published *Thank You For Your Service: Collected Poems*, a magnificent anthology of Bill's life's work as a poet. I have read each and every one.

So, now it is time to write a review of *Passing Time*, and I am experiencing something akin to being speechless. *Passing Time* is an incredibly powerful book, a collection of random memories all covered in a thick, bitter sauce of recollections of the author's experiences in Vietnam. These are mostly stories of Ehrhart's life after returning from the war, and most of its readers will recognize turbulent feelings from their own past. This is, essentially, the crazy, mixed-up, poignant memories from an earlier time, the last few years of America's war in Vietnam as seen from the perspective of a young, scarred, confused Marine sergeant with a Purple Heart and other "decorations" as he seeks to adapt the person he has become to a changing, often foreign America. He tries to have a long-term relationship with an assortment of girls, he goes to college (although his book doesn't really say he attends

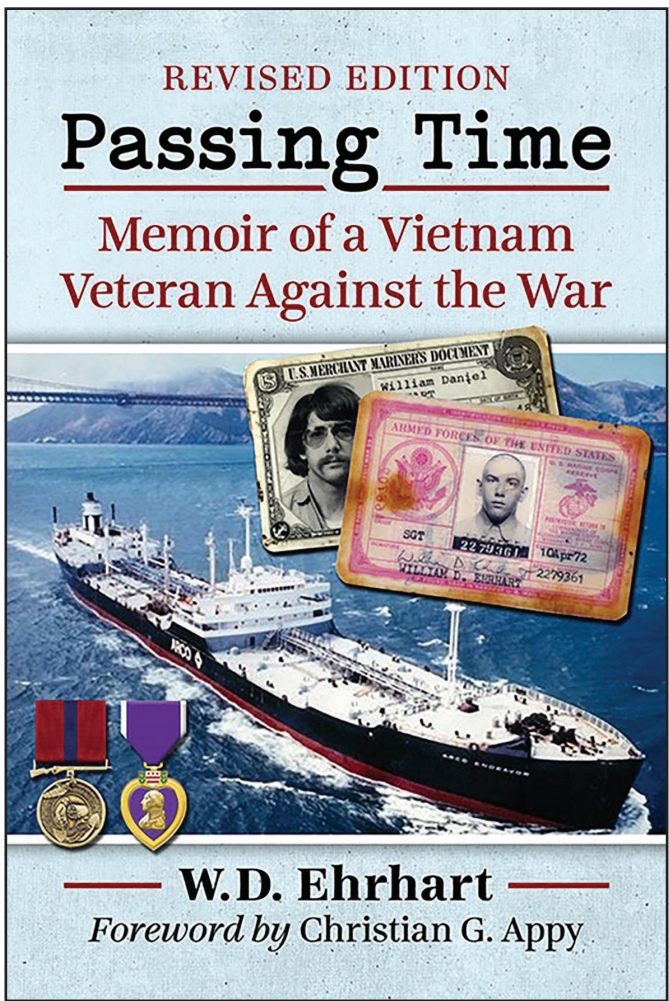
classes), he takes part in an anti-war protest, he travels across the US and Canada, he drinks too much and gets high at every opportunity, and remarkably, he joins the college's water ballet team! Ehrhart spent the summer of 1969 working as a seaman aboard a small Irish freighter traveling between Liverpool and Dublin, but "that lazy, gentle summer finally ended and I went back to crazy America and started college. And America was indeed crazy; utterly stark raving mad—completely bonkers. Year after year, I kept thinking that it had to let up sometime, but it never did. Not Once. It only got worse." The sauce of Vietnam memories dripped over him like gravy over mashed potatoes. After attaining a college degree, he got a job aboard the SS Atlantic Endeavor, a giant oil tanker sailing the western coast of the US and Canada. That's where he met Roger, who listened to Ehrhart rave about the war for a while, then asked, "You really are bitter, aren't you?"

"Bitter." Ehrhart replied. "Angry. A whole lot of things. I think too much, that's all."

Throughout the book, Bill Ehrhart bounces like a ping pong ball in a hurricane, from Vietnam to a fascination with the sea, from college classrooms to dormitory rooms with feminine company, and to the homes of friends, former soldiers, girlfriends, or students, always searching for a peace that his memories of the war will never allow. Sound familiar?

On page 95, he tells us: "God almighty, I'd only tried to do my duty as my duty had been taught to me by parents, teachers, and elders of every stripe. I had done what my nation had asked of me. How much longer would I have to go on paying for it? There were times in the dead of night, alone with my thoughts and nightmares, when I almost wished that nameless, faceless NVA rocketeer who'd splattered me with steel slivers in Hue City had been a better shot. He couldn't have missed my head by more than a foot, perhaps less, we'd calculated later. How many times have those few inches come back to taunt me?"

"Not that anyone at Swarthmore (the college he attended) ever realized the turmoil that was tearing at me. The great myth of war holds that combat is the ultimate test of manhood, and



that once a man has been to war he has been initiated into the realm of greater wisdom. He has been to the mountain and stared into the great abyss beyond, and having done so, the ordinary concerns of mortal beings can never again hold real importance or significance, dwarfed as they are by the brilliant clarity of the struggle between life and death."

"And in spite of my classmates' passionate opposition to the war in Vietnam, most if not all of them had bought into the myth as readily as any blue-collar kid from South Boston."

On page 108, Ehrhart tells the Swarthmore Rotary Club: "How many more Americans must die to justify the thousands that have already died? How many more billions of dollars that could have been spent for the needs of Americans will go up in useless smoke and flame in Vietnam? There comes a time when American patriots must urge peace instead of war. Henry David Thoreau went to jail rather than pay taxes to support the American war in Mexico. Yet today Thoreau is revered and respected. Who will be the heroes of the Vietnam War? Men like me who fought there, or those who argue for an end to further killing and senseless destruction? Those who answer every broken illusion with still more violence, or those who recognize that there are better places and better circumstances in which to defend the cause of freedom? When the most powerful nation on earth ceaselessly pounds and pummels a nation of rice farmers and fishermen, where is the honor? Why are we so determined to save the Vietnamese, who so clearly do not want or understand our help? Worst of all, the war in Vietnam is tearing our own country apart. The demonstrations and protests grow in number, size, and anger by the week, and the backlash response increases correspondingly—and now Americans are killing other Americans in the streets of America. It is time to stop trying to save Vietnam and begin trying to save America."

Or, on page 156: "I guess everybody that went through Vietnam came out of it differently. It's a hard thing to admit that your own government sucker-punched you. I guess a lot of guys just can't cope with it. Look at all the Vietnam veterans ending up in prison, ending up as junkies or suicides, ending up with less-than-honorable discharges. You just can't tell me that somehow my

whole generation turned out to be nothing but a bunch of fuckups. All those guys are hurtin' inside. They got burned and they don't know how to deal with it."

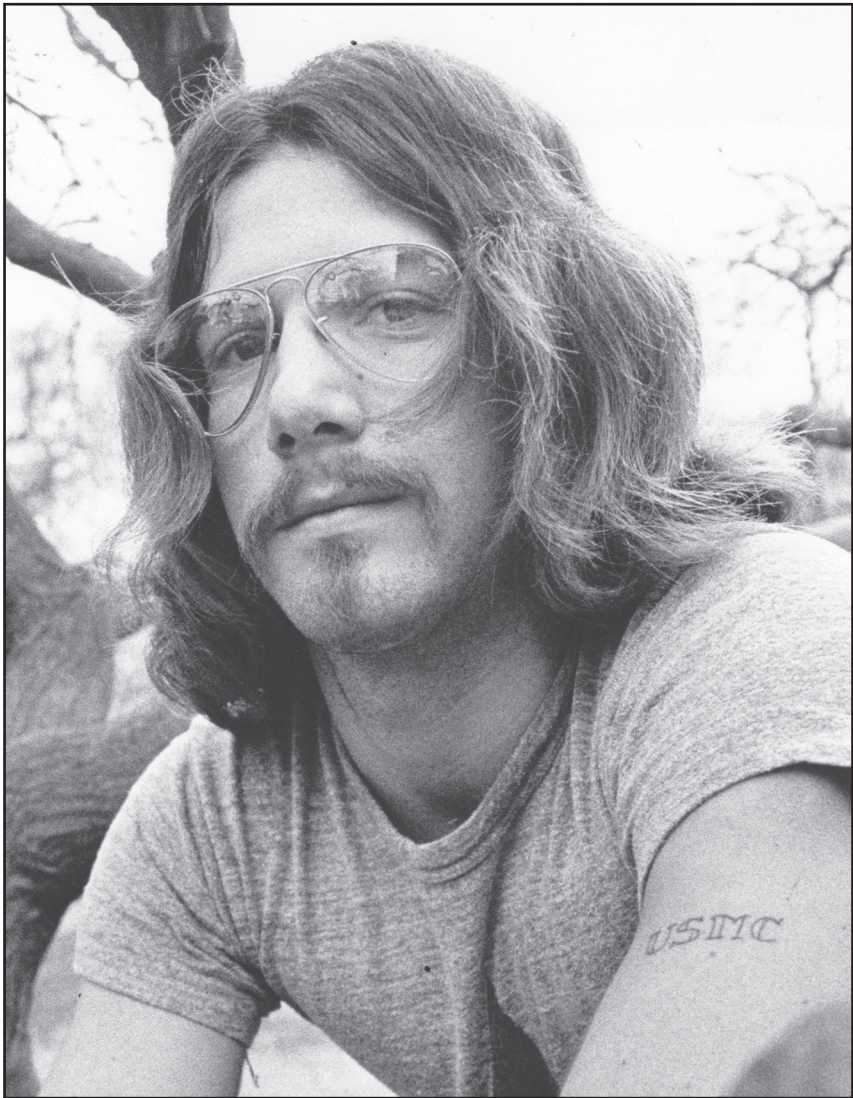
"Then," on page 188, "in late June, thanks to a man named Daniel Ellsberg, *The Pentagon Papers* found the light of day; I'd bought a paperback copy of the *New York Times* edition and begun to read."

"It had been a journey through an unholy house of horrors where all one's worst fears and darkest nightmares had suddenly become reality, hard, cold, and immutable; where all of the ugliest questions that had first arisen in the rice fields and jungles of Vietnam had suddenly been answered in the starkest and most immutable terms; where everything I had believed in for eighteen years and had desperately tried to cling to through four more years of pestilence and famine had suddenly crumbled into ashes—ashes so thick you could hardly breathe, bitter, dry, and suffocating. A mistake? Vietnam a mistake? My God, it had been a calculated, deliberate attempt to hammer the world by brute force into the shape perceived by vain, duplicitous power brokers. And the depths to which they had sunk, dragging us all down with them, were almost unfathomable. America, America, God cast his shame on thee."

This book is like being sentenced to spend the rest of your life treading water in a vast sea of shit, struggling to keep your head above water, and discovering that you are not the only one. Bill Ehrhart is there with you, and he has a raft. He welcomes you to grab ahold and ride with him a while, to paddle and kick and travel on a crazy, desperate tour of America back in the early '80s. Yes, it is worse today, but Bill Ehrhart's books are lifesavers. He thought he was just *Passing Time*, and many of us were there with him, but today a large majority of us can look back on successful careers and kids who were brought up with decent values, and grandchildren who are worth it all. *Passing Time* is a terrific book, filled to overflowing with nostalgia, regrets, and wisdom. Highly recommended!



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW. HE IS THE AUTHOR OF ... AND A HARD RAIN FELL, AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.



Bill Ehrhart, sophomore year, Swarthmore College, spring 1971.

My Road to "Spookville"

JOE MILLER

Well into my recruit training at Great Lakes, the time for job classification came around. It seemed that Navy Journalism school was not in the cards for me, since I never learned to type, and this was a prerequisite. So, the counselor says to me: Why not go for Radioman, since your radio scores were very high? I was not interested in that option.

Then, he says, how about a Communications Technician (CT)? "What does a CT do?" I asked. He read from a prepared statement that described the duties of a CT(A). I would be providing clerical support to the worldwide communications system of the Navy. This would also require a security clearance. That got my attention, with trench coats, microfilm, and funny little pills dancing in my mind. I would be part of an elite group, the insiders. Kinda silly, huh?

So, following basic training and a couple of weeks on leave, I went off to "A" school at Bainbridge, Maryland in late July 1961. The training included typing skills, working with personnel files and other documents, and basic clerical work. Not much about the secrecy aspect.

The quest for prestige and insider knowledge that motivated many of us to become CTs also led us to try for the language program. We were eligible to take the Foreign Language Aptitude Test (FLAT). On the day of the test, we filled out a "dream sheet" as to our preferences for language and place of study.

Eventually, during the final week of school, we received our orders. I found out why they called it a "dream sheet." I requested to study Russian, Polish, or German; I was assigned to study Chinese-Mandarin. I requested to study in Washington, DC; I was assigned to Monterey, California.

Well, I always wanted to see California.

After two weeks leave, I headed for California in late October. After arrival in Monterey, I reported at the Naval Postgraduate School, the site of an old hotel. This was my introduction to the "relaxed" Navy. Obvious military presence was minimal and civilian clothes seemed to be the "uniform of the day." I handed in my orders and was disappointed to learn that this place was not my actual duty station. I was to report up on the "hill," at the Presidio of Monterey, where the Army Language School was located.

When I arrived at the school, I found even more relaxation in the military presence. The only uniformed people in the barracks were those on duty. The term "barracks" doesn't fit here, at least in its usual connotation. Students were assigned to two-man rooms, each with two desks, two fairly comfortable bunks, and two six-foot lockers per student, one for uniforms and one for civilian clothes.

This was certainly another step up from recruit training. I felt a sort of culture shock. After everything learned through basic training, an assignment to a school like this can blow it all to pieces. In addition, this was an Army post; Navy personnel were in the minority. Even the Army students did not have to put up with most of the crap handed out in the "normal" post.

We were all there on orders, and it was our duty to learn one of the nearly thirty languages offered at this school. So, it seemed that the relaxation of normal military practices was meant to allow more focus on studies. Even the regular uniform inspections were somewhat farcical. Army officers knew very little about inspecting the uniforms of Navy or Marine personnel.

We were in class five days a week, six hours a day. A normal class day looked like this: reveille at 5:30 am; muster outside the barracks at 6:00 am; breakfast and room clean-up from 6 to 8:00 am; class at 8:00 am; lunch from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm; class from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. From 4:00 pm to 6:00 am the next morning, we were on our own. There were no duty assignments for students. There was no such thing as a bed check or the need for liberty passes. There were no gates, no guards, and none of the stock military base practices. On weekends, we were totally free.... of course, we were expected to study three to four hours each night. No one checked on us.

The classroom situation also reflected a relaxed military presence, though we were in uniform. Each classroom had no more than nine students, including enlisted men, officers, perhaps an officer's wife, and once in a while a mysterious civilian. All the instructors were native speakers. In my case, most of the instructors were those who left China in 1949. All in all, this was a pretty open atmosphere, very conducive to study and the development of friendships. The question of rank and privilege seldom played a role.

However, the situation did lend itself to some amusing heated competition: officer vs. enlisted; officer vs. civilian; wife vs. husband; enlisted vs. enlisted. Who had the better pronunciation? Who had the greater vocabulary? Who could write Chinese characters most like a native speaker? Invariably, enlisted personnel would be top of the class, which made for mild "confrontations" when an officer could find a reason to pull rank.

While at the school, I learned a little more about the job of a Communications Technician. The Naval Security Group (NSG), the naval communications arm of the National Security Agency (NSA), had a liaison office on school grounds. The time came for me to prepare for advancement exams, and I was allowed to study in this office. Materials were not to be removed from the room. The windows were covered over and barred. The study materials were kept in a back room with a heavy vault-like door.

Here we learned the "official" job description, the vague answer given if ever questioned about what we did. It didn't say much more than



what I was told in basic training. Still, it fed into that feeling that we were special, part of the elite, people who knew things no one else could know. We were cautioned that everyone in Monterey knew that "special" people were being trained at the language school. If there were any persistent questioners, we were to report them to the NSG office for investigation.

We were also told not to get too friendly with the instructors, for not all of them had been thoroughly checked out by the Defense Department. Rumors of "Agency" informants being planted in each class also served to heighten a sense of mistrust and paranoia.

Another factor that added to the sense of insecurity was the fact that, every so often, someone would be called out of class and informed that their security clearance did not come through. They were then immediately transferred to the so-called "regular" service. They were never given a reason as to why they were denied a clearance. We never knew who might be next.

Eventually, I spent eighteen months at the school. Though my original assignment was for a twelve-month course, the opportunity for advanced study in Chinese presented itself. I volunteered for an additional six months, realizing that this might increase my chances of actually being sent to Taiwan, where I could really use the language. This would also allow me to spend more time in Monterey, a place I was becoming quite fond of.

My time in Monterey affected my values and attitudes, as did the intensive study of the Chinese language. Monterey was an artists' community, and although Fort Ord was just across the bay, military life did not seem to belong. The overall atmosphere, mixed with the study of an "abstract" language like

Chinese, made for the development of a more thoughtful, more existential perspective on life.

By coincidence, former Green Beret Donald Duncan spent time at Fort Ord around the same period. He describes Monterey in his 1967 book *The New Legions*:

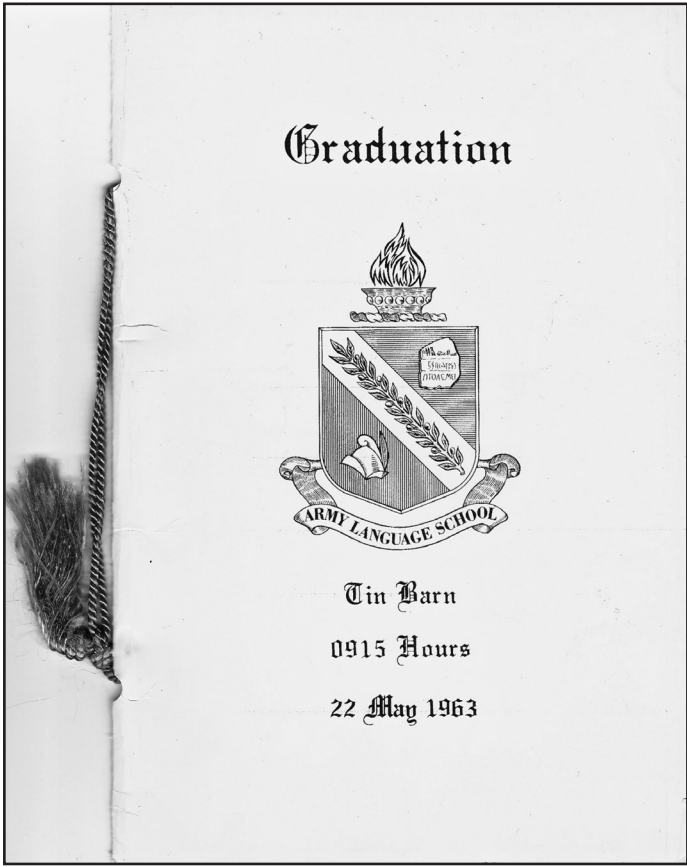
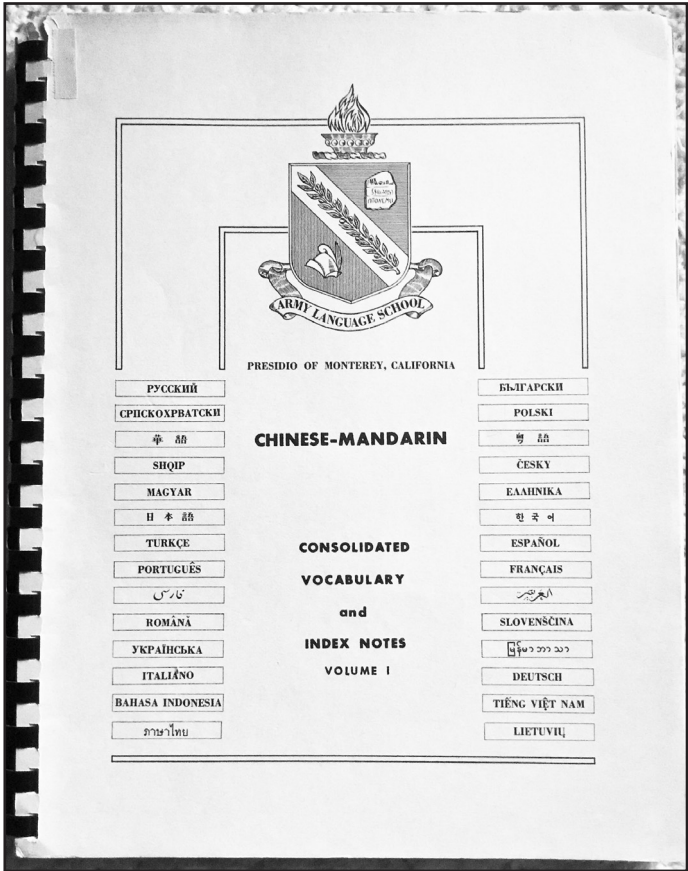
"The area has an atmosphere (despite the number of retired colonels, generals and admirals) quite different from that surrounding Southern military posts—the result, I think, of the natural beauty, the traditions of the permanent citizens, and the lack of Southern tradition, chauvinism, and prejudice. Whatever it is, the newcomer has an almost irresistible urge to create and give of himself—a very unmilitary trait—and people who stay for any length of time want to paint, write, play an instrument, or at least engage in philosophical dialogue. I found myself eventually spending more time in discussion and in reading books not connected with the Military." (p. 196)

Because of my extended study of Chinese, I got orders for duty with the Naval Security Group Detachment (NSGD) at Shulinkou, outside Taipei, Taiwan. I guess the Navy figured they had spent so much money and time training me, it would be a waste to send me to Japan or Okinawa (where many of my classmates ended up).

