



# VETERANS FOR PEACE

*Organized Locally. Recognized Nationally.*

## President's Message

We sometimes lose sight of the beauty of our mission statement. The part I am thinking of now is "all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace." In this time of ideologues and polarization, this statement stands out and makes us different from the current culture. It acknowledges that we are not a monolithic group, but that we are bound together by our dedication to create peace through our veteran's voice.

I have heard people say they must leave VFP because of what someone else did; I have heard people say good riddance to those who talk of leaving. I disagree with both. We all, including both sides of every argument, need everyone. The group of people, and vets in particular, who are dedicated to ending war is small. We cannot afford to casually let anyone go over some small frustrations or differences. As our statement of purpose says, we can each work on campaigns that we believe will end war, knowing full well others in the organization believe different campaigns will end war. And we, as a group, have more strength because of the diversity of our approaches to creating peace and abolishing war.

We waste critical energy in arguments, criticisms, bullying, and even threats over different ways to abolish war. Sharing ideas is critical for our growth. But sometimes in our dedication we lose sight of the line between sharing ideas and attacking each other verbally.

Stop and think for a moment, who does it serve to have us put our energy into fighting among ourselves about the best strategy to abolish war? Who wants us to do that instead of working to abolish war? The very warmongers who profit from having \$10 billion a month for war extracted from the working people. Looking back, remember CoIntelPro? They spent millions on developing distrust

and division in the Anti-Vietnam and Civil Rights movements. They did the same to the labor movement. On the Gulf Coast after Katrina I kept hearing blacks saying they weren't getting help because they were black and whites saying they weren't getting help because they were white. Without this nurtured racism everyone could have marched on Washington together -- all victims, all races, all religions -- and together demanded and gotten what they needed. Let us not do the work of the powerholders, let us not divide ourselves.



We get to choose day by day, hour by hour, will we put our effort into building the campaign we believe in or will we spend that energy criticizing others for working on a different campaign, even though both campaigns are aimed at abolishing war?

It can be seen empirically and demonstrated statistically that a movement's success is directly related to size of the movement (what portion of the overall population is supportive) and diversity of the movement (how broad a cross-section of society involved). This is not about compromising our principles, it is about having tolerance and empathy for others working to the same ends. The work we do is important, for that matter it is fair to say abolishing war is a life or death matter. We in VFP have a critical role in achieving those ends. And we will be more effective if we can keep our anger and energy directed outside VFP at the supports of the war culture rather than at our comrades-in-arms.

*Elliott Adams*

**Total Cost of Wars to U.S Taxpayers  
October 7, 2001— September 25, 2011**

**\$1,254,569,105,855**

Source: costs of war.org

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## Board Of Directors

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## Interim Director's Report



Members, Supporters, Comrades:

News from the national office. Two important items are moving ahead...never quite fast enough, but moving indeed.

### (1) Hiring a Development Director

Earlier this year, President Elliott Adams proposed the Board's top priority should be to get a development (fundraising) professional on board. They agreed and Veep Leah Bolger heads up the search committee.

Her committee has refined the job description, advertised widely, and got back a crop of top-notch resumes. Those were narrowed to the best six and phone interviews should be completed by the time you get this issue. Next is to hold in-person interviews with the top two or three candidates, make the choice and get to work!

### (2) Redesigning the VFP Web site

Some may wonder if this badly-needed improvement would ever happen, but it's now under way! Shelly Rockett (with two "t's," please!) heads up that work and if you've ever been involved in a webpage redesign, you know how much work it is. Virginia Druhe has completed a new page for the VFP Store and the rest of the site is taking shape behind the scenes. If you would like to be on a list to test the "beta" version, let Shelly know. The beta gang will go through it and offer last-minute suggestions before we unveil it to the world.

### VFP Finances:

With three quarters down, it looks like budget projections will hold true for a year-end deficit – smaller than we thought at the beginning of the year, but still a deficit. Our expenses are less than we budgeted, reducing the expected deficit to about \$20,000. But even the math-challenged among us know that by itself, reducing expenses is not a good way to sustainably balance a budget. And deficits, even smaller than expected, deplete our modest reserves.