I graduated from the Army Language School sixty years ago, on May 22, 1963. Less than a month later, I arrived in Taiwan, on June 12th. I had now officially entered what I am calling "spookville." The next year and a half would change my life. I would become a Vietnam veteran.



JOE MILLER IS A BOARD MEMBER OF VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR.



My Young Friend An

TONY COKELY

I don't remember when we met and I don't remember a goodbye. Ours is a time I remember the least; but, I remember you and the other kids. You all reminded me of the kids from home. My girlfriend's sister had two kids, and I used to help care for them. All the neighborhood kids hung out with us.

There were fewer rules at our house. We acted younger than the neighborhood parents. Many parents were close to my age; but, they seemed to be more like my parents. Whatever the reason, our house was always full of kids. I had no younger brothers or sisters so I enjoyed the company of the kids. I enjoyed playing with them, going on walks, and just talking with them. Their perspective was innocent.

Maybe that is why I was so receptive to you and the other kids in Vietnam. My unit would set up our day position. Once we settled in, you kids would appear. It was probably like back home. Your parents told you to stay away from us and so there you were. And you were there every day and all day.

Some of the Marines would chase you off. But, you were like stray puppies looking for something to eat or just somewhere to hang out. You were surely the oldest of the pack. Likely this was because you only had one arm. I don't remember ever asking you about your arm or your age.

I thought of you as 12 or 13. I think most boys your age had been conscripted into the army on one side or the other. The minute a boy looked old enough either the ARVN would grab him up or the VC would grab him first.

Your mothers used to hide you. One time my unit was a blocking force for a sweep through a village. It was dawn as the ARVN soldiers entered the village and suddenly boys were

fleeing toward our position.

I was ordered to shoot; but, I refused. It was obviously just boys, draft dodgers, just like the boys at home except younger. The distance was far and they wanted me to use the machine gun. I don't remember anyone shooting. I wrote a letter home afterward describing that day. In my letter, I said that three were killed and two captured. I don't remember that; but, I don't remember a lot.

Maybe your arm was a birth defect rather than the result of some military action by one of the sides. Whatever the case, I liked you and you liked me. When we Marines got settled you kids would show up and hang out in front of our lines. You and your gang would look for me because you knew I would invite you in.

There must have been other Marines with other kids hanging around; but, I don't remember that. I don't know if I gave you food or gum or candy or if we just goofed with each other. I do remember there was a time when you were around every day. Maybe I was whittling toys for you kids out of wood. I did have all those knives. God, I hope I wasn't whittling toy guns for you boys.

Your gang would approach and I would pretend that I didn't see you. You would all be hollering and waving and I would keep pretending that I didn't see you. When that got old, and it never really got old for me, I would finally act like I saw you. Then I would pretend like I thought you were the enemy. Finally, I would point at you with a swagger stick I had whittled for myself.

The selection with the swagger stick indicated you could approach. I always chose you first and you would come into our position while the others continued to holler and gesture they wanted to come too.

When you got into the perimeter I would hand you my swagger stick. It was whittled to look like a long bullet; but, it more closely resembled a long skinny penis. I called it the "pecker." You would take the pecker and indicate that several of your pals could come over to where we were.

It amazes me today to think about allowing you boys around the ordnance we carried. I had the machine gun, claymore mines, hand grenades, pop flares, trip flares, ammo, and all the knives. I can't imagine how I ensured you boys didn't hurt anyone.

Everyone was not like me. When I first arrived in Vietnam, we were walking along a rice paddy where an old farmer was working his field with a hoe. The old man was leaning on his hoe and standing still and quiet while we filed past. A sergeant in front of me smashed him in the face.

The Papa San fell to the ground in the flooded paddy and didn't move or say a word. I remember thinking, "What the Fuck?" But I didn't do anything except walk past and mind my own business. I regret it; but, I was a new guy. That doesn't make me feel any better about it.

I saw that sergeant planting booby traps in the garbage we left behind when we left our daytime position.

What was he thinking and why didn't I stop him? He had to know that someone was going to go through the trash after we left. It would just as likely be a hungry kid or an old woman as it would be an enemy soldier. Does he remember what he did today? Does he have regrets? I regret I didn't stop him.

That wasn't the only time he left a booby trap behind. We killed a VC one night. We left the body on the trail and he put a grenade under the body. It was placed so the pin would trip when the body was moved. Did the

sergeant know that his actions could be considered war crimes?

I wonder now if his victim's families later set booby traps for us. Did they take revenge on one of us for that idiot's murderous jokes? I wish I had been full grown. I wish I had cold-cocked the idiot that first time.

In World War II, some men didn't try to kill the enemy. When the military discovered this they set about dehumanizing the enemy. In Vietnam, they taught us names like, "Gook" "Slope" "Slant-eye" "Dink" and "Zipper-head."

They wanted us to be better killers so they dehumanized the Vietnamese. I think they succeeded. However, all those soldiers and Marines that bought into that nonsense came home with the memories. Perhaps repressed; but, still there in dreams and nightmares!

I like the memory of our friendship, An. I must have been giving you food and gum or candy. I hope I wasn't giving you cigarettes. You used to assign one of your gang to give me a back rub. I would lie on my poncho liner and the kid would work the skin on my back between strong fingers. He would work a ripple of the skin from my waist to my neck then back down. I remember the feeling as heavenly.

I still have a gift you once gave me. I don't know why you gave it to me. I hope I gave you something more than my friendship in return. I hope you survived the war and that your life has been as good as our best day together. I won't forget you ever!



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.

WHAT WE CAN AND CAN'T AFFORD

Essays on Vietnam, Patriotism and American Life



W.D. Ehrhart

W. D. Ehrhart's fourth collection of essays, *What We Can and Can't Afford: Essays on Vietnam, Patriotism, and American Life*, is forthcoming later in 2023 from McFarland & Company, Inc. Pictured are Mike Gillen, Frank Corcoran, Bill Ehrhart, and John Grant of Philadelphia's Thompson Bradley VFP Chapter #31 sitting on the "Smedley Butler Bench" on the campus of the Haverford School for Boys.

I Am the Wall

I stand here
week after week
day after day
hour after hour
and on
and on
the young came to me
I stood fast while
the names on me were traced
traced by the weeping
a name discovered
found among the tears
touched by the wailing
still I stand silent
the years pass by
the once-young come again
and again
and then come not at all.
I mark the passage of lines
not the passage of time.
They think I do not live
but I whisper a warning.
I am the wall.

—Hurf Sheldon

America and Vietnam, 1954 to 1963: The Road to War

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

America and Vietnam, 1954 to 1963: The Road to War
by Michael M. Walker, Col., USMC (RET.)
(McFarland & Company, Inc., 2022)

America and Vietnam is a curious book. It isn't a thick book, but it seems heavy for its size. The only introduction to the author is found on the rear cover, where it states that Colonel Walker, (Retired), "served in the Marine Corps for 26 years as an infantry and intelligence officer to include three tours in the Pacific—East Asian region, one in Europe, and two in Southwest Asia. He lives in Meridian, Idaho."

The advertising copy on the back cover, intended to lure the reader, states that in this book, "Established narratives of key events are given critical reappraisal and new light is shed on neglected factors." Well, yes, and no. The history of Vietnam's government and leadership during the targeted years seems to be offered in this book, with a wide and varied assortment of Vietnamese names, and even more abundant presentation of acronyms. However, established narratives of key events have previously been well documented, notably in *Why Vietnam? Prelude to America's Albatross* (University of California Press, 1980) by Archimedes L.A. Patti, an American who negotiated directly with Ho Chi Minh at the end of World War II.

Reading Colonel Walker's book, the reader is never able to forget that the author was a career Marine officer, and, although it is never stated in his book, probably a Vietnam War veteran. There are two pages of acronyms, and I would advise a reader to attach a sticky note so it protrudes from this collection, as you will want to refer to it often. I understand that the use of acronyms is considered a trait of America's military. Either Colonel Walker fails to understand that we civilians are not nearly so adept at this form of communication, or he has written his book for an audience of military "lifers," and is somewhat contemptuous of anyone else. If that's the case, I wonder why he submitted his book to this newspaper hoping

for a review. The story is told in a rather unusual fashion. Part I describes the path to war, and Part II, the combatants. Two consecutive chapters offer "Who Were the Viet Cong," parts I and II. Part III is "What About Laos," and it was here that I began to have real trouble with the Colonel's telling of the story. Part IV is "How the War Went and the Fall of Diem (1959–1963).

By coincidence, the day before I sat down to write this piece, the Postal Service delivered a book, *A Great Place to Have a War: America in Laos and the Birth of a Military CIA*, by Joshua Kurlantzick (Simon & Schuster, 2016). I opened it to a few key points and found it very accessible. It pretty much goes along with the stories told in *The Politics of Heroin: CIA Complicity in the Global Drug Trade* by Albert W. McCoy and Cathleen B. Read (Harper & Row, 1972), and *Looking for Trouble* by Leslie Cockburn, (Doubleday, 1998).

Unfortunately, Colonel Walker's book barely mentions the drug trade in the "Golden Triangle" of Laos, Thailand, and Burma. On page 30 he introduces the reader to the Binh Xuyen, a "state-sanctioned organized crime cartel" and political organization that kept control over the "normal criminal activities" in 1954 Saigon, including opium, and on page 217, he describes the troubling relationship between the CIA and the Laotian indigenous people, the Hmong. "The Hmong's main source of cash came from opium," which was "scandalous to the prim Americans, cultivating, possessing, selling, and using opium was legal in the Kingdom" (Laos). "What would the Americans have done had they known of the Indochinese-Corsican Mafia Opium-Heroin network?" the Colonel asks. "Bonds between the Hmong and Americans formed in the mid-1950s" the Colonel tells us, but he only tells us about military operations and cooperations, completely ignoring the vast and well-documented history of the Americans' participation in the hugely profitable drug trade flowing through Laos throughout the war years. He mentions Hmong leader Vang Pao only once, on page 222, while McCoy mentions him on 25

pages, and makes it clear that Vang Pao was partnered with the CIA in expanding the opium/heroin trade to the worldwide marketplace, with emphasis upon distribution to the US, and to US soldiers in Vietnam. Pardon me, but I have read a great deal about this element of the Vietnam story, and I believe one large factor that led to carrying on America's Vietnam involvement for seven years after the Tet offensive was the totally bogus insistence from the CIA in Southeast Asia that the war was going well, while those very same agents were making big, big money from the drug trade and didn't want to give it up. The Corsican Mafia had a close relationship with the CIA, and probably still does. The CIA maintained a factory in the Laotian village of Long Thien that processed raw opium from Burma, northern Thailand, and Laos, and made it ready for shipment and sale to world-wide markets. In 1967 and 1968, the five dirt runways at the CIA base in Long Thien were the busiest airport in the world! Flights from Long Thien were welcomed at Tan Son Nhut, where they were not inspected by Vietnamese customs, supposedly so long as Nguyen Cao Ky got a percentage of the profits. When President Kennedy was inaugurated in 1961, high-ranking CIA official Richard Bissell politely informed the new President that "the CIA was a secret state of its own," and the Agency has grown and prospered as a completely independent fourth branch of government, subject to only the most minimal of checks and balances to this day. Kennedy struggled to control and even phase out the Agency until his death in 1963. Colonel Walker's book fails to mention all of this well-documented history, and so his story can only be viewed as deeply flawed.

On the next to last page of text, Colonel Walker states that after the assassination of South Vietnam's President Diem and his brother early in November of 1963, "It all ended terribly. The Harriman team ran the American policy on Vietnam almost in its entirety and mucked it up." In Vietnam, after the coup, the new government was supposedly headed by former Vice-President Nguyen Ngoc Tho, but the real leader was

General Duong Van Minh, known as "Big Minh." The next few months were chaotic. A number of setbacks in early 1964 were blamed upon General Minh's fledgling government, and he was overthrown by General Nguyen Khanh, who was himself overthrown a week later. Khanh regained power within days, but seven more coups in the next twelve months allowed the CIA and military to control the war. Of course, this political turmoil was not in the best interests of the Vietnamese people, but the US took full advantage of the chaotic environment to expand its presence, and to introduce combat troops and intensify the air war. (Diem was assassinated on November 4th, 1963, and JFK on the 22nd.)

Pardon me, but I found that the entire tone of Colonel Walker's book felt like a history drawn from official military textbooks and interviews with top US officials, with perhaps some noteworthy inputs from the South Vietnamese personalities involved. There is virtually no input from the North Vietnamese, nor ranking Viet Cong. All of Colonel Walker's years in the Marine Corps with its "Semper Parati" attitude appear to have left the good Colonel with a tunnel vision view of a war that cost somewhere between 3½ and 5 million dead, and hundreds of thousands if not additional millions maimed, scarred, poisoned, and suffering for the rest of their lives. Colonel Walker seems to imply that, oops! A few little mistakes cost the US the victory. Our military leadership is not to be blamed. I highly recommend the Vietnam histories by Stanley Karnow, John Prados, Michael Maclear, Frances Fitzgerald, Marilyn Young, or Neil Sheehan. Colonel Walker's book is a lame attempt at revisionist history by a career military officer who can't see past the tip of his swagger stick. He deserves to be called "lifer."



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF TWO CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED BOOKS ABOUT VIETNAM, ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

If You Ain't Cheatin', You Ain't Tryin'

JOHN ZUTZ (REVIEWER)

If You Ain't Cheatin', You Ain't Tryin'
by Joy Damiani
(Words & Music, 2022)

Once the author informs the reader that the title of the book was passed on to her by a friendly NCO, and is the main lesson she learned in the Army, it becomes apparent that this will not be a story about "Being All You Can Be." In fact the manuscript could be used for counter-recruiting since it exposes many of the lies built into military service.

As she neared High School graduation she rebelled against her parents and landed in a reform school. Later she was caught by the poverty draft, baited with the promise of money for college. Her five-year enlistment was caused by a lying, cheating recruiter. After the five, she was stop-lossed when the Army cheated by extending her enlistment beyond the contract length (actually this was a double cheat by the Army).

It seems that most every interaction between enlistment and ETS was cheating of one sort or another. And of course, she applied herself and cheated the Army as much as she could. Occasionally she even managed to hold the high ground, or

at least the contest ended in a draw. But her actions didn't come close to repaying the Army for its' sins.

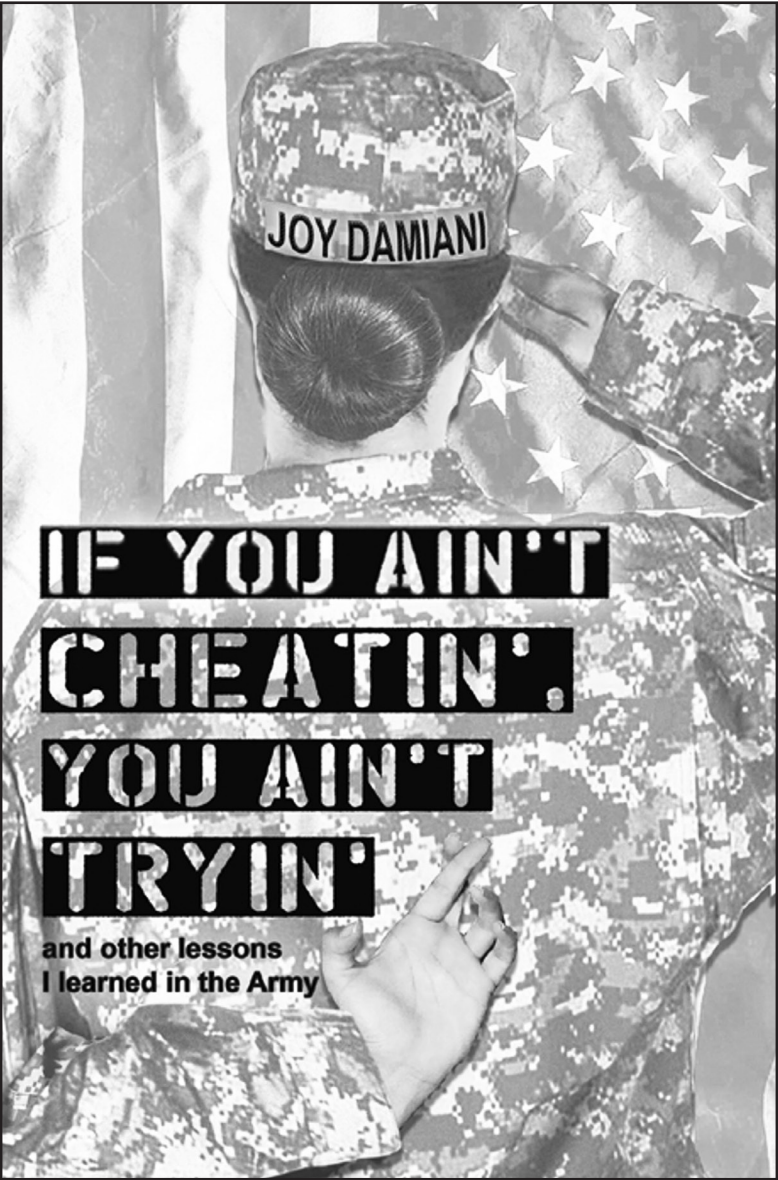
Her story exposes many of the shortcomings of the post 9/11 army. It's a bit kinder, and a bit gentler, but there are many more traps, and certainly many more potholes.

As a Vietnam vet I can relate to the differences in our service. In my time it was the Army way or else. No questions allowed. Ms. Damiani had a chance to question the directives, after which, according to the story, they would lie to get her acquiescence. Then she'd do whatever they asked semi-willingly.

Full disclosure: I have met the author in another aspect of her artistic ability—music. She is multi-talented and I recommend you search for her songs. The truth comes out in her music and her music is much more hard hitting than her book. If you like Jim Wachtendonk, you'll like Joy Damiani.



JOHN ZUTZ IS A MILWAUKEE VVAW MEMBER.



MASH Doctor in Vietnam

STEVE KRUG (REVIEWER)

MASH Doctor in Vietnam: A Memoir of the War and After
by **Reuel S. Long, M.D.**
(McFarland & Co, 2022)

"No group questioned the war more than the doctors and nurses who had to care for the casualties. I could not imagine any mission in Vietnam that was worth the cost being paid by thousands of young men"-Reuel Long

The book mostly covers the memories of Dr. Long and, in part, the recollections of one of Dr. Long's war patients, Jim Dehlin. While a considerable part of the book is about Dr. Long's life in general, I'd like to concentrate on the part of the book that deals with the American war in Vietnam.

Dr. Long was an anesthesiologist in a MASH unit. He describes, in grueling detail, the wounded and dying, the long hours of surgery, and the human costs of it all. How does a Mash doctor care for their patients without becoming numbed by the day-in and day-out tedium and terror? Dr. Long talks about a song called "We Like it Here" (we like it here, we like it here, you bet your ass we like it here) sung by doctors and nurses when things got really bad. He also talks about writing to Nixon and others asking them "Why?" He queried "...why young Americans should lose their lives and limbs and suffer

unspeakable mutilation to determine how such primitive people should live and be governed?" And, in a defining moment of the book, he connects with a patient, Jim Dehlin, who has lost his legs, but happens to live near Dr. Long back in Michigan. Dr. Long provides Dehlin with a tape recorder and later sends the tape, with a note explaining how it came to be, to Dehlin's family.

The book has more on their relationship later, but back in Vietnam: "...I inquired of the doctor I was reliving 'what do you have down there?' He answered 'frag wound to the head'. I asked if there was a medevac on the way and was told there was no point in a medevac. He suggested that I take a look for myself, so I made my way to the end of the Quonset hut to check the guy out. The patient's breathing was somewhat labored and displayed some stridor (noisy breathing). There was a small entrance wound to one temple and no exit wound. With my thumbs, I pulled open both eyelids, only to observe two unreactive, completely dilated pupils. There was no need to risk a helicopter pilot's life to move him. Somebody back home didn't know how devastated they were going to feel. Back in the States, Richard Nixon was preoccupied with the White House wedding of his daughter, Tricia and was more concerned about getting re-elected than keeping his promise to end the war. Nixon was laughing

and dancing and celebrating while this young man was lying on a stretcher on the other side of the planet, brain dead but still breathing." The man died later.