Clearly, what's needed is to boost revenues, thus the priority on getting a development director. (\*) But no matter how good our development director is, every potential donor wants to know their gift is being well spent.

Our members have sustained VFP to a much greater degree than the typical non-profit's membership base. That's both good news and not so good...good, because it allows us to sustain a level of activity regardless of how far south the economy or the stock market goes...not so good, because there are many things we could be doing to move up the day when we "...abolish war as an instrument of national policy," but those things require money beyond what

*Director's Report continued on page 16*

## From the Editor

It's been a pleasure being the editor of the newsletter for the past few issues and getting to know members of the organization and what they want to see in the newsletter. My thanks to Michael Uhl for his help and for making the transition go easily. In this issue we feature a few longer pieces that I have found especially compelling. One by Bill Ehrhart on his return to Vietnam and one by Vince Stavrino and Will Thomas on their fact-finding trip to Hebron on the West Bank. Let me know whether you like the longer features and would like to see more of them. It's interesting how many members are such good writers. I've have had no shortage of material to work with.

However, one area that has been problematic is the chapter reports. Several people have told me that they have not received my e-mail notices about deadlines for the reports. If you are a chapter contact and have not received the notices, please get in touch with me by e-mail at charossi@verizon.net. I'll make sure you get added to the list of chapter contacts for the newsletter. Deadline for reports for the Winter issue is **Thursday, January 5, 2012**. I look forward to hearing from you.

*Chuck Rossi*

# Peace is a Prerequisite for a Sustainable Future

## VFP Report from United Nations NGO Conference

Bonn, Germany, was the host city for the United Nations NGO Conference on Sustainable Societies, Responsive Citizens, and Veterans For Peace was in the house. Gerry Condon and Helen Jaccard from Seattle volunteered to represent VFP at the September 3-5 conference, with over 1400 delegates from around the world in attendance

“Sustainable Societies” refers to sustainable governance, development and living in all aspects, including production and consumption, especially agriculture, water and energy. “Responsive Citizens” refers to volunteering, holding governments accountable for their policies and commitments, telling government what we need, transforming our culture from consumerism to having active civil communities, and empowering women and youth.

Vandana Shiva, renowned Indian physicist and global justice activist, inspired the international gathering with her strong keynote speech.

“In order to have freedom we now need to recognize where we are losing our freedoms. We have government by the corporations, of the corporations, and for the corporations. We must choose between a world where everything is a commodity for sale, or we must say, ‘Our World is Not for Sale,’ like we did at the WTO protests in Seattle in 1999.”

“Enough is enough,” added Thierno Kane from Senegal, representing the Open Society Initiative for West Africa. “When are we allowed to participate and when is it time to take action? You can have representatives, but if they are absconding, we need to take the power back.

“Sustainable societies equal societies of solidarity,” said Thierno Kane. He then shared a Senegalese saying, “You sharpen your knife. You sleep with it. You wait for the dawn.” Mr. Kane added that this did not imply violence, but was instead a call to nonviolent action.

Vandana Shiva and Thierno Kane were among only a few speakers who directly named the corporate-dominated power structure that is responsible for so many of the unsustainable practices that are bringing our planet to the edge of irreversible destruction. Many other panels and workshops focused on the practical aspects



Helen Jaccard and Gerry Condon with Thierno Kane of Senegal.

of sustainable agriculture and healthy environmental stewardship.

Climate change – make radical changes to energy production and consumption.

Poverty; Income / Asset Inequality; Food, water, energy insecurity – tax financial transactions, stop stealing cropland for biofuel production, provide food locally first rather than for export. Stop privatization of water. Decentralize energy production.

Loss of Biodiversity – change the way we grow food – stop using genetically modified crops that depend on fertilizers and weed killers; change from huge monoculture plantations to multiple crops with crop rotation; farm organically.

Production and Consumption patterns – including drilling and mining. In the developed countries - consume less and different items; in the developing countries development should not make the same mistakes as Western societies; nor should the desire to be

*Peace Prerequisite continued on page 16*



Vandana Shiva challenged corporate control.

### Newsletter

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# Report from Hebron: Hell on Earth for Palestinians

We saw the colorful painted words on the wall (with white doves above them) in front of a school in Hebron: “FREE PALESTINE.” On closer examination, we noticed that someone had tried to paint-over those words, but the message still is visible. This was our welcome to the largest Palestinian city in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Both of us were part of a 12-day sojourn to Israel and Palestine, sponsored by Interfaith Peace-Builders whose mission is “to give U.S. citizens the opportunity to see and understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict firsthand and to empower these citizens to educate their local communities and advocate for better US foreign policy when they return to the US.”

As we walked through Hebron, we encountered numerous Israeli military checkpoints with young soldiers, part of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF). This once beautiful old city is now a walled-in-fortress, dying economically, and a virtual “ghost city?” One has to relate the actions of a Jew from Brooklyn, Baruch Goldstein, who had emigrated to Israel (called “*aliyah*,” the right of any Jew to return to their “homeland”). The Israeli state, on the other hand, has long rejected UN Resolution 194 (1948) which calls for the right of return for Palestinians who were driven from their homes, villages, and cities in 1947-48. Yet, Goldstein, as so many other immigrant Jews, received financial assistance to move to a new Israeli settlement adjacent to Hebron. According to the International World Court, the UN, and the Geneva Conventions, such settlements are illegal as they steal land that rightfully belongs to Palestinians.

This Jewish doctor from Brooklyn, Goldstein, decided in 1994 to go Hebron’s Ibrahim Mosque and visit the Tomb of the Patriarchs where it is alleged that Abraham, Isaac, Rebecca, and Sarah are all buried within a cave below. Apparently, Mr. Goldstein had decided that the Palestinians whom he saw as “dirty, filthy, uncivilized non-humans,” (“Arabs”) must be taught a lesson. So, he went into the mosque with a high-powered rifle and killed 29 Muslims, while wounding over 200. And he, in turn, was killed by Palestinians who rushed into the mosque while this extremist settler was reloading. Today, he is revered by many as a martyr and his grave is visited by many Jews who acknowledge him as one of Israel’s true heroes.

Our Palestinian guide, Issa, told us that following the massacre,



In Hebron: protest at Shuhada Street.



In Hebron: Israeli Defense Forces soldier with kids.

the Israeli military imposed a curfew in Hebron and immediately set up numerous checkpoints, including the one that is vital to providing access to the heart of Palestinian commerce and trade. It is called Shuhada Street but Palestinians call it “Apartheid Street.” In addition to the checkpoints, the Israelis have placed large concrete barriers blocking auto traffic and even 10-foot high barbed-wire fences which cordon off smaller side streets. About 600 very fanatical ideological Jews are settled within the heart of Hebron and it is here (and in the areas around nearby Israeli settlements) that violence against Palestinians is, arguably, the most heinous in the occupied Palestinian territories (the proper term used by the UN for West Bank lands).

Issa explained that these 600 Jewish settlers who are protected by Israeli police and IDF, dictate how some 35,000 Palestinians may live, move, conduct business, and how they are forced to only walk on designated streets. Having to traverse such routes means they often have to leave 30 or more minutes early to arrive on time at their schools, clinics, houses, or to visit family members and friends. Downtown Hebron is nearly dead, economically. Walking the often deserted, littered streets, we saw only a few local youths and numerous heavily armed, bored-looking young IDF conscripts at checkpoints and riding about in jeeps. We did, however, bring a small measure of joy to some young Palestinian children by distributing five soccer balls purchased in Hebron. The youngsters were so very happy to receive such highly prized items!

And, yet, despite the Israeli settlers’ verbal and physical attacks against Palestinians, which are well-documented via photos and film, one Muslim Hebron resident told us:

“My dream is to live in peace with all people, including Jews, in a democratic, single state.” We learned that the Arab residents of Hebron, mostly Muslim, have used and still employ techniques of non-violent resistance to the now 44-year long military occupation that has resulted in creating a near ghost town -- Hebron.