Later in the book Dr. Long talked about Jane Fonda's visit to North Vietnam as "Despicable". At least Fonda apologized for doing and saying what she did, when did Nixon and the other liars who promoted the war ever do so?

Years after the war Dr. Long and Jim Dehlin meet up and the book shifts to Dehlin telling his story. After having lost his legs he was in a hospital ward where the nurses had to come through twice a day to change dressings. The cries of pain would get closer as his turn approached and after his turn, he listened as the nurses continued through the ward. "We never blamed the medical crew for what we went through....during that painful period I wanted every politician, every advisor, every person who had a part in the decision that involved all of us in Vietnam, to sit with me and watch what I was watching and hear what I had to hear during all those dressing changes. What if some of their kids were getting those dressing changes?" Dehlin goes on to participate in Dewey Canyon III.

In his closing thoughts Dr. Long talks about French Colonial rule and how after the second world war the

US sided with the French to reimpose their control of Vietnam (reviewers note: one of the first protests of our involvement came from US Merchant Mariners who objected to ferrying French troops back into Vietnam on US-flagged ships). He talks about the war as a "profound mistake" and how the press failed its job in alerting us to the lies that got us into the war. He also blames the educational system for "failure to teach history and examine our mistakes," a potent comment given the present conservative push to eliminate any teaching that makes the student feel bad about our history. Dr. Long also mentions how government benefits are contributing to the decline of the republic and a somewhat confusing call to serve and contribute as he and Jim Dehlin did. Dr. Long and Jim Dehlin do an excellent job of detailing how corrupt and wrong the war was. Why ask others to join up to participate in other wars possibly based on lies? Isn't this contrary to honoring the warrior but not the war?

The book ends with a discussion of the faults of the M-16 rifle and of the military-industrial complex failure to deal with the problems.



STEVE KRUG IS A RETIRED MERCHANT MARINE CAPTAIN, WAS A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR DURING THE AMERICAN WAR IN VIETNAM AND IS A VVAW MEMBER.

What We Teach

ALAN DONOHUE

This is a suggestion as to what might replace what is currently being taught in American high schools regarding the lead up to the Korean war. This story should be added to the list of omissions and corrections that include the genocide of Native Americans, slavery, and exploitation of Africans, (often referenced in discussions as Critical Race Theory), including facts like both Washington and Jefferson owned slaves. US foreign policy, in general, should be viewed from the Spanish-American war to the present; but what the US did in Korea starting immediately at the end of WWII has an echo today in Ukraine.

First, a little background on Korea's history before US troops landed there on September 8, 1945. The Japanese government invaded Korea and ended the 500-year-old Yi, or Chosen dynasty, in 1905. That same year the Taft-Katsura Memorandum was signed in which Japan's hegemony over Korea was recognized by the US in return for Japan's pledge not to interfere with America's control of the Philippines or Hawaii. Japan's occupation was hated. So when a pro-independence rally was called, on March 1, 1919, two million turned out.

Repression followed. Three hundred thousand were arrested and 50,000 were sent to prison. The Colonial land policy had forced many peasants off the land and even as rice exports rose by a factor of 8, from 1912 to 1935, rice consumption for most Koreans fell by over 35%. Wages in 1935 were 50% lower than in 1927, and the work day had increased from 12 to 16 hours. To enforce Japan's rule, the police force had increased from 6,200 in 1910, to 20,800 in 1922 and then to 60,000 in 1941. This police force was used to break up labor strikes and independence rallies, but also to enforce the public ban on the use of the Korean language. Depending on the year 40-50% of the centralized colonial police were Korean.

After Japan's surrender and the war's end on August 15, 1945, there was a massive surge in the Korean struggle for independence. At that time there were over 30,000 Koreans in jail, most of them political prisoners. An anti-Japanese activist, who had spent 3 years in prison, Yo Un-hyong, and others established the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence (CPKI). By the end of August 1945, 145 branches were functioning as basic units of

government all over Korea, except in four cities where the Japanese military ruled.

On September 6, 1945, activists from the CPKI met in Seoul and established the Korean People's Republic. Unfortunately, the hope for an independent and more democratic Korea was short-lived. The wealthy landowners and businessmen who had profited under the occupation received the backing of the US military when troops landed on September 8, 1945. On September 16, these collaborators formed the Korean Democratic Party. They, however, were tainted by their Japanese connections. But Syngman Rhee, who came to the US after the repression of 1919, and claimed to be a true nationalist, returned to Korea on Gen. MacArthur's plan October 16, 1945, and four days later was denounced by both the Soviet Union and the KPR.

The US Army Military Gov. in Korea was not a neutral actor. That Fall of 1945 it banned a KPR publication, *The Traitors And The Patriots*. In December it banned strikes, and in January 1946 the activities of the KPR were declared illegal. During this time, Rhee's US-backed party attacked the People's Committees

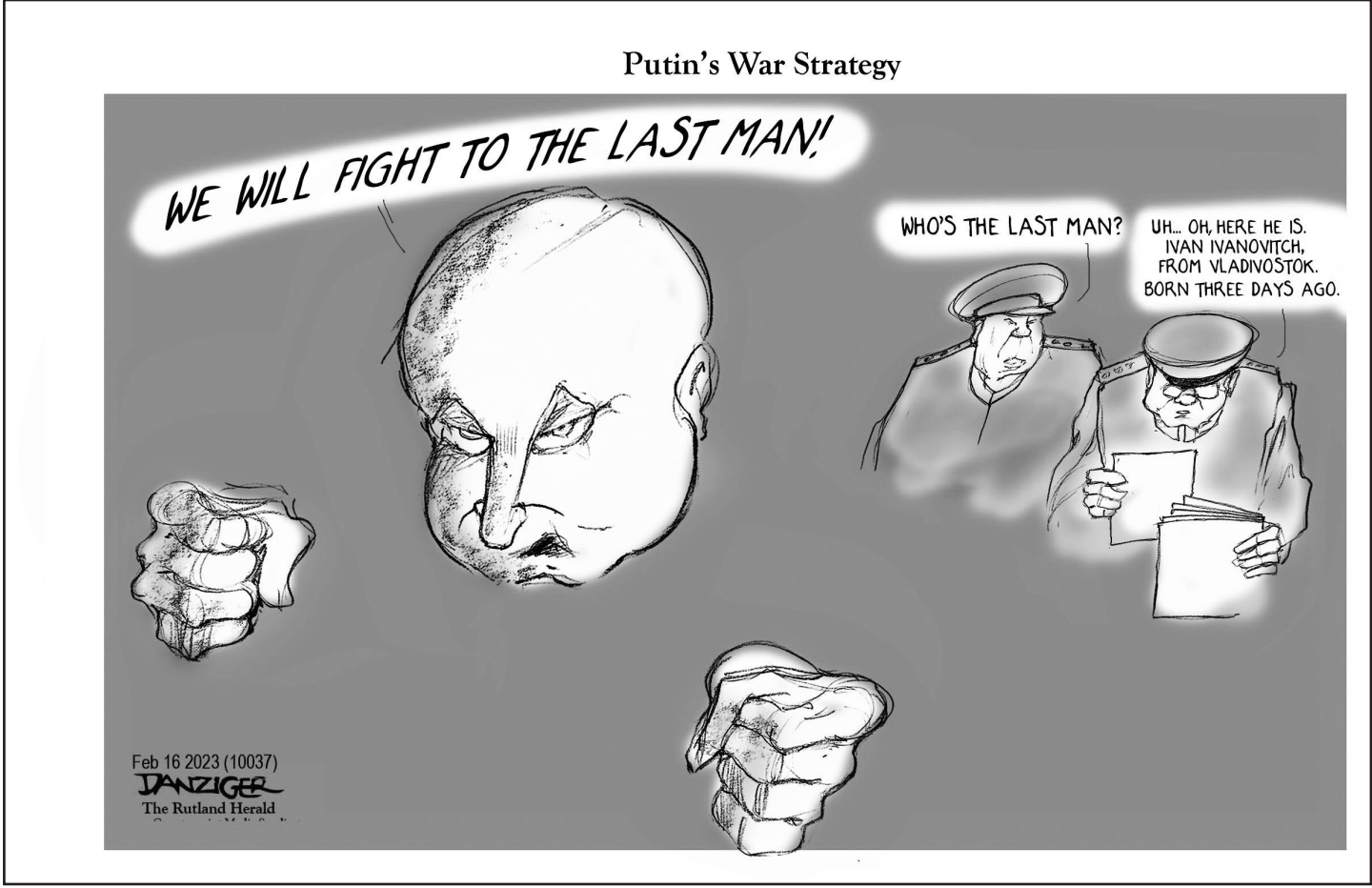
that had arisen out of the KPR. This was done using the Japanese-trained Korean police. These Police had been handed over by the US to Rhee for his use in forcing workers and peasants to give up control of the factories and lands which had been seized from the Japanese.


The political machinery to control an election in South Korea was turned over to Rhee's party and Koreans from the northern part of the country, who had worked or profited under the Japanese occupation. They had fled south and joined in the repression of the KPR and its supporters.

Many peasants did not vote, including the majority on the island of Cheju. One KPR candidate who was elected to the parliament was murdered when he arrived in Seoul. Regarding the repression by the US-backed Rhee regime, it is estimated that up to 100,000 people were killed before June 1950, including at least 30,000 on the island of Cheju in 1948. On October 19, 1948, soldiers of Rhee's government, in the mainland port city of Yosu rebelled, refusing to embark for Cheju, siding with the islanders. The islanders had refused to take part in the election, which they viewed as rigged.

The Koreans living north of the dividing line mostly supported the pro-peasant socialist policies of the KPR, as did the Soviet military. They were also led by Koreans who had been fighting the Japanese in Manchuria. One of those leaders was Kim Il-Sung.

It must have seemed terribly wrong to the American veterans of the war in the Pacific to see Koreans and Chinese, who had been allies during the war, pictured as enemies by 1948. But then again that also happened to America's European ally, the Soviet Union.





AL DONOHUE IS MEMBER OF VVAW WHO SERVED IN THE INFANTRY IN 1966.

Fifty Years Ago

ALLEN MEECE

Fifty years ago in 1973, the US walked away from the useless Vietnam War. Nobody surrendered, nobody won and nobody apologized. But a lot of people died and hordes of people suffered permanent physical and mental trauma from directly or indirectly participating in the long, drawn-out atrocity of war.

The atrocities did not end because congress got wise after ten years of false pride and propaganda lies. It ended because dedicated educators taught The Great American Public Mind that the Vietnam War was an amoral fake war.

Dirty secrets had been drug out of the government's covert closet. Citizens learned that American destroyer spy patrols had been breaking international maritime law by operating within NVN's territorial waters near sensitive military bases. I was on one; the USS Edwards, DD950. We crew members weren't told where we were or that it was an illegal, classified patrol. Of course, we weren't respected enough to be asked if we wished to break the law and provoke a war.

Voters heard the CIA was provoking bloody combat by sponsoring secret paratrooper raids inside North Vietnam and even went so far as to buy a fake airline and named it Air America. It flew supplies to its clandestine raiders. The Department of Defense's "military conflict" in Vietnam, Republic of, was becoming seen as the CIA orgy of violence that it actually was.

Many Americans decided not to go there and were respected for making that illegal moral decision that would get them a five-year prison sentence inside the "Land of the Free" (in propaganda speak). It became OK to choose personal honor over patriotic stupidity.

In 1973 I emigrated to Canada after a landslide majority of my so-called "fellow American" voters had voted for the war-mongering Richard Milhous Nixon for president.

I had married a Canadian girl and had a decent job as a Field Service Engineer for Bausch & Lomb, a big American Corporation. I had received excellent electronics training as a sonar technician in the Navy.

My life was good but I was getting drunk twice a week to cope with my subconscious dissatisfaction with the world situation. American capitalism was able to continue its monstrous bloodbath to get access to Indochinese material resources, despite millions of conscientious people marching in anti-war protests across the world. I had taken part in that dishonorable war. I became a practicing alcoholic for the next sixteen years. The deepest wounds of war are under the skin.

I'm writing this in a private room on the twelfth floor of the Miami Veterans Administration hospital where my four-year enlistment has earned the benefit of affordable, world-class medical care for my cardiac condition. I'm glad I served in the Navy, but it had a price; being forced into amoral mortal combat. Later I experienced addiction, divorce, and homelessness.

As a catharsis for my shame, I wrote a novel about my Tonkin Gulf experiences called *Tin Can*. It shows the crew of a destroyer conducting a successful mutiny against the politics of the US Navy which was killing people for wanting socialism to fix the poverty that colonial capitalism had installed there. It felt good to write a positive novel about my naval disservice.

I attended self-help group meetings for addiction and I got the beer to stop controlling my life. I moved to tropical Key West and married a wonderful woman. I am living a serenely enjoyable life at last.



ALLEN "SOMERSET" MEECE, USN
1962-66, USS EDWARDS DD950, HAS
PUBLISHED THE NOVELS "TIN CAN" AND
"BRAVE NEW MARS" AT AMAZON.COM

The Sixth Extinction

She welcomed them all
with abundance;
they would eat
if they were clever,
if not, they would be eaten,
but never destroyed.

There was balance:
at the top of every food chain,
a natural restraint;
Appetites never exceeded supply,
until humanity decided
the rules were not made for them.

People proliferated right along
with rising civilization;
and wars, counter-intuitively,
became active accelerantes.

Yes. Wars, were a unique aspect
of humanity's complex nature.

She has been forgiving to a fault.
Centuries went by
as our numbers rose,
other species sharply declined,
taking with them
important food sources,
forcing humans to use chemical whips,
to extract grains from vast tracts
of exhausted land.

Wars intensified,
industry became a monster
hungry for energy,
carefully stored
throughout five earlier extinctions.
It was meant to be a gift,
used but sparingly.

Deep wounds scarified her surfaces,
her depths invaded by millions of wells,
of course it was painful,
and a violated earth convulsed.

She can no longer tolerate
this burgeoning horde
so like a swarm of poisonous spiders
she must shed
with a violent shudder;
loosening her bones,
drying up her most nurturing rivers
flooding still others,
over-filling her oceans,
drying up and flooding
their vile nests, until, at last,
the invasion is stemmed.
the numbers diminished to a point,
where she can begin to relax.

Will this be the humbling
humanity always needed to earn
it's rightful place on the planet?

Maybe.

—Woody Powell

Alone With Just Numbers

for Skinny Dennis, The Pooh Bear

It was all about that, the numbers.
The Body Count. We were all just that:
the NVA, the VC, the little kids, old folks,
just body count, me and Pooh too.

The count for us Grunts in F Troop went from
seventy-eight to eleven able to walk,
in just one operation, but Pooh Bear, he had
my three, my six, my nine, twelve, through it all.

We got through another nine months alive,
the two of us, alone, together being the constant
as far too many others, thirty-nine more strangers,
became just numbers on a toe tag in a body bag.

Woke up beside him alive in The Seventh,
The Eleventh, The Twenty-Fourth,
The Ninety-Third Evacuation Hospitals
and Pooh was always there at my three or my six.

Came home with him to D Company, Advanced Infantry Training,
Fort Hood, teaching 11 Bravo Grunt newbies how not to die
using the M-16s, M-60s, M-79s, with the M-113 ACAVs
they would be on as just more numbers in the Nam.

Lost him in 1970; see, I had no working numbers for him.
Found him about 1980 and drove out to New York
to freak our five kids out crying on his porch
about The Numbers, the dead there was no dealing with.

Got called minutes before 2000, Pooh talking some shit,
about maybe, maybe it might be just us two.
Then nothing until early 2015, another call out of the blue,
an unspoken goodbye maybe, a quick, "Bro, I love you".

I looked up phone numbers, called around and found,
with Agent Orange cancers, suicides, just old fucking age,
yeah, Pooh, it may just be me and you that made it through.
Just today, found you on a page; dead, on 02/07/2015.

More numbers to deal with, to feel, to try to ignore.
Now it's just me and no ambush patrol could feel so alone.
Don't want those days back when we were boys trying to be men,
but I do miss our time together and I will see you again.

And Three Dog Night, they had it right about that Number One.

—David Connolly

Corn, Coal & Yellow Ribbons

SUSAN DIXON (REVIEWER)

Corn, Coal & Yellow Ribbons: Poems by Kevin Basl and Nathan Lewis
(Out of Step Press, 2021,
www.kevinbasl.com)

Corn, Coal & Yellow Ribbons begins with a question often asked of veterans: why did you join? Such questions often get glib answers, from both veterans and sociologists, but not here. By the end of this collection—eleven pithy, witty, bitter poems—Iraq War veterans Kevin Basl and Nathan Lewis have examined the question as asked to one particular population, taken the question apart, and shown us the complexity of its answer.

The two poets grew up in "Northeastern Rustbelt/Appalachia," Kevin in Pennsylvania coal country and Nathan on the shores of Lake Ontario in New York State. After leaving the Army, both became activists and artists, and both, in time, came to Trumansburg, New York, a small town outside of Ithaca, which is where I met them and grew to admire their work. They create art and music, write poetry, conduct workshops, and make "combat paper" from pulped military uniforms. *Corn, Coal & Yellow Ribbons*, a product of their press, is handmade and sewn by the poets, its guts are printed in nearby Lodi, its cover is combat paper that they made, and each copy is signed. These details are important because the poems are not ends in themselves. They and the process of fabricating the books make up a whole, each depending on the other for meaning-making. (Kevin's essay,

"This Is Not A Military Uniform: An Essay About Combat Paper," which probes the links between creativity and meaning, is available online at www.prometheusdreaming.com/this-is-not-a-military-uniform)

The poems provide glimpses of childhoods filled with everyday ironies and premonitions only recognized in hindsight. In "The Desert Storm," for example, Kevin celebrates his ninth birthday against the sounds of war and its patriotic commentary—

*That night, a green blizzard on the tube:
Scuds, flashers, friendlies—
we learned it all from NBC.
Grandma, Grandpa, Mom & Dad
TV casualties, like the Big Game
had come two weeks early.
The US will win. US will win.
No, it won't take long. Won't take long.
Supporting our troops. Back after these messages—*

*We put the war on mute
I made a wish for something small,
plastic
my candles into smoke
gave the anchor back his voice
and we all ate chocolate cake.*

In "First Ambush Mission" Nathan helps with the family vegetable stand that "never turned a profit" in part because the good people coming from the three nearby churches "complained when sweet corn went up to \$3/dozen." Nathan and his twin brother conduct an ambush mission to protect the crop,

"Raccoons standing in for guerillas." And then—

*My wet sneakers squeaking on linoleum
Had my ears not been ringing
I would have heard
Desert Army Boots crunching gravel*

In areas where opportunities are circumscribed and families can't turn a profit on hard work, young people are likely targets. "Anyone living in an impoverished area, rural or urban, will easily recognize the military recruiter's car as it lurks around the high school parking lot." These poems look at how military recruitment feeds on and is fed by communities struggling with racism, drug addiction, gun violence, and unemployment. That symbiosis becomes sinister in poems like Nathan's "Rust Belt Fed"—

*The combine strips the corn from the fields,
the recruiter's van strips the youth from our schools, churches
Like metal scrappers pulling wires and pipes
from a foreclosed home
Except this job gets done in broad daylight,
owners hold the door and help you load*

In "Fortune," Kevin throws a magic 8 ball so hard it shatters the storm door of a trailer home, causing him to be grounded for the rest of the summer—

*But what, on a breezy June afternoon,
will prompt that costly, fateful shot?
This: a simple question, slurred sideways
over the ball:
When I am done with school,
will I leave this wasteland behind?
You will shake it hard
much too hard
and the little white pyramid
will float up
through the purple inky fluid
to present its response:
my sources say no.*

At the high schools where the young people have few chances to leave their wasteland behind, recruiters on their own mission ask "what are you going to do with your life?"

"What are you going to do with your life?"

These poems, born from conversations, creativity, and community, from uniforms made into paper, and from the land, simultaneously challenge the very idea of an "all-volunteer" army, and answer the question.



SUSAN DIXON IS CO-AUTHOR WITH VIETNAM VETERAN MARK M. SMITH OF *SEEKING QUAN AM: A DUAL MEMOIR OF WAR AND VIETNAM*

Sunlight on Brass

How long has it been?
The everlasting stench.

Adrift on the hard earth,
The hiss from my insect-deflated
Mattress wakes me.
Minutes, or is it years—
A blast
Shrieks of those stampeding
And all night, the braided groans
Of those left behind.

At dawn, look at them:
Perforated, bloodless, stiffening,
A doomed arm reaching still—
Until the old man near the girl lifts his rifle
A lieutenant fires—
The machine gun, everyone opens up
A second time wounding her, beheading him.

In the silence:
Sunlight on brass cartridges.
White cordite cloud.
Gray brain on black silk.

Water, she pleads, reaching for my canteen.
And she drinks, drinks until green smoke,
Medevac, lifts her away.
In this quiet time, among their scattered packs
We find our souvenirs.

—Marc Levy

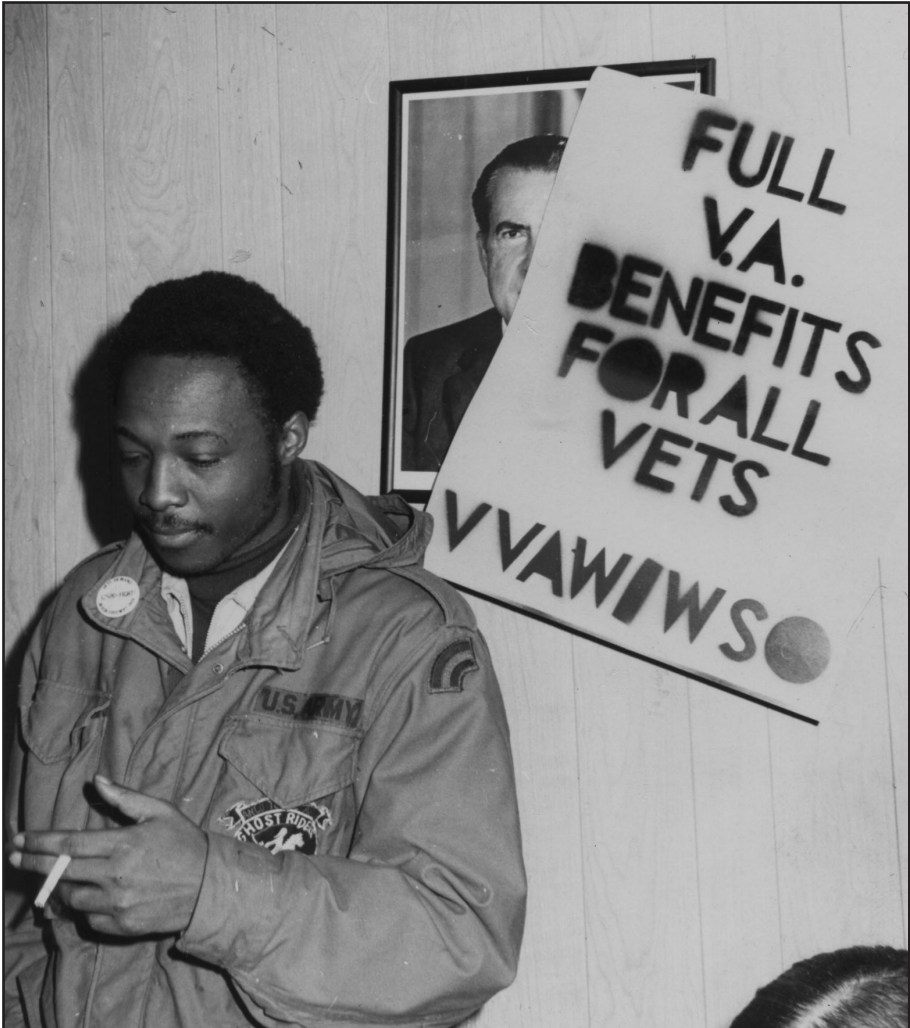
Nice To Be Special

This Universe
Fourteen billion years old
Two trillion galaxies
Two hundred billion trillion stars
gotta be at least a trillion inhabitable planets
One of them called Earth
Where billions of species come and go
Then pfft man appears
In God's image no less
And this Earth
Hell this whole Universe
It is all ours
To enslave, to degrade, to destroy
And then we go to Heaven
What are them odds

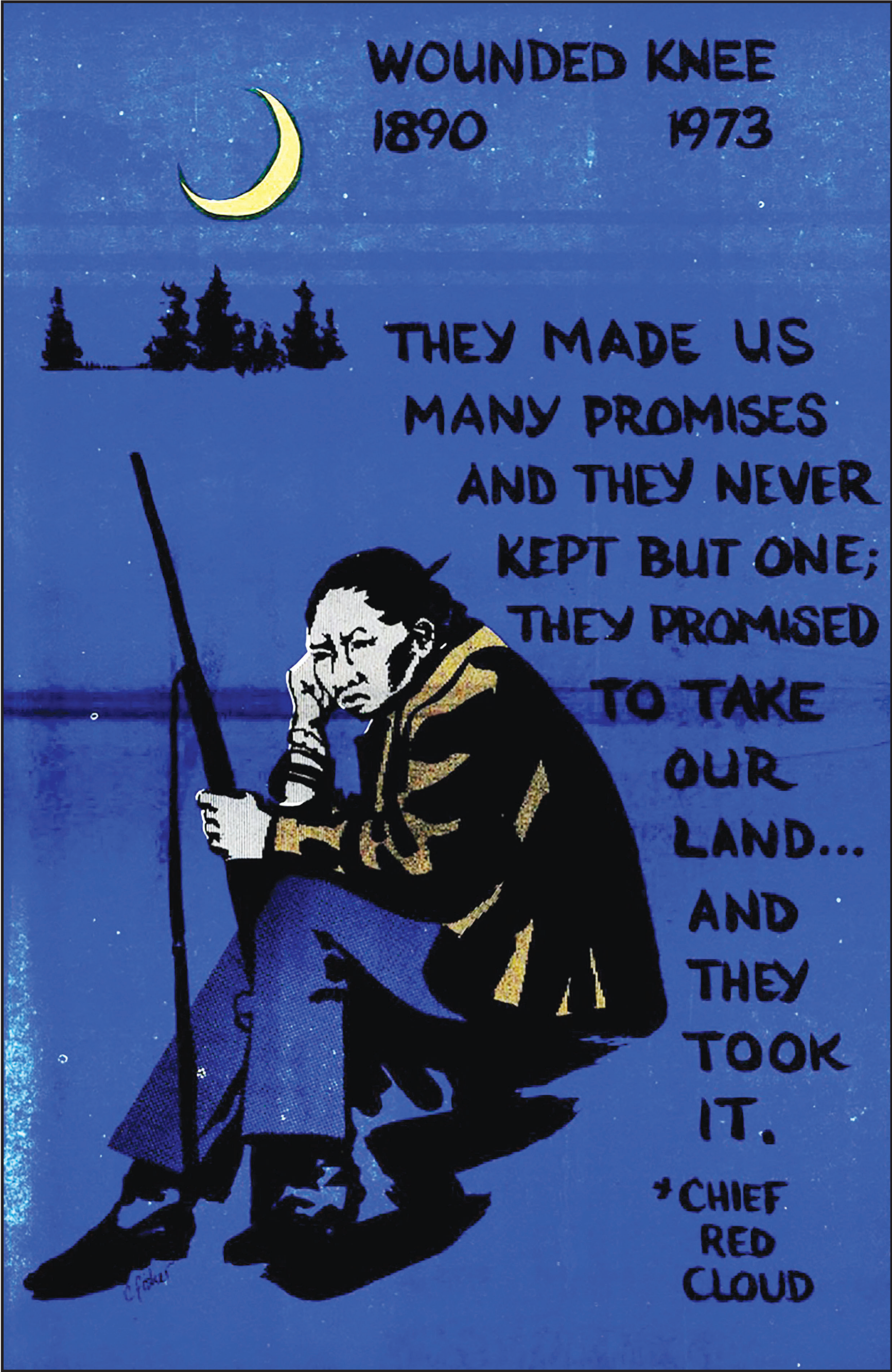
—Rich Peters



Doc Levy walking toward wounded female POW after the platoon reconned an ambush. Cambodia 1970. Photo by Jeff Motyka.



Milwaukee VA Takeover, 1974.



From the May, 1973 issue of Winter Soldier.



Milwaukee Labor Day march, September 3, 1973.



THE VETERAN

SECTION C

Volume 53, Number 1

Spring 2023

VVAW Remembers Native American Struggle

ANN HIRSCHMAN

Reprinted from the Spring 1993 issue of The Veteran

I tried to write a couple of lines and seven pages came out. I guess I write like I talk.

I wrote this thirty years ago and it still brings me back to the experience of Wounded Knee. It was my honor to have been there and the experience has informed my life in profound ways.

I felt like a very small unimportant cog in a great wheel. I hope that the tone of what I wrote isn't misleading. The courage and strength of the AIM people, especially the Wounded Knee residents, was and is an inspiration.

The most difficult part of this memoir is that Leonard Peltier is still in prison, Anna Mae Aquash is dead at the hands of the FBI, and things on the reservations have changed far too little in 50 years.

We all have to keep on keeping on. Love to all,

When I got the message that Barry wanted an article about Wounded Knee I thought: "Why now?" When he said it was the 20th anniversary I thought: "NO WAY," but it's true!

Twenty years ago I was in Fort Lauderdale (a relative political backwater) hoping for a few months of normal life. Peter Schnall, a doctor I'd known from the Medical Committee for Human Rights, called to recruit medics at Wounded Knee. I said: "Sure, I'll go if I'm needed."

I was young, single, temporarily between jobs and addicted to the adrenaline rush you get in emergency medicine. Did I forget to mention stupid?

Five weeks later I was on my way. The first complication came at the airport where I discovered that the MOST DIRECT flight to Rapid City, South Dakota, had three stops and a plane change in Chicago. It took the agent 35 minutes to write up the ticket. When I mentioned that the two guys in suits behind me in line would want to go on the same plane, she cried.

We'd heard that people trying to go to "The Knee" were being "detained" under various pretexts. I noticed that these people had tried to go solo, so I called Chicago VVAW and asked for support. I'm finally able to thank you guys for getting me to my second plane intact and not in handcuffs.

At Rapid City, I was met by a scared lawyer from Mark Lane's crew. He seemed bent on getting "informed consent" and kept saying cheerful stuff like: "you DO know that there is shooting going on?"

After assuring the lawyers that I was prepared to risk my ass, I was introduced to a pediatrician named

Mike from California, who was to be my partner for a few weeks. We got into the chopper. Next war I get the one with doors? We had a nice trip 'til the FBI tried to shoot us down.

Our pilot decided to land at the FBI checkpoint because he didn't have a death wish. We were strip-searched (you haven't lived 'til you've been nude, in an APC, in the winter, in South Dakota). A lot of our stuff was confiscated. They took our toilet paper and tampons, so we couldn't make Molotov cocktails (for you skeptics, NOBODY could make this shit up!) They took all the cigarettes they could find. They did give us back our clothes.

Finally, we were in Wounded Knee. After all of the chaos getting there, it was a haven of peace. The outgoing medics briefed us and introduced us to the Medicine Men in charge (Black Elk and Crow Dog) and left.

One of the first people I met was Eva, a nurse from the AIM chapter in Kansas. She asked me if I knew how to shoot and if I'd agree to provide first-line security in the "infirmary." I mentioned I could shoot and was issued an M-1 for the duration. Later, on speaking gigs for the Wounded Knee Legal Committee, I was often asked about the rumored sexism inside. I pointed out that there was limited ammo and that it was not a great time to teach people to shoot.

It only took a few hours to see that there was a real problem with both communication and deliveries to us from the outside world. On my first night, the most useful thing I did was to help Dennis Banks print the newsletter by recycling waste ink.

Several of the people in the Knee were vets and their ability to cope with the firefights and aftermath really helped me. I would take cues from them as to how to act and it really helped me survive and not do anything insensitive to the other people there.

There was one big firefight while I was in and I was scared green until I had some patients to fix. Frank Clearwater had just come in with his pregnant wife when the shit hit. He was with several others in the church on the hill when he got shot. I was about 300 yards away when I got called and two guys who were "runners" helped me up the hill.

Inside the one-room building, it was horrible. Frank had been hit in the head behind his ear and the back of his head was gone. The doctor was a quarter of a mile away, there was shooting going on, and I'd never been trained as a brain surgeon. I tried, it wasn't enough. Maybe nothing would have helped, but I tried. Frank was evacuated under white flags (they kept shooting anyway) to the infirmary, still



Ann Hirschman at Wounded Knee, 1973. Photo by Anne Pearse Hocker.

barely alive. Mike (the doctor) and I and, more importantly, the Medicine Men, were afraid that we needed to get Frank to a hospital. We decided that Mike would ride with him to insure that he actually got care when he arrived. Frank Clearwater died a few days later.

Now we had no doctor and, for one, my arrogance stood me in good stead as I was too conceited to be scared. I also still had the benefit of Black Elk, Crow Dog, and Eva to work with.

The next casualty was a guy whose name I still can't use because I don't know his legal status. He took a hit in the arm and there was an entry wound but no exit. We had no X-ray machine and the arm was twice its normal size. I knew that if we didn't get the bullet out we might lose the arm or the patient despite the few antibiotics we had. Black Elk advised a sweat lodge to try to get an idea. This was not in my nursing school books but ANYTHING was worth a try,

A Sweat Lodge is like a sauna, only a lot hotter. The ceremony seems very simple. A group of people, usually led by a Medicine Man, meditate and ask for help while seated in a circle around superheated rocks.

Despite the 28-degree outdoor temperature, the sweat is done in the nude. The sweat lodge is so intense that people basically melt when they get out. Mike took his pulse after his first sweat and it was over 200!

After this sweat, Black elk ordered us back to the infirmary. We RAN back. I would have bet against being able to walk.

Black Elk then found the bullet, easily! We were able to remove it. The arm slowly started to look like a human limb again.

Then there was Cooper. I've always said that only the good die young and that Al Cooper will live to 143. He didn't have to test the theory the week I met him. Vets are like that! Al was on the security team and decided to fix a radio on his time off. He did forget to unplug it. He had ammo belts across his chest. The current passed through his heart. Eva had never put in an IV but she did great. We now had a patient with a pulse of 31 (not really compatible with a long life). Usually, I'd have done an EKG but we didn't have one. So we punted. I finally felt like I'd got one right when Al woke up and demanded to go back on patrol.

I could bore everybody with more gory stories but enough already.

There was an incident near the

end of my stay that taught me again that you can't believe the feds. There had been a foray to a neighboring ranch and the people got back in time for the evening news. The lead story was of the burning down (by arson) of this ranch. We ran outside. We looked at the ranch. We were CONFUSED! Later that night a bunch of tracer bullets hit the ranch and we weren't confused anymore.

Then it was time to leave. We thought the new crew would be fine if they listened to Black Elk and Crow Dog.

Our exit was negotiated with the FBI. With us was a very sick young girl who needed medical care outside. The FBI had not checked with BIA tribal police goons and they had other ideas. We watched as our patient and the FBI were about to leave us with the goons. I did not expect, at that point, to get out. BIA goons had "eliminated" other people leaving Wounded Knee and we knew it.

One of the most conflicted moments of my life was when our patient got so much worse that the FBI got scared for her—and came back for us. (I was GLAD to be in FBI custody and, maybe, glad that the patient needed us, and guilty for being glad.) I must have spent too much time with the Mother Cabrini Brigade.

The FBI took our patient to the hospital and left us with a couple of people at a farmhouse in the middle of a field. The people were supposed to be "liaison" people from Washington. It felt like a hard-cop soft-cop game to me. That night, after a meal (?) of what looked like WWII C-rats, we were rescued by a wonderful guy in a Toyota 4WD and brought back to Rapid City. We had showers, cigarettes, and Pepsi all at the same time.

My next stop was the national VVAW meeting at Placitas. I do not remember the trip, I do not remember the camp-out, I do not remember Annie Bailey being there. It's a good thing you vets taught me about PTSD, or I might worry about this.

I don't know how to finish this. There are too many people to thank to list everybody. I learned more than I taught and got more than I gave. I have tried to use the lessons and gifts as best I could.



ANN HIRSCHMAN IS A NURSE AND HAS BEEN A RESPECTED MEMBER OF VVAW FOR OVER 50 YEARS. SHE IS A BOARD MEMBER OF VVAW.



Wounded Knee, 1973.

Wounded Knee Bust

VVAW

Reprinted from the May 1973 issue of Winter Soldier.

Since the take-over at Wounded Knee began over a month and a half ago, the government has been using every devious method possible in trying to destroy any support for the people inside. They are attempting to distort and bury the reasons which led to the take-over in the first place.

In the general vicinity of Wounded Knee itself, the feds have been able to force many people out of the area by arresting them, keeping them in jail for a few days, and then letting them out on bond with the stipulation that they leave the area immediately upon release. Over 175 arrests have been made so far, most of which are for "interfering and impeding federal law enforcement officers in the performance of their official duties during a civil disorder." Anyone looking like a supporter has been subject to arrest on these charges.

Bart Savage and Bill Branson of the VVAW National Collective were arrested on these same charges on March 13th at a federal roadblock while attempting to bring medical supplies to Wounded Knee. What made arrests on these charges so illegal is that the "official duties" of the feds were to stop and search every car attempting entry into Wounded Knee. By having to perform their "official duties" of stopping and searching the

car, they were "interfered and impeded with" by Bart and Bill from carrying out their "official duties".

Sounds crazy? Bart and Bill thought so too, until they were taken to the jail at Pine Ridge and found that everyone else there had been arrested on the same charges and under very similar circumstances. This pattern is so widespread and so illegal that it is very clear that the only purpose of it is to "put people on ice" for a while and then remove them from the area, thus breaking up support from the outside.

Everyone arrested is taken to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) jail in Pine Ridge for a couple of days to await transportation to the county jail in Rapid City for arraignment and bond hearings. The Pine Ridge Jail is a throwback to medieval times. People are stuffed into cells like cattle and sanitary facilities are almost non-existent. People are not formally charged until reaching Rapid City nor are they allowed phone calls until the second or third day of incarceration, both of which are in direct violation of basic constitutional rights.

The BIA police are extremely resentful of the feds for having to keep federal prisoners in their jail. They take out their anger on the prisoners. But because of their unity and their strength, the "POW's" can stand up to, and resist, the oppressive conditions of the jail.

On Friday, March 16th, Bill and

Bart were transported, along with four Indian brothers, to Rapid City. The arraignments and bond hearings were held in the afternoon with everyone having bail set at \$5,000 each except for Bill and Bart, who, for some unknown reason, had bail set at \$50,000 each. Re-hearings for the bond were then scheduled for the following Monday.

The cells in Rapid City were even more crowded than in Pine Ridge. People were packed in nine to a cell. As more POWs were brought in, the unity and spirit which was so prevalent in Pine Ridge became stronger and stronger. The jail became organized! Communication was established between floors via air vents. Demands for better sanitary conditions were agreed upon and chants were organized throughout the jail for these demands.

Never having prisoners before who had the "nerve" to voice demands on them, the jailers at first ignored the chanting, assured that it would soon die out. But it continued; over and over again. Finally realizing the determination of the prisoners, the jailers had no choice but to give in to their demands. Many fingers make a big fist.

Monday morning brought the second round of bond hearings. As the jail in Pine Ridge was still full, and the county jail was forced to transfer many people to Deadwood

because it was so crowded, the magistrate had to start letting people out on personal recognizance on, of course, the condition that they leave the area immediately. Bart and Bill, who three days before had bail set at the incredibly high figure of \$50,000 each, were among those released.

But the story does not end here. The systematic and illegal arrests continue. People are still being held in dungeon-like jails. Their rights are still being abused. And the reasoning and objectives behind it all are still the same; put people away for a while, try to make them afraid to continue their support, and then get them out of the area. But they are forgetting something. Putting many different people from many different backgrounds together under common oppressive conditions is creating bonds that will never be broken. The people are learning, both from each other and their experience in jail. They are learning that the poor and oppressed people of this country have many things in common; impoverished living conditions, lack of opportunities, lack of basic human rights such as health and education, AND, the very same oppressor! They are learning the meaning of unity. They are learning the power of that unity and what it can do. And finally, they know that they are right and that their cause is just!



Bart Savage and Bill Branson, 1973.

1973: A Year of Unity and of Struggle

VVAW

From the December 1973 issue of Winter Soldier.

SUMMARY OF THE YEAR

The year began with the continued war in Indochina and with the signing of the peace agreement for ending the war in Vietnam. Immediately, the US and the Saigon regime violated it, and continue to do so. The US is still bombing Cambodia daily but is unable to suppress the struggle for independence of the Cambodian people. In Laos, the coalition government that resulted from the signing of their agreement proceeds on shaky ground. Elsewhere around the world, liberation struggles grew in strength while war broke out in the Middle East and a fascist coup overthrew the government in Chile.

At home, the American people were subjected to ever-increasing repression. We saw the trial of the Gainesville 8 end in victory for the people and the continuing trial of Gary Lawton and Zurebu Gardner, falsely accused of murdering two policemen. The occupation of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement forcefully dramatized the continued abuse of Native Americans by the US government. In addition, we witnessed the explosive rebellions in prisons across the country that pointed out the repressive nature of the American system. Political trials continued in a blatant attempt to silence dissent.