We discovered that our guide Issa was arrested several years ago and fined 2000 shekels for trying to prevent the closing of some shops in the old market. While Issa is one of the leaders of “Youth Against Settlements,” we found him to be a studious young man, reserved, knowledgeable, and soft-spoken though he walked with a cane due to a beating by the IDF. We saw with our own eyes how the IDF have literally welded shut many of the shops’ latches

*Report from Hebron continued on page 19*

## 2011 VFP National Convention Debrief

After long months of planning, it was gratifying to see life breathed into the convention's programs, such as Thursday night's public event. Jeff Paterson volunteered to serve as Master of Ceremonies that evening, and expanded a tight schedule to encompass a critical update on the war resistance movement in addition to pre-scheduled speakers Blase Bonpane and Will Hopkins and performers Emma's Revolution, all of whom were top notch! I loved the bell-ringing demo given by Chapter 27 members in advance of Armistice Day (11:11 on 11/11/11), and, thanks to presenter Chris Knight, Chapter 72's media awards ceremony was another bright star of the evening.

Chapter 72 stalwart Bob Goss, in his professional capacity as Production Coordinator for Portland State University's Lincoln Performance Hall, where the bulk of the convention took place, oversaw many technical details. Our volunteer list is way too long to print here, but I would like to acknowledge core committee folks by name: Marion Ward, Dan Shea, Mike Hastie, Chris Knight, Rico Vicino, Barbara Gurwell, Grant Remington, Sandie Henson, Harvey Thorstad, Malcolm Chaddock, Sarah Hobbs, Jenika, Joe Dunn and Bob Goss. Special thanks also to Northwest veterans Larry Kerschner from Centralia, Gene Marx from Bellingham, Leah Bolger from Corvallis, and Barry Jones from Portland for stepping up to MC different plenary sessions, and to Col. Ann Wright and Cherie Eicholz for helping with the Saturday afternoon film screening.

Additionally, I'd like to give a shout out to Paul Cox, MC for our Saturday night banquet, and to the Seattle Peace Chorus members who traveled from Seattle to perform for us (with Love!) for free, as well as to Doug Mackey, who managed to arrange a live audio connection to Afghanistan, adding great ambience to Kathy Kelly's inspiring address. I'm sure VFP Treasurer Nate Goldschlag would agree that any mention of the banquet should include Doug

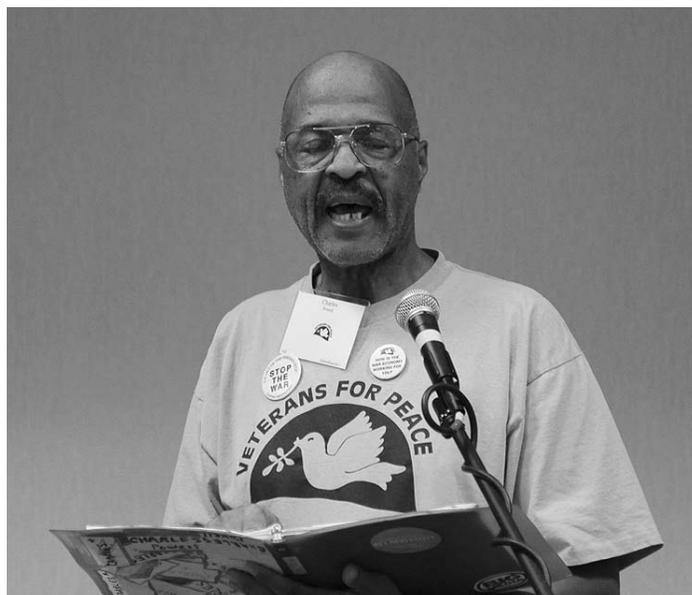


**More powerful than a locomotive: Brian Willson addresses the convention. (Photo by Mike Hastie)**

Zachary's fundraising pitch, which netted well over \$20,000 in pledges!

Unfortunately, I missed the business meeting, although I did catch wind of the resolution calling for the impeachment of President Obama while sitting at my banquet table. Whether or not you think the resolution, which passed, was a good idea, I think everyone would agree it was a great conversation starter.

I especially want to acknowledge all the luminaries who graced our convention—including Kathy Kelly, Col. Ann Wright, Dr. Ed Tick, Brian Willson, Robert Jensen, Michael McPhearson, and Jessica Goodell—for their ongoing work as well as their inspiring words, which equally fed people's heads and hearts. Most of these folks



**Charles Powell reading during the Wednesday evening poetry reading. (Photo by Mike Hastie)**

mingled with us for the whole weekend.

I am pleased to report that our convention got widespread press attention, largely thanks to a story written by Mike Francis, military reporter for *The Oregonian*. It was Mike Ferner who discovered the story had been picked up by AP and appeared in at least eighteen publications across the country, including all of the armed forces newspapers. Francis framed his story around an interview with Brian Willson, after Mike Hastie called on the reporter in person and gave him a copy of Brian's book along with a convention

program booklet. "I only regret that I didn't hand him a cold beer with the sweat running down the bottle," quipped Hastie. According to Willson, it was his boyhood admiration for Stan Musial and the St. Louis Cardinals that resonated with Francis and got him to pick up the phone. (Read the article online at <http://bit.ly/vfpfrancis>)

A number of radio and TV interviews were also generated, both before and after the convention, including one with Chapter 72 president Grant Remington on KOIN, Portland's CBS television affiliate. Our local chapter's membership and participation was boosted as a side benefit of our hosting the convention, evidenced by a handful of new faces at our August chapter meeting. One of our WWII veterans, Will Pool, was

convinced that the convention had a medicinal effect on his pulse rate—more proof that involvement with Veterans For Peace is good therapy for PTSD sufferers.

This report wouldn't be complete without some acknowledgment of what didn't go so smoothly. Based on feedback we received, as well as my own experience, a few details that could have made this year's convention that much better include:

- confirming details with all scheduled presenters before the event, including the leader of the radical walking tour I thought was secured months ago
- assigning the "convention

**Convention continued on page 11**

## Chapter Reports



Left to right, Dud Hendrick, Maine Senator Olympia Snowe and Bruce Gagnon at Old Halloween Days.

### Chapter 1, Portland, ME

Members of Chapter 1 joined over 25 people as part of the contingent hoisting the Bring Our War \$\$ Home banner demonstrating against our outrageous military spending. They carried a large puppet created by Jamilla El-Shafei and garnered second prize for most creative float entry in the Old Halloween Days Parade in July. Senator Olympia Snowe talked with outgoing chapter president Dud Hendrick and member Bruce Gagnon but remains in support of endless war funding. Bruce thought that Snowe's "defense" of the war in Afghanistan was "weak" and pretty much pro forma.

Members of Chapter 1 were joined by other peace activists to protest the Blue Angels appearance at the former Brunswick Naval Station on August 27th. The featured speaker, Beth Adams from Massachusetts,



Members of Chapter 1 and others at gathering outside the old Brunswick Naval Air Station for Blue Angels protest.

spoke about the military as the world's biggest polluter. About 35 people were at the main gate.

Chapter 1 has been tabling and handing out literature at a number of events across the state recently. We spent the day of August 6th at the PeaceWorks Peace Fair on the Mall in Brunswick. We were at the Common

Ground Fair along with the Campaign to Bring Our War \$\$ Home on September 23-25.

Some of our members headed to Freedom Plaza in D.C. to join others beginning October 6th for the non-violent resistance to the war in Afghanistan and corporate takeover of our government.

*Clarence "Smitty" Smith*

### Chapter 21, New Jersey

Chapter 21 participated in the annual July 4th parade in Teaneck, NJ where we were greeted with cheers, peace signs, clapping and thank you's. Five chapter members attended the VFP Convention in Portland, Oregon. Chapter member Jim Fallon, agent orange cancer survivor and DAV Service Officer

took part in workshops on both topics as well as the Medic/Corpsman Caucus. Jim was a medic in Vietnam.

Chapter member Michael McPhearson gave a rousing speech during the banquet dinner on the closing night of the convention. He

said some things that just needed to be said. In August Chapter 21 and Bergen County chapter of Military Families Speak Out had the 6 year anniversary of their weekly vigil at the Teaneck Armory.

Our chapter Peace Walker, Jules Orkin, spent the summer in the U.K., France and Sweden walking with, among others, Footprints for Peace. Jules unfurled the VFP flag as he walked along the Loire Valley where there are nuclear power plants. Traveling almost to the Arctic Circle, Jules joined Ofog (mischief) the Swedish anti-nuke group to demonstrate outside NEAT, North European Aerospace Testrange. Utilized by the U.S., NATO and others, as well as arms manufacturers, NEAT, at 24,000 square kilometers of "neutral Sweden" is Europe's largest overland military test range. The wonderful Puffin Foundation named Jules a Puffin Peace Fellow and helped with travel costs.