INDOCHINA

In January, 5,000 VVAW/WSO members marched in Washington on Inaugural Day demanding that Nixon end the war in Indochina. When the agreement was signed our members

pressed for its implementation by the US. Barry Romo of the National Office traveled around the country talking about the horrors of the December bombings that he lived through in Hanoi. In California, members demonstrated against Thieu as he visited Nixon in San Clemente. Other demonstrations occurred throughout the year protesting the bombing of Cambodia. In the Fall, VVAW/WSO organized Indochina Solidarity Week in which chapters spoke and leafleted in support of the struggles for independence in Southeast Asia.

GIs

VVAW/WSO military chapters in Japan grew as they demonstrated against the war in Southeast Asia and the American presence in Japan and Okinawa. They participated in marches on Kadena AFB and members were arrested for handing out copies of the Declaration of Independence on July 4th. The military declared the Hobbit, (the movement coffeehouse), off limits, but the chapters grew because of it. In the US, VVAW/WSO saw an increase in GI membership through the efforts of the NOSCAM offices in Dayton and Chicago. In a show of solidarity with GIs, chapters participated in GI demonstrations on Armed Forces Day, which helped result in the formation of new chapters aboard the USS JFK and at Ft. Leavenworth.

AMNESTY

VVAW/WSO, long committed to universal and unconditional amnesty, began a national program for amnesty. Programs were begun to upgrade less



than honorable discharges that veterans received for their opposition to the war and the racism and oppression of the military. One of our demands is to upgrade all these discharges to a universal one. Community work and demonstrations were organized by chapters to bring the issue of amnesty and resistance to the war in Indochina to the prominence it requires. This amnesty is for all war resisters.

VETERANS

In February, the VA announced that it was asking for cuts in veterans' benefits. This attack on veterans has long, historical roots in the US. In New York City, members went to hearings on veterans' problems and confronted the panel with the truth about the VA's failure to meet the needs of vets. In Milwaukee, VVAW/WSO took over the VA office to point out the continuing plight of veterans. Chapters across the country set up PVS groups to counter the ineffectiveness of the VA in dealing with vet's problems on returning to the US after fighting for "freedom" only to learn that this was a lie.

WATERGATE

As the Watergate disclosures were made, it was learned that VVAW/WSO was the target of illegal surveillance and infiltration by police provocateurs. To counter this, chapters spoke out

to expose the corruption forced on America. Demonstrations occurred in towns and cities and VVAW/WSO participated in them. As Nixon attempts to subvert investigations into Watergate, VVAW/WSO has joined in calling for the impeachment of the biggest criminal in this nation's history.

INTERNATIONAL

As VVAW/WSO develops into a strong force for peace and justice it also develops strong ties with liberation forces around the world. During the past year, members attended meetings in Rome, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, and Moscow, and met with representatives of Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Korea as well as with representatives of liberation struggles in Africa and Latin America. These meetings allowed us the opportunity to learn of the struggles against imperialism that are being waged in the world today. VVAW/WSO stands in support of these struggles and these meetings have helped chapters inform the people of the continuing crimes of the American government in exploiting countries around the world.

UNITY-STRUGGLE-VICTORY



John Lindquist.



All photos on this page from November 1973 takeover of the Milwaukee VA office.

The Horror, The Horror . . .

Ed White (REVIEWER)

Fire and Rain: Nixon, Kissinger, and the Wars in Southeast Asia
by Carolyn Woods Eisenberg
(Oxford University Press, 2023)

In the American Civil war, Lee commented to General Longstreet, after witnessing the carnage at Fredericksburg: "It is well that war is so horrible, or else we should grow too fond of it." And in the movie *Apocalypse Now*, Colonel Kurtz repeats those very words just before he is slaughtered. The horror, the horror. . .

Author Carolyn Eisenberg's new book is not just one more book about Vietnam; rather, she exposes yet another horror: The lack of empathy or concern President Richard N. Nixon and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger held about those being slaughtered on their watch. Eisenberg is well suited to make these judgments. She listened to countless hours of the recently declassified Nixon tapes; read thousands of transcripts of Henry Kissinger's telephone calls, and researched cables from the Pentagon; listened to many anti-war interviews; read memoirs and diaries, as well as numerous interviews with the North and South Vietnamese. Carolyn Eisenberg says she spent 10 years researching this book. It certainly shows in the 519 pages, 28 chapters, and extensive bibliography.

One of the central horror stories the author unveils is the destruction carried out by B-52 bombers in Cambodia and Laos. This story reads like a torture session. In vivid and deep detail Eisenberg describes the three key decision makers, Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, and General Alexander Haig, and their constant adherence to the strategy of endless bombing to

get North Vietnam to the negotiating table. In my view, the constant B-52 pounding of Vietnam and neutral countries can only be described for what they were: War crimes. Eisenberg extensively details the attempt by these three men to get China and the Soviet Union to pressure North Vietnam. When these attempts failed, Nixon called out the B-52s for yet more, and more, and more bombings.

At one point in the war, President Nixon—screaming at the military chiefs—berated the Air Force for not flying in bad weather. Neither Nixon nor Kissinger witnessed the results of the bombing on civilians, and the author implies that they did not care.

In a unique contribution to the many solid books written about Vietnam, in the past 50 years, Carolyn Eisenberg pays close attention to the anti-war movement and to the question of whether it made a difference in ending the war. The author especially describes the role played by the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). Chapter 12 of her book focuses exclusively on VVAW and its commitment to ending the war. She stresses how returning combat veterans became involved in peace marches; offered testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; participated in the teach-ins on college campuses; held the Winter Soldier Investigation in Detroit, Michigan; and threw away medals before the Capitol; and how the FBI infiltration of VVAW; the Last Patrol demonstrations at the Miami Convention; and student protests on campuses around the country all formed to create a peaceful response to end the war. While Eisenberg does not provide direct quotes from the key

players in the White House regarding changing policy on the war, she does claim that the anti-war movement had a strong impact on the Democratic Party which brought more anti-war Congressmen to submit numerous bills to stop funding the war.

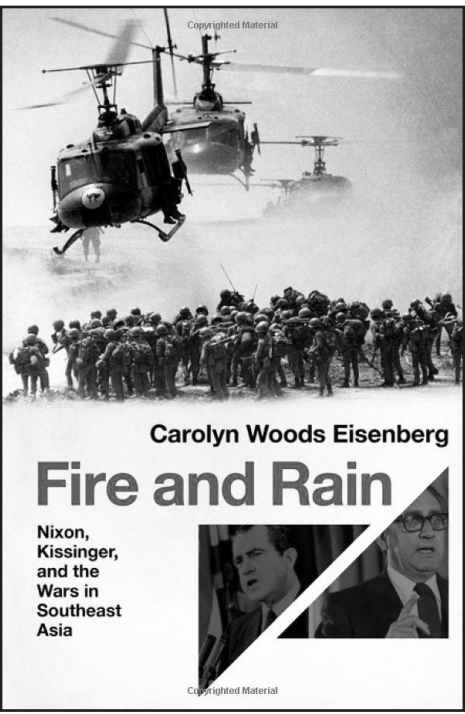
None passed. And Nixon—calling himself the "Peace President"—claimed he was the one ending the war, and those who opposed him were unpatriotic.

The Vietnam Moratorium Committee was a particular thorn in the side of Nixon and Kissinger and its influence on members of Congress. But at a press conference, President Nixon declared, "Under no circumstances will I be affected by it." That is not what Carolyn Eisenberg discovered. In her research, the author learned that Nixon's comments were, in fact, untrue. Nixon was affected to be sure, but he was not affected enough to cease bombing innocent civilians in four countries. The President would simply curse all those who disagreed with him and attack anyone who leaked information contrary to his public statements.

One of the key takeaways for me after reading Eisenberg's book was that both Nixon and Kissinger were unwilling to stop a futile war, and that decision was part of their character, their identity.

Each time they sent the B-52 bombers into additional and unnecessary sorties, they risked the lives of the American pilots, and they also created even more insurgents to fight the US troops and their Allies.

If there is another "horror" in war, this is the lesson: Nixon's actions created insurgents as the bombing



continued and inspired them to fight even harder. Surely this lesson should have been applied to future wars after Vietnam, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan, to name just two additional "forever wars."

Although he is not a favorite of mine, Samuel Huntington astutely pointed out: "The West won the world not by superiority of its ideas or values or religion (to which few members of other religions were converted) but rather by its superiority in applying organized violence. Westerner's often forget this fact; non-Westerners never do." That is yet one more horror of war.



Ed White is a Marine Vietnam Combat Veteran with memberships in VVAW, VFP, and VVA. He has taught courses on the Vietnam War at Triton College in Illinois; his lecture: "The Lessons of Vietnam" can be viewed on C-Span.

And Then Your Soul Is Gone

Jim Wohlgemuth (REVIEWER)

And Then Your Soul Is Gone: Moral Injury and US War-Culture
by Kelly Denton-Borhaug
(Equinox Publishing, 2021)

I am writing this because I think this book is important for all of us who knew when we got out of the military, when we left war behind, that something was different. Something did not fit. We did not fit. Even if we were not injured or subjected to a traumatic event, we felt different. We were different.

I found out about her work on moral injury during a session of the Veterans for Peace convention. I convinced her to come on my Podcast, Veterans for Peace Radio Hour (Sound Cloud and Spotify) to talk about moral injury. You can find that discussion here: soundcloud.com/user-55976759/111722-veterans-for-peace-with-dr-kelly-denton-borhaug-on-moral-injury-and-us-war-culture

Reading her book made me realize and identify some of the demons I was carrying with me. The VA had diagnosed me with PTSD but I could not recall the incident, event, experience that put me over the edge. However, I knew that something had happened to me. Why did I break down when the NVA marched into

Saigon in '75 and my realization of the waste became the reality? Why would I be hitting the ground at every backfire, even though I had never been in an actual combat situation? How come I had to walk out of *Apocalypse Now* to sit in the lobby of the theater smoking cigarettes while my wife and our friends watched the rest of the movie? Why did I have to turn my back when watching fireworks at our friend's lake house? Why would I wake up in cold sweats fearing my ship, the Westchester County, was heading back up the rivers? Why, to this day, do I have spells of crushing sadness?

Reading Dr. Borhaug's book about Moral Injury and especially about war culture opened up some truths and opened up some wounds that made me realize that not only I might be suffering from moral injury but maybe most of the country is also suffering. She used case studies, tons of research, and her own perspective of the United States to craft this book to uncover and identify the atrocity of moral injury.

It helped me pinpoint the series of experiences I had and to link them to the way I feel now and help me understand that even after 50 years, my feelings could be intensifying,

that time does not heal all wounds. It helped me make a list of feelings, attitudes, actions and reactions that made me different that could all be linked back to my experience in the Navy and Vietnam.

She explains how the violent nature of the US War Culture has sacralized war making and military service. She shows how the military industrial complex, the media, our churches, our schools and our sports are participating and contributing to the elevation of this US War Culture. She shows how this seeps into every corner of our society and culture.

It is an easy and understandable read even while digging into the complexities of our militaristic psyche. It has helped me understand a little better what is going on within me and why after 50 years these feelings have actually grown. It encouraged me to find a local VA sponsored moral injury group.

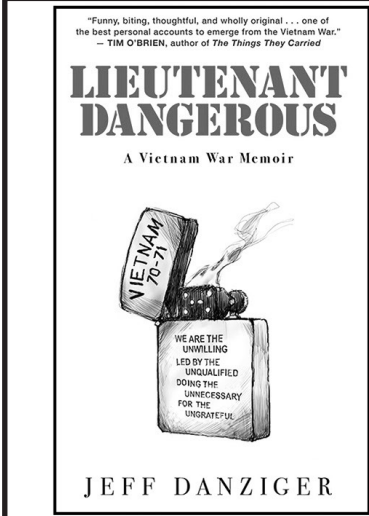
I really cannot encourage you enough to read this book and share it with those who may not understand your feelings but want to try.

About the author: Dr Kelly Denton-Borhaug is Professor in the Global Religions Department at Moravian University in Bethlehem, PA. The book was published by

Equinox. She has been investigating moral injury, writing about it, listening to veterans, and working with veterans' groups for over seven years. She has published in the *Nation*, *TomDispatch*, *Scheerpost*, and other platforms. Her book, *And Then Your Soul is Gone: Moral Injury and US War-Culture*, has been used by veterans to better understand the deep impact of war and war-culture in their lives. She also works with veterans. If you are interested in developing a veterans or civilian "discussion group" in your area to learn and talk about moral injury, you can contact her at denton-borhaugk@moravian.edu. For more about Kelly Denton-Borhaug, who is a university professor, go to www.moravian.edu/religion/faculty/denton-borhaug



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.



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*



Southern Voices

SUSAN DIXON (REVIEWER)

Southern Voices: Biet Dong and the National Liberation Front
by Michael Robert Dedrick
(University Press of Kentucky, 2022)

In 1968, when Michael Dedrick was serving as an analyst and interrogator in Saigon, "Americans then were impatient, angry, stressed, fearful, and arrogant, trying to push their military vehicles through traffic with little or no regard for Vietnamese rights or cultural differences." In 2013, when he returned after an absence of 45 years, he found a place in which "traffic was heavy but not chaotic, with few Americans, and with the feel of a city that was now vibrant, dynamic, clean, and orderly in its own fashion." He had come to Vietnam a second time to observe, to listen, and, more importantly, to ask what the war was like for them.

In February 1968, Dedrick had interrogated one of the participants in the attack on the US Embassy during the Tet Offensive, a man named Ba Den, a member of a secretive group of special forces fighters called the Biet Dong. Unlike the image we might have of such fighters, though, these were "ordinary" people shielded by their anonymity, their walks in life, even their age or gender. Dedrick returned

to Vietnam in hopes of finding this man and learning more about him. In that purpose he did not succeed, as Ba Den had died, but simply by pursuing his purpose, following the leads that appeared to him, and at each step showing respect, he was able to meet eight other members of the Biet Dong. He sat with them, recorded their stories, transcribed the interviews, checked each transcription for accuracy, and published the accounts in *Southern Voices: Biet Dong and the National Liberation Front*.

Although these accounts, taken together, add a new layer to the American understanding of the war, Dedrick says, "I did not want to write yet another military history; rather, I envisioned a book of personal remembrances published in both English and Vietnamese." The dual language format, of practical use only to scholars, has enormous symbolic significance to English-speaking readers. It says what has been said too little: that Vietnamese have their own stories to tell, their own points of view, their own opinions of their government and their country, and their own language.

They also have their own opinions of us based on insightful observation of our strengths and weaknesses. The

director of the War Remnants Museum, Huynh Ngoc Van, for example, said of the American soldiers that "they were young and needed reconciliation." In light of assessments like these, it becomes more than a minor detail that on learning of Ba Den's death, Dedrick bought an incense holder and had it taken to Ba Den's grave. This act of cultural awareness and respect opened doors for him as he embarked on his project.

The result is a collection of small, calm, almost understated stories and all the more powerful for that simplicity. Dedrick places each of his interviews on a particular day in a particular place, which underscores the humanity as well as individuality of each person. It also suggests the passage of time. Decades have brought changes but have not altered the commitment of these fighters to the cause they fought for. Accounts of time spent in South Vietnamese prisons are painful to read but they point to one of the major contributions of the book—the witness of those whose stories provide a welcome layer of complexity to the "two sides" narrative of the war more familiar to American audiences.

Dedrick enriches the accounts by including copies of letters, poetry, maps, and photographs. Readers are

given the opportunity to see and to expand their understanding. Dedrick invites his readers to follow him into unfamiliar territory, that of Vietnamese themselves. By being present in the story, Dedrick avoids academic distance but by never forgetting his purpose he lets the story belong to the Vietnamese speakers. The result is so much more enlightening than the more common obsession that Americans have with themselves. How could that have happened, we still wonder? Facing fighters who were "ordinary" people, how could our superior fire power have lost? Muoi Than, an NLF soldier who had been imprisoned at Con Dao with Ba Den said, "When you are young you want to do the right thing. ... Not all Americans were bad, but when they came, we followed Uncle Ho's saying: 'It's better to fight for freedom than die enslaved.' Everyone thought that, otherwise they would not have had the courage to fight."

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SUSAN DIXON IS CO-AUTHOR WITH VIETNAM VETERAN MARK M. SMITH OF *SEEKING QUAN AM: A DUAL MEMOIR OF WAR AND VIETNAM*

Coyote Weather

JOHN KETWIG (REVIEWER)

Coyote Weather: A Novel of the 1960s
by Amanda Cockrell
Northampton House Press, 2023

Coyote Weather is a novel by an acquaintance. We met briefly at a book introduction event for a mutual friend. When she learned that I am the author of two books about the Vietnam War, she asked if I would take a look at her upcoming book and let her know what I thought.

Amanda Cockrell has a Master's degree in English and creative writing from Hollins University, an institution that is highly respected for its writing programs. In fact, Ms. Cockrell was the director of the MFA (Masters of Fine Arts) program in children's and adolescent literature at Hollins for many years and remains involved in the writing community at that school. She grew up in the Ojai Valley of California, and has written that *Coyote Weather* is "for the Ojai boys who went to war and didn't come back, or came back someone else, and for the ones who didn't go and were marked by it nonetheless." *Coyote Weather* is a California term for weather that bakes everything dry, brown and ready to catch fire. During those times, hungry coyotes are known to come down out

of the hills to eat people's cats and small dogs.

Coyote Weather succeeds in offering a realistic portrait of the realities we all had to deal with in the middle to late sixties. The war in Vietnam is far away, but it hangs like a giant dark umbrella over every aspect of life in those days. The story begins in 1967. Randy Ottley is in basic training, but his essence, his soul, sometimes escapes the confines of his body to float low and fast to home. The war is a dividing line that "scrapes everyone's nerves raw." Graduating from high school, Jerry refuses to make plans for the future because he is concerned that the Vietnam War is just a symptom, and the coming together of that war in Vietnam, the Cold War, and the ridiculous "duck and cover" atomic bomb drills in school are all indications that there won't be a future. He has no purpose, but is taking a minimal number of classes at the community college, just to stay clear of the draft. With nothing to do, he drops by the neighborhood arts center where a class in Irish folk dancing is taking place, and meets Ellen. She is, of course, young and beautiful, with long hair, the epitome of California fashion in 1967. She attends a college in Virginia, and while she is home for the summer she is working as a cub reporter for the local newspaper. Ellen dismisses Jerry's pessimism as she carefully plays by all the Establishment's rules. Well, almost.

If I write too much, I will give away the story line. Suffice to say that it is pertinent to the 1960s, fast-moving, and plausible. I found myself rooting for the main characters. The story line includes many of the obligatory happenings of the sixties, from a protest march to the draft, struggles with the generation gap, a commune, suicide, and far more. Once you're into the story, this is a page turner.

Surprisingly, the cast of characters are familiar. They will usually resemble someone you know, or knew back then. The action comes fast and hard, sometimes with calamitous consequences. The author has shaken the crumbs from her brain to recreate so many of the thoughts and ideals we felt when we were young, and daring us to revisit those challenging community sentiments and hard-drawn conclusions from so long ago. This is a nostalgic story, but it swoops and swirls across a broad spectrum of near-psychedelic themes

that will leave you, in today's political and social environments, wondering what the hell happened. It is a thought-provoking look back at where we came from that will encourage you to examine what you have become today in relation to the person you were back then. It is not for the faint-of-heart.

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JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF TWO CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED BOOKS ABOUT VIETNAM, ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.



VVAW members selling the Winter Soldier. Dave Curry on the right.

Dear John

EDWARD HAGERTY (REVIEWER)

Dear John: Love and Loyalty in Wartime America
by Susan L. Carruthers
(Cambridge University Press, 2022)

Given the title of this book one might suspect at first glance that it contains lurid tales of romance gone wrong or gloating anecdotes describing soldiers' revenge on unfaithful women. In less adept hands the book might easily have gone further in that salacious direction, and though there are of necessity plenty of examples provided to support her points, Susan Carruthers has taken a more scholarly approach that adds much to our understanding of the impact of "Dear John" letters on American military personnel from World War II through Operation Iraqi Freedom/Operation Enduring Freedom. The subtitle is equally important in identifying the scope of the book. Carruthers discusses how military leaders and some influential civilian supporters and commentators have shaped policies related to soldiers' personal relationships with significant others and, perhaps more importantly, molded the generalized perceptions of the women who authored "Dear John" letters. While the many detrimental effects of such letters are examined carefully and with scholarly care, the underlying message that frequently shows through in that analysis is that women, by and large, have been getting an unjustified bad rap. Though the impact of receiving a breakup letter can and likely does encompass many of the behaviors she identifies, there is much support for the underlying assertion that casting blame on the female authors of those letters is not universally warranted. No matter the truth of that conclusion, try telling it to a jilted John in a combat zone. Reactions to such emotional jolts almost universally elicited predictable negative consequences. I suspect that some readers have been there and could have contributed some stimulating comments to this discussion, but rather than focus on why women wrote "Dear John" letters, Carruthers focuses instead on "why other people have had so much to say about the severance of romantic ties between men and women in wartime" (18).