*Nancy Nygard*



Recent work on the transom of the Golden Rule ketch.

### Chapter 22, Garberville, CA

Chapter 22 is working to re-open the Jim Demulling Memorial Veterans Grove, (affectionately known locally as the Vets Peace Park). Plans for proper restrooms have been submitted, donors found, and a team is cleaning, planting, watering, and putting the park back into shape for our community.

The VFP Golden Rule Project is moving along with its plans to restore and sail the famous anti-nuke ship. The project is attracting youth, energy, and new mem-

bers to the chapter. Two members of the chapter attended the National Convention in Portland.

*Fredy Champagne*

### Chapter 25, Madison, WI

On July 15 and 16 (the 66th anniversary of Operation Trinity) Clarence Kailin Chapter 25 sponsored an exhibit consisting of more than forty posters as a reminder of the danger which nuclear weapons still constitute. For you old-timers, the posters were from the exhibit which was originally presented at the VFP national conference at Columbia, Missouri in 1996. The panels have, for some time, been resting in Peter Shaw's garage in State College, Pennsylvania, and Peter and Sandy Kelson deserve much gratitude for transporting them to Wisconsin for the occasion.

The exhibit was held in the Main Hall of Madison's Capitol Lakes Retirement Center, who graciously hosted the event. The facility is located just three blocks from the Wisconsin state capitol and there was a very good public attendance. That this was a success is attributed to by the visitors' many comments; for instance, one of them said, "Thank you so much for this display! It has given me very much to think about."

The event opened on Friday morning with an address by Lincoln Grahlf. After making clear that the sponsors of this exhibit insisted that it was not about why nuclear weapons were used in 1945, or even whether they should have been used, but was presented as a precaution against the horror that could result if they ever were to be used again. He then briefly explained the mission and principles of VFP, talked about his own experiences as an Atomic Veteran,

and concluded by pointing out that the nuclear weapons in the hands of the major powers today are actually a thousand times as powerful as the ones dropped on Japan and also by describing, in some detail, the nightmare of (so-called) depleted uranium.

*Richard Chamberlain*

### Chapter 27, Minnesota

Once again, Veterans for Peace Chapter 27 is asking churches and other groups to join with us and ring the bells on or around Armistice Day, November 11, 2011. The Armistice of 1918 ended the terrible slaughter of World War I. The U.S. experienced the death of over 116,000 men, plus many who were physically and mentally disabled, severely needing ongoing care. For one moment at the 11th hour of the 11th day on the 11th month, 11 a.m. on November 11, 1918, the World agreed that World War I, must be the War to End All Wars. There was exuberant joy everywhere and many churches rang their bells, some 11 times, to mark the signing of the armistice.

Veterans For Peace local chapter 27 will hold its annual bell ringing ceremony on Armistice/Veterans Day at the First Shot Memorial on Minnesota's Capitol grounds, Friday, November, 11 at 11 a.m. Members and supporters will gather at 10:30 to participate in the ceremony.

The following churches and organizations are ringing bells and committing to working for peace on or about Armistice Day November 11th, the anniversary of the end of World War I "the war to end all wars" when bells were joyously rung around the world.