To address the issues of blame or causation for the breakdown of relationships, or to examine means to prevent or alleviate the emotional consequences of those failed connections, Carruthers delved deeply into a vast amount of literature ranging from military policy documents and Red Cross or chaplain and psychiatric records to popular literature such as film, novels, and songs. In addition, a trove of primary sources in the form of letters and other personal papers was consulted, along with the profusion of guidance that filled the pages of Women's magazines and poured forth from newspaper advice columnists. Of primary importance to her research, however, were recorded oral histories from veterans, which illustrated that the widespread "Dear John" phenomenon respected no race, rank, or branch of service.

One of the most interesting aspects of the book concerns how the services early on attempted to regulate soldiers' relationships so that they provided the proper mix of emotional, sexual, and practical support without jeopardizing the men's martial capabilities. Army regulations of the mid to late 1930s discouraged marriage among most enlisted personnel by mandating that regimental commanders give their approval, and by providing for punishments for failure to gain that approval prior to a marriage. World War II began to chip away at some of

the Army's hesitation, first when GIs began to father children and marry British women, and later when others wed Germans during the occupation. In the Pacific, it took a special presidential decree to temporarily lift a ban on Asian immigration before marriages to Japanese women were permitted. The requirement to obtain a commander's approval for marriage, however, remained in place until the 1980s, and as early as 1965, chaplains in Vietnam viewed marriages to "oriental war brides" as a "foremost problem" (44).

Policies in Vietnam illustrate the military's ineptitude in recognizing and addressing a problem of its own design. Draftees at first were nearly all single young men, yet these teenaged GIs were unjustly criticized for forming romantic relationships with Asian women. A secondary effect of an initial reluctance to draft married men led to a number of potential draftees marrying quickly to avoid being called up. President Johnson changed that policy in August 1965, with only married men with children remaining deferred. By 1970 even married fathers became subject to the draft. One can easily imagine that the large number of early marriages among young couples that took place before mature, stable relationships could take root led to a dramatic rise in the divorce rate. Undoubtedly some of those marriages crumbled under the stress of separation once married men were called to serve.

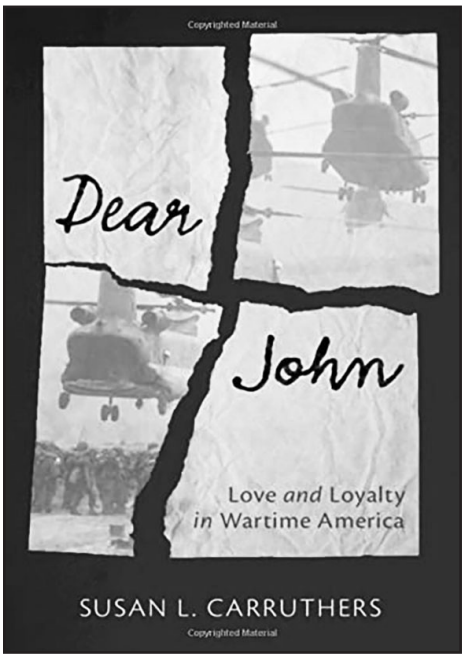
The 1980s saw a marked change in the Pentagon's attitudes towards marriage among its personnel. Only the Marines bucked the new shift to a more family-friendly environment. Moreover, the policy of discharging pregnant female service members had ended by 1975, opening the door to a wider acceptance of the concept of a military "family." The changes resulted in many challenges to the services. Marriages continued to fail at alarming rates (even more so among female personnel), and programs designed to strengthen the stability of military families were targeted mostly at the largest population—the wives of male service members. As Carruthers notes, the military services are still struggling with their angst and ambivalence about marriages, choosing to focus first on "wives as the disorderly force to be managed" (53). Like the proverbial Sword of Damocles, wives remain recognized both as a source of support as well as a prime source of a soldier's potential failure.

While receiving mail can boost a soldier's morale, the military has sought to impose policies governing even the most innocuous communication, and in that effort they were supported by the Red Cross and popular opinion. In 1942, for example, the War Department actively discouraged unknown women from writing to soldiers. Recipients of unsolicited letters were prohibited from replying to the writers. On the surface, reasons for discouraging such relationships concerned the potential distraction from duty it caused the soldier, and the potential damage to a young woman's reputation. More practically, it added to the burdens of an already struggling mail system. The postal service handled 28 billion pieces of mail in 1940, for example, and by 1945 the number had jumped to nearly 38 billion. Nonetheless, GIs almost universally ignored the proscription against correspondence and sought to exchange letters with any willing female. By the time of the Korean War, advertisements from GIs seeking correspondents appeared regularly in newspaper personals sections. During the Vietnam War, a concerted effort

was made to ensure no soldier went without mail. A California woman, Maynard "Mom" Jenkins, headed "Operation Mail Call," a network of about 60,000 letter writers. While not all were young women seeking to correspond with potential mates, Jenkins personally attended the weddings of nine couples who were put in touch through her network.

Even correspondence between couples whose relationship would have met with the military's approval was subject to guidance influenced by the services and by a host of self-help busybodies. Women in the 1940s, it was thought, required coaching not only on the lost art of letter writing, but on what was appropriate to share with soldiers and what was not. Books such as *The Infantry Journal's Handbook for Army Wives and Mothers* provided such guidance during World War II. The main goal of letter writing, such works presumed, was to build soldiers' morale. "Elevation of male self-esteem was a vital art to master," (71) Carruthers asserts. Women's needs for mutually satisfying intimacy played no role in the guidance. Meanwhile, servicemen overseas were plagued by fears of infidelity, which led many to rationalize their own sexual betrayals. Perhaps adding to the soldiers' fears was the growing number of "Dear John" letters received by other men in their unit. The term "Dear John" appeared and took root in the American vernacular as a result of a *New York Times* Sunday magazine story that coined the term in the fall of 1943. Media coverage of the problems caused by those letters led to much debate. Women who worried about how to convey an alteration in their feelings for a soldier were advised to conceal their change of heart. Their partner's vulnerability to emotional injury was considered too great a risk not to engage in a charade designed to conceal women's changed attachment. Remarkably, despite the so-called sexual revolution of the 1960s, young women in the Vietnam Era received precisely the same advice their parents had twenty years earlier. Some GIs in Vietnam disagreed with the stock recommendation, preferring to know the truth outright rather than puzzling over a decreased number of letters or obvious changes in a women's tone. Others considered a woman cowardly in waiting for the man's deployment before breaking up with him, but one universally despised type of letter was the "I thought you should know" sort that came from a concerned friend or relative disclosing the behavior of the soldier's wife or girlfriend. In all wars, some men harbored anger and resentment against women or the men who stole their affections. Sometimes those emotions led to violence and even murder. Eventually, lawyers even developed a "Dear John" defense in some of those lethal cases. Luckily those attorneys never had to face George Patton as a witness. During World War II the controversial and outspoken general told journalists that unfaithful women at home ought to be shot as traitors. The condemnation of such unfaithfulness, even if in less drastic terms, continues to this day.

Actual reactions to "Dear John" letters were typically more restrained. In World War II men often found relief by forming "Brush Off Clubs" in which jilted soldiers playfully bemoaned their status while scheming retaliation and ways to quickly find a replacement for a lost love. Soldiers also frequently shared their letters as a means to court sympathy and denigrate the sender. The shared stories of loss embraced camaraderie and brotherly bonds that exceed the norms of romantic love, yet also required "unreliable women as their foil" (131). Carruthers, however,



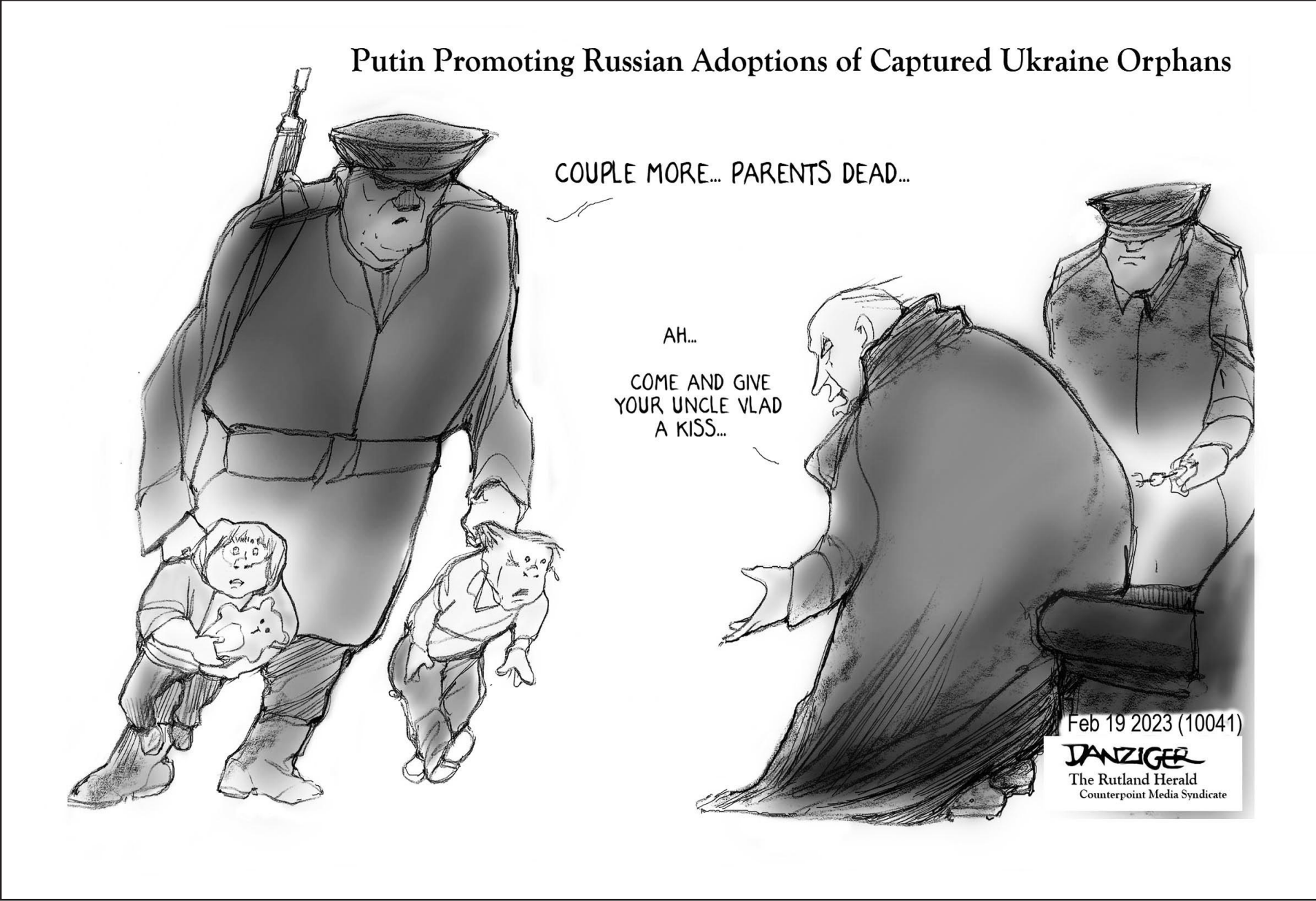
misses an opportunity to examine how such behavior may have been used as a successful coping mechanism. The chance to explore the real pain caused by many breakups is passed over there but surfaces later in another section of the book.

A chapter about waiting wives is devoted primarily to a discussion of spouses of Vietnam Era prisoners of war. Communications between POWs and their families were tightly controlled and restricted. The Department of Defense scrutinized all outgoing letters, which were limited to only six lines of text, as were POW letters home that were closely inspected by the North Vietnamese. Some wives formed POW activist groups that were surprisingly not anti-war but instead staunchly hawkish. They not only lobbied for a complete accounting of all POW and missing personnel in Vietnam, one group went so far as to support protracted hostilities in order to tie American withdrawal to the swift repatriation of POWs. One conservative woman even divorced her husband after he made anti-war statements in captivity. Others struggled to maintain their loyalty to husbands held captive as a result of participation in an increasingly unpopular war that chipped away at the kind of social support networks that had sustained women of their mothers' generation. In the end, Vietnam Era "Dear John" letters became emblematic of a troubled society with feelings of "abandonment, betrayal, [and] rejection" (178).

Letters eventually evolved over time due to technology, first being supplemented during the Vietnam War by taped voice recordings. While taped messages seem not to have been much utilized for "Dear John" purposes, the tantalizing prospect was the subject of a *M*A*S*H* episode televised in 1973, reinforcing already widely held beliefs about women's ill treatment of their men in Vietnam. In fact, one psychiatrist even introduced a psychopathology termed the "Dear John Syndrome" in 1969, which pertained to an increasingly hostile and hate-fueled tone of break-up letters from women, some of whom he alleged even sent along photos of themselves in compromising positions with their new love interests.

More frequent communication as a result of internet access in modern conflicts has been perceived either as a negative or as a mixed blessing at best. The ease of access places unrealistic expectations on deployed soldiers, sometimes leading to issues revolving around what psychologists have termed "incomplete separation" (106). Deployed personnel are physically separated and yet are expected to remain an integral part of home life. Constant involvement with spouse or family while remaining focused on the deployed mission "requires prodigious feats of emotional discipline" (107).

continued on page 23



Dear John

continued from page 22

Soldiers, moreover, still evince some preference for letters simply because of their portability and tangibility, not to mention their private nature in contrast to potentially monitored and censored electronic communications. Some even attribute talismanic properties to letters carried into danger, though that sentiment has largely fallen out of favor.

The book's last two chapters explore the ideas of emotional injury and suicide. After World War II the term "narcissistic injury" came into vogue in psychiatric literature and the term described an unhealthy self-regard rather than regret over lost love as being responsible for adverse reactions to "Dear John" missives. "Narcissists," asserted this diagnosis, "recoiled from blunt trauma to the ego," rather than to the heart (192). During the Vietnam Era, psychiatrists added "disorders of loneliness" as a diagnosis. Distinct from homesickness, this condition was said to have led to drug and alcohol-fueled attempts to escape reality, all of which were exacerbated by receipt of a "Dear John" letter by youthful GIs unable to adapt or cope with their situation. With twelve-month rotations, many men in Vietnam viewed their tour of duty as little more than a contest to survive. Genuine friendships, military psychiatrists thought, seldom blossomed among service members, and in the context of an emotionally hazardous environment a "powerful pseudo intimacy" (194) rather than close bonds emerged. Many men never kept in touch with anyone from their units once they returned home, and while this was not universally true of course, it does raise questions about the "stark contrast to the way in

which many Vietnam veterans have romanticized the transcendent love that bound men together in combat and thereafter" (194). Carruthers throws out that bomb without further comment, and while such speculation is not technically within the scope of the book's theme, it nevertheless bears further exploration. Though never having served in direct combat, it is reasonably simple to speculate about the many logical reasons why that might have been true in Vietnam, while readers who did serve in combat can undoubtedly dispute or effortlessly rationalize why that was or was not the case for them.

Though GIs throughout history have sometimes taken their own lives for a variety of reasons, it is a relatively recent phenomenon that the services have undertaken any systematic analysis of the issue, and such detail begins to shed some light on causation and the impact of "Dear John" communications. In Vietnam, MACV tracked 379 suicides. It was thought at the time that broken romantic ties led to a significant number of those deaths. By 2008 the annual rate of US Army suicides at 20.2 per 100,000 exceeded that of the US civilian population. More soldiers died by their own hands that year than by enemy action. Army-wide suicides reached a new high of 323 in 2012. Studies conducted across DoD largely concluded that there was little correlation between deployments and suicides, leading to closer scrutiny of interpersonal relationships as a possible cause. It soon became an accepted rationale that failed relationships played a significant role in suicides, though Carruthers brings to light some of the methodological flaws leading to those

conclusions. It was, she contends, simpler for the military to blame failed relationships than to look more deeply at the real impact of deployments during the nation's longest war. Military programs designed to strengthen family relationships still focus on the female spouse's role in ensuring their soldier husband's stable mental health, but an approach based on mutual fulfillment has evolved. Nonetheless it remained primarily the wife's job to undertake the lion's share of the emotional work needed to provide stability. Yet break-ups remain prevalent among military couples, and many commanders persist on focusing on that aspect in the wake of suicides rather than examining the bigger picture of what events caused the disintegration of a relationship. Women, Carruthers continues to maintain, still bear the brunt of the blame, often with no consideration of how the man's actions might have contributed to failure. Instead, the "Dear John" letter is all that remains to leave "female fingerprints on the figurative smoking gun" (237).

Carruthers ends with an incisive conclusion summarizing her main points and illustrating that "seven decades of Jody calls and Dear John stories suggest that men in uniform have continued to endow the specter of female disloyalty with potent integrative properties" (247), while the services have found it convenient to use "Dear John" tales as justification that deflects from other possible causes of a GI's actions. All of that leads Carruthers to bemoan the fact that the traditional "Dear John" story ignores the voices of the women who wrote them and ultimately leads to the assertion that women, not warfare,

constitute the prime offender in failed relationships.

One might ask why such a close examination of "Love and Loyalty" is relevant, but given today's rate of broken relationships and suicides, it is clearly evident that DoD must reexamine its approach to how it treats the military "family" and the myriad issues that arise from family life. Moreover, it is incumbent upon good military leaders to be educated and attuned to the kinds of issues that lead to family dysfunction and suicides. More importantly, an understanding of the conditions that lead people to take desperate measures must also lead to knowledgeable and effective means of intervention from peer level through leadership level, and lastly at the institutional level. The "Brush-off Clubs" of the 1940s were a lighthearted façade, but many a truth is said in jest. A broken heart and all the reasons that lead to it are no joking matter. Carruthers' scholarly treatment of the subject challenges us to think carefully about being so cavalier about such a serious issue. The book is well worth reading on that account. It will be interesting to see if subsequent research can delve more deeply into the letter writers' side of the story.



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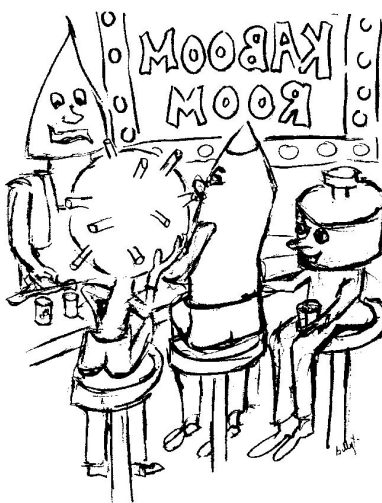

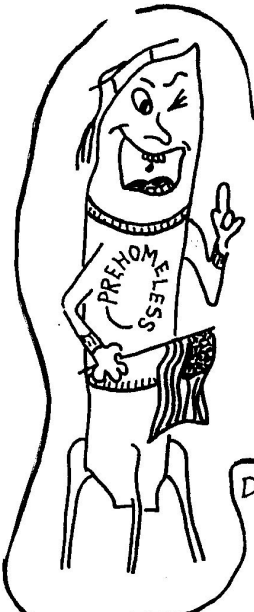
Long Island demo, 1971.

VA Admission

Just before Veterans Day,
The VA sent a letter
Declaring that I'm 100 percent
Disabled from disabilities
That struck late in life
Due to the war in Vietnam—
This is beyond amazing—
Not that long ago
The VA told Vietnam vets
It was all in our heads,
That our mothers caused our problems,
That it was none of their business—
I could tick off the insults
Decade by decade—
And now, just like that,
I'm accepted into the inner
Sanctum of war heroes—
No Purple Heart,
But an Agent Orange
Admission ticket to VA care

— Jan Barry
Warrior Writers workshop 11/13/22



 <p>THE SMART Bomb</p> <p>Hi Ya Kids! I'm a Really Smart Bomb!</p> <p>MORON</p>	<p>Empire Builders Create Divisions.</p> <p>"Others" Are Lesser Beings To Be Used...</p> <p>Up!</p>  <p>They DIVIDE By Age Sex Race Religion Ethnicity Hair Color shoe size Etc. & CONQUER</p>	
<p>Find Your Allies Wherever They May Be.</p>  <p>Stick Together To Overcome Greed!</p>	 <p>We Are All Related! "Mitákuye Oyás'in"!</p>	 <p>People United Will Never Be Defeated!</p> <p>©2023 Billy X</p>

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

The middle panel - in the bottom row - of the latest Oxy was exhumed from my archives. It's from a poster I did for VVAW's 3rd Annual Labor Day Peace & Solidarity Parade in Milwaukee (circa: 1970). I sometimes try to join the past to the present. Labor struggles and the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) inspired me. The poster had credits to the labor cartoonists "Hobo Wobbly Joe Troy", Arthur Morse and Whitey that still seem appropriate. History repeats as the union movement rebuilds. —Billy X



THE VETERAN

SECTION D

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A Tribute to John Prados

ELLEN PINZUR

John Prados (born January 9, 1951 hated that he shared Richard Nixon's birth date!) died on November 29, 2022, in Silver Spring, Maryland. After 25 years together, I was by his side, holding his hand when he took his last breath. He had been 6'1" tall; weighed around 190 pounds; had tightly curled hair which he wore pulled back into a short, fuzzy pony tail; and almond-shaped dark brown eyes that lit up with joy when he was happy or amused. He gave himself the nickname of "Gato," which is Spanish for cat. He had excellent posture, ramrod straight, yet moved with the grace of a feline. If you met him, you would remember.

John was a renowned author of more than 25 books, covering military and intelligence history from World War II through Dien Bien Phu, the whole of the Vietnam War, the invasion of Iraq and early tapings of presidential records. In addition, John edited a number of well-received, major document compilations in the Digital National Security Archive series, especially covering Vietnam and the history of the CIA. In addition, he was generous with his time and knowledge to help other scholars, students, and reporters understand and learn more about various areas of interest.

John enjoyed playing and designing war games; he felt that such games worked with his findings about how wars came about and were pursued. He understood that wars didn't necessarily have to turn out the way they did—human choice made a difference.

It may sound strange to some that an intense interest in military history and an avid enjoyment of wargaming could go together with a loathing of war itself. He understood that those who know most about war, either through study or through combat experience are often those who take it most seriously and recognize its horrors as much as its fascination and occasional glories.

And while he could be scathingly critical of many military leaders and politicians, he was always deeply moved by the courage and suffering of the grunts who did the fighting—all of them—American, Vietnamese, Japanese... Union and Confederate... all of them.

He was committed to telling the truth about US involvement in foreign affairs, i.e., war—he explained in so

many of his works that the US backed the wrong man, or the wrong policy and that the soldiers sent into battle paid the price.

John's death was reported on line by a moving tribute on the *National Security Archive* and with extensive obituaries at the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*.

But one of the most important aspects of John's life was not mentioned in any of those tributes—and that was his life membership in and full support of Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

John worked out of the New York branch office and participated as a draft counselor and activist, including the march to Valley Forge in 1971, the protests at the trial of the Gainesville 8 in 1973, the protest in front of the Whitehall Selective Service Induction Building, and the myriad anti-war protests in the New York and Washington, DC, area. He also was heartbroken to learn that there were FBI informants among those he considered his friends at VVAW.

John was very proud that he attended many of the VVAW reunions over the years. He never got over the fact that he never got to hear Country Joe McDonald during the 25th Reunion in New York (he was nursing an inebriated friend) nor at the 35th in Milwaukee (when he, Brian Matarrese and I were in a car accident on our way to the festivities—we weren't hurt but we were delayed!).

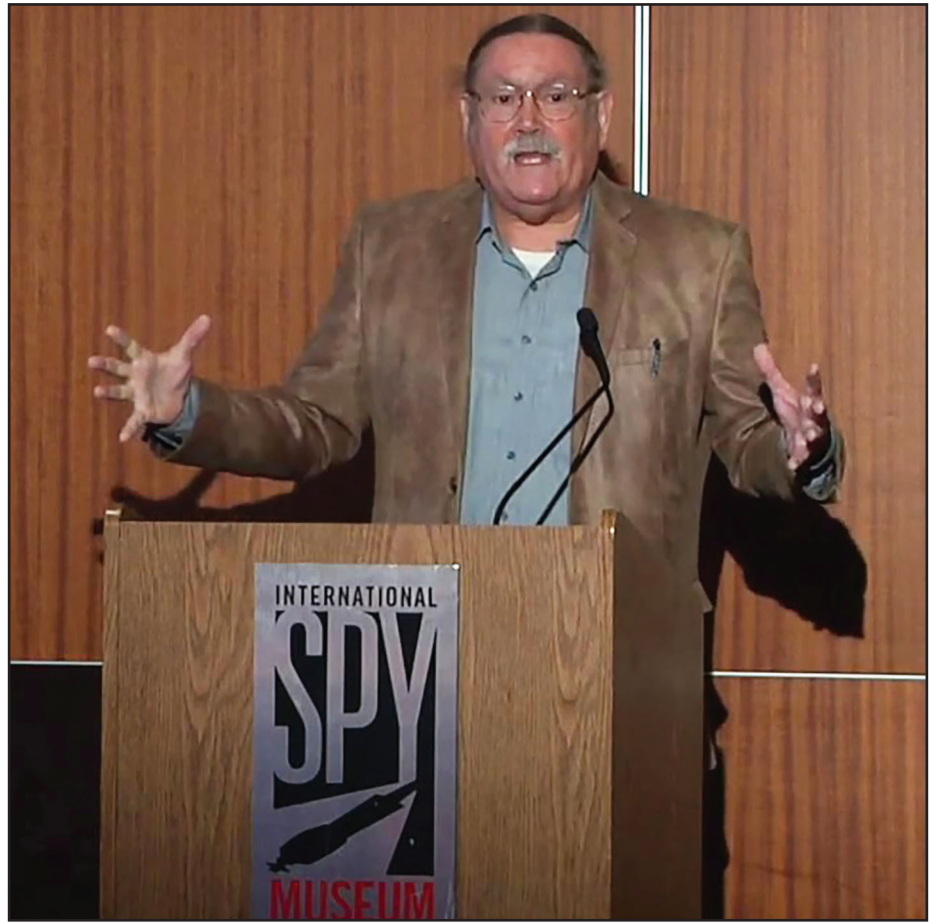
John knew and lived by the principle that you cannot kill for peace.

Links to obituaries:

- [nsarchive.gwu.edu/news/intelligence-vietnam/2022-11-30/memorial-john-prados-1951-2022](https://www.nsarchive.gwu.edu/news/intelligence-vietnam/2022-11-30/memorial-john-prados-1951-2022)
- www.nytimes.com/2022/12/03/books/john-prados-dead.html
- www.washingtonpost.com/obituaries/2022/12/05/john-prados-classified-documents-dead/



IN 2000 ELLEN PINZUR MOVED FROM BOSTON TO SILVER SPRING, MD, TO LIVE WITH JOHN AND HAVE THE GRAND ADVENTURE OF THEIR LIVES, AFTER HAVING MET AT THE 2ND TRIENNIAL VIETNAM SYMPOSIUM AT TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY IN LUBBOCK, TEXAS. AND WHEREAS MOST PEOPLE WILL SAY THAT PARIS IS THE MOST ROMANTIC CITY IN THE WORLD—JOHN AND I CITED LUBBOCK IN OUR WORLD!



John Prados at the International Spy Museum, Washington, DC, 2008.



John Prados at Olsson's Books and Records, Washington, DC, on the publication of his book *Hoodwinked*, 2004.



John Prados at VVAW's 40th Anniversary in Chicago, 2007.



Horace Coleman and John Prados at VVAW's 40th Anniversary in Chicago, 2007.

Louis De Benedette, ¡Presente!

VVAW

Louis De Benedette, perennial thorn in the side of the School of the Americas and member of the Clarence Fitch Chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, passed away in October 2022. He was 79. His anti-war history began after he joined the Army in 1966, when he quickly realized the war in Vietnam was contrary to his beliefs as a Catholic and told his commanding officer that "the war is immoral, and God does not want us to fight in it." He was eventually discharged from the military and returned to his home in Newark where he became a county welfare caseworker. While in New York City for an anti-war demonstration, Louie found a small group of Vietnam veterans under the banner Vietnam Veterans Against the War and joined VVAW. He was a committed member of VVAW and passed out copies of *The Veteran* for years.

He was arrested and jailed numerous times for anti-nuclear actions, and later he made many trips to Central and South America to bear witness against US war-making there. He wrote about these trips for *The Veteran*, and Ben Chitty noted in 1996 that "Brother Louis De Benedette, member of the Clarence Fitch Chapter of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, has started his 4-month sentence for actions at the School of the Americas on Veterans Day 1995. Louie is incarcerated in the federal correctional facility at Otisville, New York, an old Army camp converted to a prison—Louie probably does not feel right at home..."

When the US began its Afghanistan and Iraq wars, Louie helped start a peace vigil on a busy Ithaca street corner, and these vigils continue on a weekly basis.

VVAW was very important to Louie as can be seen by his articles for *The Veteran*. "My VVAW brothers and sisters have stood by me during some very difficult times," he often said. Despite a significant lifelong mental illness, Louie remained committed to resisting militarism and was greatly valued by the peace and justice community.

Brother Louie, ¡Presente!



Louie De Benedette (far right) in Nicaragua.



Louie De Benedette in Peru.

Memories of Steve Klinkhammer

JOHN ZUTZ

If you were on the volleyball court at a VVAW July 4 campout, you probably played with (or against) Steve Klinkhammer. Steve was likely the organizer, and it seemed he wouldn't quit. He outplayed many of the kids.

This is a quality that governed his life.

Steve had the misfortune of living in Racine, so those of us in Milwaukee or Chicago didn't have a lot of direct contact. But news of his actions and accomplishments came often. Steve was the "Energizer

Bunny" of Racine County. He kept moving and he worked hard to attract attention. He was tireless in his efforts to improve his community.

Stephen joined the Navy out of high school and served two tours in Vietnam. He was on the USS America (CVA66) in the Gulf of Tonkin when the war ended in 1973, and served again with Surgical Team 6, attached to the 2nd/9th Marines for the evacuation of refugees from Saigon in the spring and summer of 1975 setting up refugee camps and providing care for them in camps from the Philippines to Guam.



I particularly remember attending the annual Halloween Costume Ball at the Racine Memorial Hall. I recall when Steve and his buddies painted themselves bronze and posed as a duplicate of the Three Men statue that stands at The Wall. I know he was a mover in the recent rehabilitation of Racine's Legacy Museum and Veterans Museum. Steve raised money to open a bar/restaurant inside the Racine Vets

Center called the Foxhole Lounge.

He was an active leader in many veterans groups. He organized food drives and fundraisers, among other events. He made a difference. He made the world a better place and he will be missed by many.



JOHN ZUTZ IS A MILWAUKEE VVAW MEMBER.



Cornelius Hawkrige Obituary

JOHN KETWIG

I am sad to report the passing of Cornelius Hawkrige, who I consider to be one of the few true heroes of our American war in Vietnam. Mr. Hawkrige was 95 years old, and a resident in an assisted living facility in Missouri. He was somewhat of a recluse, a fugitive from his past, but he was also my friend.

A book, *The Greedy War* by James Hamilton-Paterson, tells Hawkrige's story. I consider *The Greedy War* (British title *A Very Personal War*) to be the best book I've ever found about the war in Vietnam. It took me a long time to find a copy, back in the days before the internet. Time after time, used bookstores that offered search services would try for weeks or months, and ultimately tell me, "It's suppressed. There are certain books the government doesn't want you to read, and they disappear. I'm sorry, but I can't find one." I found it hard to believe in "the land of the free" where freedom of the press is at the very top of the Bill of Rights. I finally found one in a used bookstore! I guarded that book like it was gold. And, I began to look for Cornelius Hawkrige. I wanted to shake his hand and thank him for what he had done.

Hawkrige was British, but he grew up in Hungary. After World War II, Hungary found itself behind the "Iron Curtain," dominated by the Soviet Union. As tensions increased, Hawkrige took part in acts of rebellion against the Soviets and was sentenced to life in a gulag coal mine. One day, for reasons he never discovered, he was released. He returned to Budapest, where the Hungarian revolution was raging, and one morning he saw a Russian tank rumbling into the neighborhood. Hawkrige escaped to Austria on foot, where the CIA interviewed him about the gulags, and in appreciation, they flew him to the US. He found employment with a security firm involved in the occupation in the Dominican Republic. He was deeply troubled when he saw the government officials living in great luxury while the common people were penniless and mistreated. Many of the items designated for the poor, including food, were instead diverted to the black market. One of Hawkrige's co-workers noted his hatred for communism and suggested he investigate the company's operations in Vietnam, working alongside the American military. If he transferred there, he would join the forces opposing communism, and he would earn significantly more.

The Vietnamese had learned to steal the enormous wealth Americans brought to their impoverished country. For instance, by law, all cargo had to

be unloaded from ships and planes by Vietnamese stevedores. From his very first days in-country, Hawkrige heard complaints that up to 80% of all the goods loaded onto trucks and transported to their American military destinations never arrived. He investigated and saw whole convoys detouring and unloading their cargoes downtown. When he reported this, he was told to look the other way. He even managed to meet General Westmoreland, who told him, "You have an opportunity to become a rich man. Shut up, play along, and you will get rich. Don't make waves."

Hawkrige was appalled, and he began contacting Congressmen and Senators. On a trip back home to the States, he was driving on a mountain road when a truck pulled alongside and forced him off the road. His wife was killed, and Hawkrige spent months in a wheelchair. He was invited to testify before the Senate Subcommittee on Investigations, chaired by Senator Abraham Ribicoff. From his wheelchair, Hawkrige described the corruption happening in Vietnam, the money-changing, and the military's obvious participation in it. Surprisingly, he was not allowed to talk about the loss of goods to the black market or the enemy. In mid-July of 1969, *Life* magazine did an article revealing not only his testimony but also his great distress over the theft of goods shipped to our military. That was supposed to be the cover story that week, until Ted Kennedy drove a Buick off a bridge in Chappaquiddick, Massachusetts.

I was determined to meet Cornelius Hawkrige and shake his hand. I wrote to the publisher of *The Greedy War*, and months later they informed me that they couldn't be of any assistance. I found a recent novel by James Hamilton-Paterson and wrote to him. More months went by, as I learned that Paterson lives half of each year in a grass hut in the Philippines and the other half in Tuscany. (He says he cannot write about modern civilization while participating in it, so he does most of his writing in the Philippines.) After a long wait, he responded to my inquiry, providing a few names of people Hawkrige considered friends. He warned that Hawkrige was intensely private, as he believed sinister forces were still trying to kill him. One of the names Paterson suggested was a writer for *Time-Life*, who had done the *Life* magazine article. I managed to connect with that writer by phone, and he flatly denied that he had written it, or that he knew anything about Cornelius Hawkrige. Finally, I contacted a retired Air Force officer in Texas, and his wife offered to contact



Cornelius Hawkrige.

Hawkrige to see if she could provide his address or phone number. He called me one evening, and we had a long and spirited conversation. I had spent 7½ years trying to find him.

At that point, I was working, and traveling constantly, and Cornelius was far more inclined to write, so we exchanged letters. He typed and was always very open about his Southeast Asia experiences. For a long time, we talked on the phone about once a month. I think it was about 2003 that my wife and I planned a vacation trip and spent a couple of days visiting his farm. Once we got past the dilapidated guard shack at the gate, I finally got to shake his hand and we talked for hours about his adventures. We got on well, and I regularly talked with him by telephone. His advancing age became a factor, as he could no longer type letters, and his hearing deteriorated to the point where I would have to shout into the phone. Since retiring, we have visited about once a year. Cornelius was a voracious reader. I combed through used bookstores for the types of non-fiction he liked, and

sent them often, by the box load, by media mail. Then, a couple of years ago, it became necessary to move him to an assisted living home, and he refused to talk on the phone from there. He enjoyed letters, and Carolyn and I both wrote to him, adjusting our printer to produce big, dark print. We saw him last October, he was 95 years old and frail, and he passed away on November 6th. That was less than three weeks after our final visit.

Cornelius Hawkrige was a recluse, believing to his dying day that agents of the old KGB were looking for him, intending to kill him. I was careful to maintain his privacy. He was a rigid man, in the old-world European manner. He never smoked, never tried any form of alcohol, and never used any profanity. A Great Pyrenees dog was his only companion. His one great appetite was for cheesecake, and we sent him large assortments of cheesecakes every year for his birthday and Christmas. He seemed to enjoy our visits when we would "chew the fat," most often about the corruption he had seen in Vietnam, his efforts to do something about it, and the deteriorating world situation. Cornelius Hawkrige was a genuine hero of the Vietnam War, but he could have done so much more if anyone had listened to him. The truth about the war was carefully and systematically covered up or ignored in those days, amid widespread corruption and profiteering.

Over more than thirty years, I learned to love Cornelius Hawkrige as a good, simple, honest man who attempted to expose the disgusting truth about America's way of waging war. I hope he is resting in peace now.



JOHN KETWIG IS A LIFETIME MEMBER OF VVAW, AND THE AUTHOR OF TWO CRITICALLY-ACCLAIMED BOOKS ABOUT VIETNAM, ...AND A HARD RAIN FELL AND VIETNAM RECONSIDERED: THE WAR, THE TIMES, AND WHY THEY MATTER.

In Russia Everyone is Reading Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-four



Feb 22 2023 (10042)

DANZIGER
The Rutland Herald
Counterpoint Media Syndicate

Grave Removal in Northern Quang Tri Province, late 1966

PAUL NICHOLS

Early during my tour of duty in I Corps, I was sent to the outskirts, barely within the coiled concertina wire perimeter to guard Vietnamese peasants while they dug up remnants of buried family members. Ominous tree lines stared from across a rice paddy expanse.

"Our" battalion area was in the expansion process on their land. Many Vietnamese graves located in this area of the Dong Ha combat base had been indiscriminately bulldozed away, causing diplomatic concerns somewhere up the line between South Vietnamese and US governments. To help appease such concerns, grave removal was ordered when possible under close guard by Marines of the 3rd Engineer Battalion.

As I stood near them with my rifle in hand, carefully watching their every move, I had no empathy for what they were forced to do. I did not know of ancestor reverence which, linked to ancient Confucian beliefs, was of monumental importance to Vietnamese culture. Even had I been aware of these values, my disdain would have been fueled by ingrained ethnocentrism, anger, and hatred. The Vietnamese people were dehumanized from Parris Island boot camp through Camp Geiger, Las Pulgas, and Okinawa, where I embarked on an assault ship to the Cua Viet River

near the DMZ.

My job was to assure that these peasants weren't Viet Cong digging holes and burying mortars or other weapons for use in planned attacks under the darkness of night. It was nearly impossible to tell who was who among the general population. The Vietnamese dug into the red soil at various gravesites extracting fragments of ancestral bone and body parts for relocation elsewhere. Bone was caringly placed in small wooden boxes, as the Vietnamese jabbered and mouthed a handful of rice during the digging. I watched, void of compassion. We had often been rocketed at night. "Compassion" was just a word from dictionaries. Years after I left the war with lifelong wounds this experience remains very troubling to me.

Occupying large areas of Vietnamese land, disfiguring it and the intrinsic values it held, and inhumanly assaulting sacred ground to establish "our" combat base, instills no pride in me. I think of how Native American people felt when subjected to broken treaties. For example, when their sacred Black Hills of South Dakota and Wyoming were violently taken over, mined for gold, and developed by greedy, bigoted, white outsiders during the mid-to late 1800s. I feel



Vietnamese peasants digging up ancestor remains in northern Quang Tri Province

deep shame that our country's military decimated indigenous populations and involuntarily forced tribes to live on squalid reservations, destroying their way of life.

Ongoing dark sides of US history countrywide. Ongoing worldwide! We all need to gaze into a mirror and contemplate.

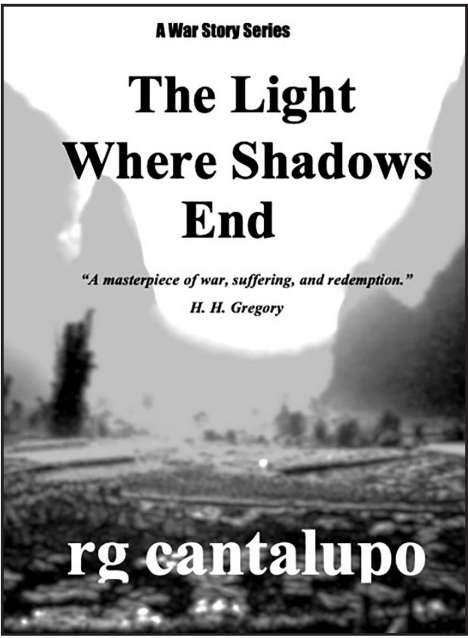
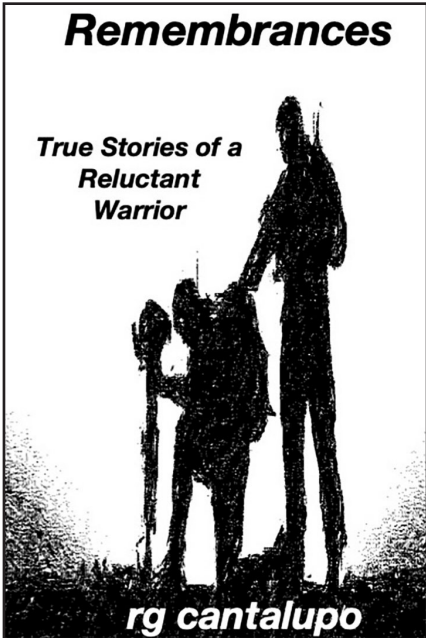
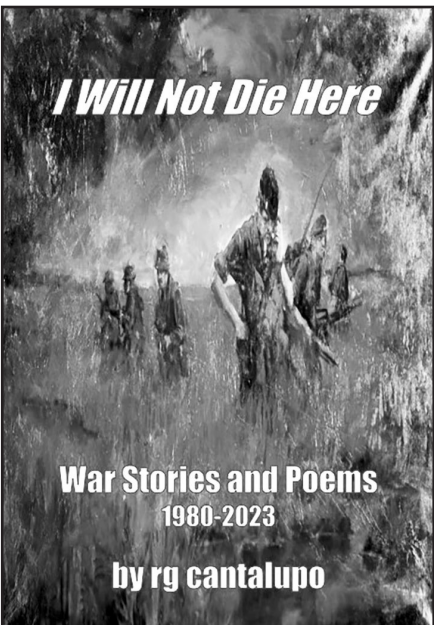
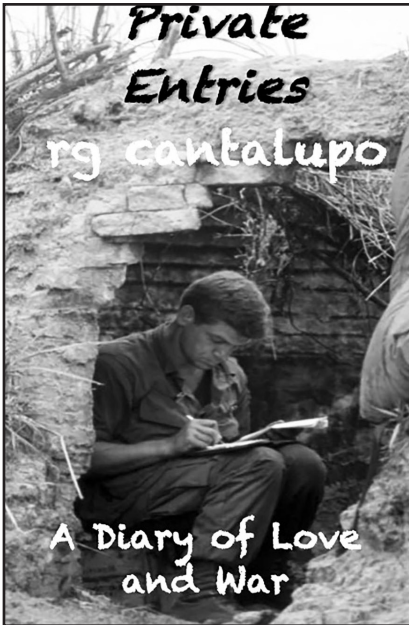


PAUL NICHOLS WAS DRAFTED IN LATE 1965. FOLLOWING FAMILY TRADITION, HE IMMEDIATELY ENLISTED IN THE MARINE CORPS. WITHIN A YEAR HE SERVED WITH THE 3RD ENGINEER BATTALION IN THE I CORPS REGION OF VIETNAM WHERE HE WAS SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN 1967.

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Marching to a Silent Tune

A Journey from
We Shall to Hell No

GERALD R. GIOGLIO

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

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From Dealey Plaza to Gulf of Tonkin

JOHN CRANDELL

Random thoughts on the leadup to Lyndon's Big Lie (The first of a three-part dissection of LBJ).

Statistics were ever the bottom line with Robert Strange McNamara. Numbers were his only mantra. Once installed at the Pentagon early in 1961 he brought in his "Whiz Kids" and having received carte blanche from JFK, began a top-to-bottom review of the entire defense program. His deadline ran right into the brick wall of normative operations in the five rings of the five-sided Pentagon. His management techniques gained in formulating firebombing of cities in World War II, in college studies, and rising through the ranks at Ford, Inc. quickly were short-circuited by military bureaucracy. Added power granted by Kennedy allowed him to push aside and largely ignore the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In White House meetings, they would never volunteer a word of advice unless asked and their mute reticence irked Kennedy. He downgraded their value and brought Maxwell Taylor out of retirement to try and ease the friction. Being pushed aside, the analytic input of the Chiefs became lost amid McNamara's predilection for dominance. Also, the arrogance of the cigar-chomping General Curtiss LeMay annoyed the hero of PT-109. LeMay sat immediately to the left of Taylor in meetings in the Roosevelt Room. Their antagonism towards one another soon became legendary. Taylor hated tobacco smoke. LeMay would light up and puff blue clouds out of the right side of his mouth. And Taylor was not the only recipient of abuse. When Kennedy refused to order the immediate bombing of Cuba in the 1962 Missile Crisis, LeMay left the door open while relieving himself in the president's Oval Office restroom—for all to hear. He was the all-time loose howitzer in relations between the Pentagon and the White House and would soon be immortalized by actor Slim Pickens in the film *Doctor Strangelove*.

The Whiz Kids disparaged sole reliance upon military experience. The circuit breaker would blow on their quantitative analysis come the third day of January, with Kennedy nearing two years in office. That had come with the infamous Battle of Ap Bac south of Saigon, the engagement of ARVN and Viet Minh forces which illustrated ARVN command's reluctance to engage despite advisor John Paul Vann's advice. Guerilla marksmen had improved their aim and brought down several American helicopters. With the disastrous results reported by Halberstam and Sheehan, Taylor dispatched General Earl Wheeler to Saigon for an assessment. The general returned to Washington and delivered a damped-down report. To have rendered an accurate assessment would have stood as an embarrassment to the Kennedy administration's efforts in counterinsurgency. A spot-on report would have pictured

the South Vietnamese military as a gaggle of idiots kowtowing to a corrupt, repressive dictatorship; would have stood diametrically in contrast to political necessities in the US capital. An adequate report would also have revealed in-country commander General Paul Harkins as being a deluded lunatic and that he and Ambassador Lodge were at each other's throats.

By November of 1963, Taylor had become chairman of the Joint Chiefs. Three of its members had been reassigned under the administration's effort to get Pentagon commanders to get with it. Only LeMay remained due to his influence in Congress. Army General Decker had advised McNamara that the American military could not win a conventional war in southeast Asia—and was forced to retire as a result. Also forced to retire was Navy Admiral George Anderson who had gotten in McNamara's face during the 1961 Bay of Pigs fiasco. Georgie was never forgiven.

After Kennedy's death, what had been his distaste for the military mindset was replaced by a simulacrum in Lyndon Johnson's rabid need for support, consensus, and approval. The new chief executive was notoriously averse to dissent and was obsessed with the need to project unity. Customary interservice rivalries among the chiefs resulted in his brushing them aside, with a long-drawn-out tragic result. McNamara and Taylor were dispatched to Saigon for an assessment in the second week of March of 1964. Upon return, McNamara reported Harkins as being self-delusive and inept in his performance. In June he was replaced by Westmoreland who in turn proceeded to continually cook the books in assessing NLF/NVA strength. By then, McNamara had come to realize that the Chief's intelligence reports served primarily as a means for the acquisition of greater resources and so decided to pay little heed. However, as the cost of increased materiel for assisting South Vietnam rose, McNamara deliberately underestimated 1963-1964 spending and later expressed surprise when forecasts were exceeded so that Johnson could expand domestic spending. As costs rose in future years, he would continue to produce doctored numbers to satisfy Johnson's desire to mislead Congress and the nation. He'd quickly become the favorite among Johnson's cabinet by fully supporting Johnson's nullification of Kennedy's NSAM conceived for an immediate one-thousand-man reduction and a rapid withdrawal of American personnel following the fall election of 1964. An insidious aspect lay with LBJ's favoritism. McGeorge Bundy, national security advisor to both Kennedy and Johnson would eventually describe the latter as being "the wariest man about whom to trust that I have ever encountered." Bingo. Anyone halfway familiar with Johnson's sordid career before 1960 can see much in that statement.



Prior to his appointment as ambassador to Laos, William Sullivan had served as assistant to White House advisor Averill Harriman and had occupied several desks at Foggy Bottom. In February of 1964 he was given specific Oval Office instructions—tasked with collecting opinions from various federal departments on the issue of how best to proceed in Vietnam. Pressure from somewhere had called for taking more active military measures and it wasn't coming from the Pentagon. Right off, Curtis LeMay told him that the current policy "would result in US involvement over an indefinite period with no light in sight." Other Joint Chiefs rumbled that Americans would not support a limited involvement. Taylor weighed in, voicing that Americans would sour over an involvement extending past 1965. LBJ had given Sullivan orders to formulate only one single path, and nothing more: "a slow, very slow escalation" of aerial bombardment of the north. This was a full year in advance of what became the game-changing NLF attack on Camp Holloway at Pleiku. Eyeing the November election, Johnson in no way wanted to create a comparison with the nation's experience in Korea. His long-time associates and benefactors back home in Texas quite likely were the source of pressure. The fact was that they had leverage, and lots of it.

Half a century later, for his 2014 master's thesis at Fort Leavenworth, Major Jeffrey Quail set out to prove that beginning in 1963, a decade of corporate operational contract support of Pentagon ops in Vietnam "positively affected the future logistical capabilities of the US Military." He was duly awarded a master's degree from the Army's School of Advanced Military Studies. He ought to have dedicated his study to Lyndon Baines Johnson—as he inadvertently revealed the primal factor in the US having invaded a small nation on the other side of planet Earth.

The downgrade of the Joint Chiefs' input had served to fortify McNamara's dominance of the department. He could dominate on one side of the Potomac and wantonly wag his tail on the other. That's why 'Ol Hang Dog loved him. One month following the assassination in Dallas,

LBJ telephoned McNamara from the Johnson Ranch on Christmas Day with a curious holiday greeting. Only four weeks had lapsed since Kennedy's brains had been blown to smithereens. He said this to the strange man: "You are one of the nicest things about this Christmas. You've made our year mighty comforting to know you're around. There's no one in government that means more than you, and I just wanted to say that to you." Many years later McNamara would relate that his actions under Kennedy during the Missile Crisis had been a personal triumph (after first having recommended an invasion), that he'd learned much during his first year and nine months as SecDef, that by then his views had become "pretty well fixed" and he then turned his attention to South Vietnam with full confidence.

The South Vietnamese government's sway in the provinces weakened during the first half of 1964 and McNamara and Taylor made a second trip across the Pacific. Arriving back in the Pentagon, the Brilliantined SecDef wrote a report containing three options, each one conceived in view of the November election. By his actions since JFK's death and his having been in accord with Kennedy's plans for withdrawal and then wagging his tail for war for Johnson's political welfare, McNamara became America's elemental hegemon of the coming eleven-year disaster. He would always speak with wide-eyed gonzoid authority. Ironically, even in attempting to account for all of the wrong decisions speaking to the press following the publication of his book *In Retrospect* in 1996, he was never undone or abjectly ridden about his and Johnson's malevolence. Interviewed by Errol Morris in the 2003 film *The Fog of War*, his pepped-up enthusiasm comes through in spades. He seems enthralled to have finally realized he had made an inordinate statistical error. And sadly, the foremost conclusion after reading his son's harrowing memoir—*Because Our Fathers Lied*, is that Craig McNamara never fully came to grips with his dad having clearly signed off on him early on. While he was in prep school in New Hampshire, he called his father, and made a request to be sent government leaflets regards Vietnam, background information for an upcoming teach-in on the reality of US involvement circa 1966. Silence ensued. Craig was near going overboard, off the boat. Yet no memoir has better delineated that time in American history. Getting off of his father's craft freed him up, allowed for his embrace of the world as it is, and quite an adventurous life his has been.



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.



VVAW literature table, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1973.

Keep Singing

GEORGE CRITCH

To the editor:

A brief intro; I am a long-time admirer of your efforts to carry the torch of peace. When I returned from my exposure to the war I marched in peace vigils but to be honest, it was about the women, I was just trying to fit in. And the hippie women were cool and I wasn't. I knew the war was fucked up but I never thought we could stop it. I have to admit I was not worldly at all.

My awakening came about while in-country. Our participation in an operation in the delta had been successful, in the view of the warlords. When the after-action report came back with numbers that quantified the success, I relayed them to my friend who had been asleep, and missed the count. After he came out with a butt and a cup of mud I excitedly relayed

the report to him. His response to my recitation of numbers was, and I quote, "how many churches and schools did we hit?" It was my epiphany and we are still the best of friends. We talk every Sunday night on the phone.

After that conversation, I looked at everything we did with a different slant. There wasn't just an enemy out there. There were innocent people who were affected by our actions. That revelation has never left me. The many subsistence fishing vessels that we inspected and harassed were the homes of poor people struggling to feed themselves. We were invading their life.

Two years ago I got a bad life forecast and had major surgery. I was laying in the pre-op when the anesthesiologist approached and started a conversation. She explained

that her parents had escaped Vietnam with the collapse and how guilty and fortunate she felt to be in a major university hospital and how she wanted to give back and return to the country that she never knew. She had survivor's guilt; she was lovely and gentle; we spoke and I explained the ache in my soul over my participation in the war and how I interacted with boat people and the fisherman of the delta. She reached out and asked me how old I was in the war. When I responded "eighteen," a tear rolled down her cheek. She was a mother and compassionate.

So for you guys that have carried the anti-war torch for so long, I include you in the legions of the compassionate that I have met on my journey, and here are some words in consideration of those such as yourselves:

Keep singing!!!

Your inner song
Is strong
It pulls one along
As the river
Drags
All it snags
Becomes part
Of. It's throng
Caught in the current
Mixed with the inherent
Tune of the cacophony
Of its melody
So keep singing
Your inner song
Let the vibration
Ripple like a wave, long and true
Through the blue
Of the deep of your inner song
And you will never be wrong



Letter to the Editor

Dear *The Veteran*,

I was shocked by a quote from Dr. Edward Tick in John Ketwig's review of *Coming Home in Vietnam* in the Fall 2022 issue of *The Veteran*. "The Vietnamese people don't experience PTSD. 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." This statement is both bizarre and incredible.

While PTSD was first recognized in combat veterans, PTSD is a psycho/physiological response to trauma and shock. If you are picked up and flung forcibly against a wall, you experience trauma and possibly also shock. It does not matter what threw you against the wall. A bomb, a rocket attack, artillery fire, a gas leak in a kitchen, a tornado, an earthquake, a runaway truck striking the building,

an enraged domestic partner, a home invasion robbery. Any of those could, and sometimes do induce PTSD.

It may be that emotional or psychological stress could increase the likelihood of inducing PTSD. It may be that being free of conflicting emotions could reduce that likelihood. However, young children and infants, without conflicting internal ideas, are also subject to PTSD. Pets and domestic animals exhibit PTSD.

It may well be that veterans in Vietnam feel less moral stress about their war service. It may well be that they have much better access to health and psychological care than US veterans do and that psycho-physiological disturbances are caught early and successfully treated, instead of ignored and allowed to proceed to debilitating PTSD. But if you are thrown against a wall and undergo shock, you have a high likelihood of developing PTSD, no matter what the reason you were thrown against the wall, and no matter what your

ideology about what picked you up and threw you.

It is possible that experience in full-contact sports, like rugby, American football, boxing, or martial arts, may make you less likely to experience a shock reaction to physical trauma. A Judoka who has been thrown hundreds or thousands of times may hit the wall and bounce off, without being shocked or stunned, though they may be bruised. The same for football players—they've been hit and tackled, and even if they've broken bones, they do not readily go into shock. It is also possible that experience in mindfulness meditation may also lessen the likelihood of shock reaction, despite the trauma.

However, the physiological processes that can result in PTSD do not depend at all on motivation or mentation; and to claim that those physiological responses are absent from an entire nation is clearly false, and not so subtly racist.

To say, "The Vietnamese people

don't experience PTSD," is quite akin to the racists of 1900 saying, "Asians / orientals / Africans / Hispanics / Jews / Eastern Europeans simply don't feel pain like we (white Europeans) do." It is profoundly racist. It is a claim that one ethnic group simply does not have the same neurological makeup of other humans, and is thus immune to maladies that "more sensitive peoples" suffer.

I don't know what Dr. Tick thinks qualifies as PTSD, but it seems very greatly different from the common understanding of the term.

Peace,

Rashid Patch
Oakland CA

I enlisted in USMC in 1966. Somehow I was never sent out of the USA. I connected with VVAW in 1971 in San Francisco when their offices were in a warehouse I had studio space in.



VVAW Armed Forces Day demo, May 16, 1975, Washington.

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

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

VVAW also took up the struggle for the rights and needs of veterans. In 1970, we began the first rap groups

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

Today our government still finances and arms undemocratic and repressive regimes around the world in the name of "democracy." American troops have again been sent into open battle in the Middle East and covert

actions in Latin America, for many of the same misguided reasons that were used to send us to Southeast Asia. Meanwhile, many veterans from all eras are still denied justice—facing unemployment, discrimination, homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder and other health problems, while already inadequate services are cut back or eliminated.

We believe that service to our country and communities did not end when we were discharged. We remain committed to the struggle for peace and for social and economic justice for all people. We will continue to oppose senseless military adventures and to teach the real lessons of the Vietnam War. We will do all we can to prevent future generations from being put through a similar tragedy, and we will continue to demand dignity and

respect for veterans of all eras. This is real patriotism and we remain true to our mission. Anyone who supports this overall effort, whether Vietnam veteran or not, veteran or not, may join us in this long-term struggle. JOIN US!



Insignia of Vietnam Veterans Against the War



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

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

Our insignia is over 46 years old. The insignia, VVAW® and Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc.® are registered trademarks belonging to VVAW and no other organization or group may use it for any reason without written permission from the VVAW Board of Directors.

Beware of VVAW-AI

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

SUPPORT VVAW! DONATE OR JOIN TODAY!

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

Membership Application

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

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

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

- Signature _____
- Date _____
- Total Amount Enclosed _____

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



RECOLLECTIONS

Some Things You Never Forget. . .Or Forgive

ROGER QUINDEL

On March 17, 1968, I was severely wounded in a rocket attack that killed nine other soldiers. Five days later I was shipped to Camp Zama Hospital near Tokyo, Japan. On April 4 Martin Luther King was murdered. On June 6, as I was lined up to board a plane to take us back to Vietnam, they announced that Presidential candidate Bobby Kennedy was murdered in California earlier that day.

One of the really great things about being stationed at a firebase next to the village of Trang Bang was that you could always buy those little pleasures that were never available when in a base camp far from any village. Things that you take for granted until you are totally and absolutely deprived of them. Like what you ask? You can buy soda. You can buy a beer. You can get film for your camera. You can buy extra food from the locals or even pot if you were into that sort of thing.

One mid-morning, a few days into my stay at Trang Bang, I bought a cold coke from a young girl. Just when I turned away I heard this Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN)

Lieutenant screaming at her. She quickly fled the scene. I asked a little boy I had befriended what happened. "Didi mau" (she go). The officer had forced her to leave. I really didn't get it. We wanted her here. We wanted to be able to buy a cold soda. Now she was gone. Hours later she was back. I bought another soda. As I was putting the change in my pocket the same ARVN officer raced at her screaming once again.

This time was different. He smashed her full force in the face with his rifle. She screamed in agony. I got blood on my pants leg. I couldn't believe what had happened right in front of me. I was going to kill that ARVN officer. Our sergeant jumped in front of me and put his arms around that inhuman beast. "Don't shoot him. Don't! We can't have a firefight with the ARVN's (our allies)."

"Sarge move. Sarge, please move. I am going to kill him. I don't want to hurt you." Other soldiers gathered. Some tried to calm me down while others helped get this monster away.

We are risking our lives to put

motherfuckers like him in charge. This is bullshit!

That incident cemented my view that we were fighting for nothing. Our politicians back home; our command staff in Vietnam all knew that our allies were far worse than useless. They were a menace to their own people. How can you possibly justify permanently disfiguring a young girl for selling a can of soda?

I felt this savagery personally because just three months earlier I had eight bones in my head broken by shrapnel from a 122-millimeter rocket. I knew what she was going to go through. But I had excellent medical care from doctors and nurses who knew what they were doing and had the equipment and medical supplies I needed. She would have little of that.

So why would an ARVN officer—our "ally"—so brutally attack a young girl for selling soda? It turns out he was in charge of prostitution, drug, drinks, and food sales in Trang Bang. Any Vietnamese involved in any of these businesses with American soldiers had to pay kickbacks to this officer. He would then give his

commanding officers their share. I don't know if our sergeant or our officers were a part of this—other than renting the bunkers, the ones we built to protect ourselves, for prostitution—but I wouldn't have been surprised.

It was a dirty war that cost US taxpayers one trillion in today's dollars. Some people and some soldiers would do anything to get their share. She was not part of his crew. She had to pay a price. She had to be an example.

And we had to fight, be injured, and even die to keep this abomination of human behavior in place. Our sergeant promised us something would be done about this incident. We are still waiting.



ROGER QUINDEL WAS A RADIO-TELETYPE OPERATOR WITH C BATTERY OF THE 3RD/13TH ARTILLERY UNIT OCTOBER 1967-68. HE SPENT NEARLY 4 MONTHS ALONG THE DESERTED CAMBODIAN/VIETNAM BORDER. HE MARCHED WITH, AND HAS BEEN A MEMBER OF VVAW SINCE THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON, DC IN 1971.



Ammunition



Feb 5 2023 (10030)

DANZIGER
The Rutland Herald
Counterpoint Media Syndicate