- First Lutheran of Alexandria
- Immaculate Heart

on Mary Catholic, Minnetonka

- Good Shepherd Lutheran of Marshall  
*Steve McKeown*

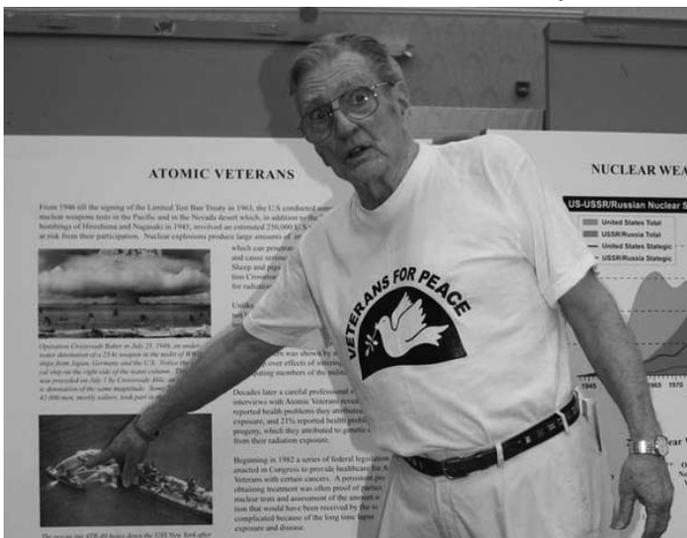
### Chapter 31, Philadelphia, PA

The chapter participated in the Philadelphia Gay Pride Parade this Summer and for the third year in a row won the award for "Best Public Statement." Mike Felker spoke at a program sponsored by the New York City Chapter of Veterans for Peace on "The Things We Leave Behind: The Long-term Effects of War on Countries and Their Populations." The program focused on depleted uranium, agent orange, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and land mines. Mike gave a presentation on landmines and clusterbombs. Mike also prepared informational material entitled "Weapons of Individual Destruction: Landmines, Clusterbombs, and Explosive Remnants of War," which was sent to all Pennsylvania State and National representatives. The third, and final, film in the Chapter Film Series, *In the Valley of Elah*, is scheduled for October 26. The series has been successful and might be continued into the Fall and Winter. Frank Corcoran and John Grant attended the Annual Convention in Portland Oregon. Several members of the chapter are planning to attend the demonstration in Washington on October 6.

*Chuck Rossi*



The Chapter 31 contingent at the Gay Pride Parade.



Lincoln Grahlf points to the tugboat he was on following atomic bomb detonation at Bikini Atoll in 1946.



Mike Felker (left) and Gene Cleaver (right) at the Philadelphia Gay Pride Parade.

**Chapter 41, Cape Cod, MA**  
**Cpl Jeffrey M. Lucey Chapter**

Summer 2011 saw the chapter involved in two local events. On July 4th we marched in Hyannis at Cape Cod's largest parade with a coalition of peace and justice activists. As usual, we got a warm reception often complete with the 'peace-sign' or a salute.

A few days later we participated in a co-sponsored event featuring Amy Goodman and Jimmy Tingle (a local political comedian). Amy focused on the crucial role of truthful reporting in a democracy and related some of her 'adventures in journalism' around the world.

Attending the event were Jeffrey Lucey's parents Joyce and Kevin who now serve as 'godparents' and inspirational members of our chapter. The turnout was great and we got to reemphasize our "Hidden Costs of War" theme.

This Fall, we look forward to our usual activities like Veterans Day action but also hope to build on our momentum from the first six months of 2011 to expand the scope of our "Costs of War" focus and to increase our membership and our efforts for peace.

*Duke Ellis*

**Chapter 69, San Francisco, CA**

The most important project that Chapter 69 has worked on came to fruition this summer with the introduction to Congress in Washington, DC of the "Victims of Agent Orange Relief Act of 2011" – House Resolution 2634. This resolution needs the support of all citizens and veterans of conscience, to: educate and organize the public, get media coverage, and above all urge each chapter's House of Representatives member to co-sponsor the bill. H.R. 2634 calls for funding of agent orange victims in Viet Nam, clean up of the "hot spots" there (former US bases), aid for the progeny of US vets who have been sickened by

AO from their parent's service, and help for Viet Nameese-American victims. See: vn-agentorange.org for all specifics.

Among numerous other things, the San Francisco chapter did: book tour

events for Brian Willson; sponsored a major meeting of Viet Unity, a local progressive, youth-oriented Viet Nameese-American group; did Bradley Manning outreach at Gay Pride Day parade and other events; established a Veterans Resource Center in the SF Veterans Memorial Building; voted against the national convention's resolution to Impeach Obama; and got the chapter on FaceBook.

*Nadya Williams*

**Chapter 102, Milwaukee, WI**

The Homeless Veterans Initiative (HVI) sponsored by our chapter continues to expand. It now includes a food pantry, a weekly breakfast, and a free furniture program for homeless or low-income veterans.

The weekly pantry and breakfast are at St. John's Evangelical Lutheran church, located near the VA hospital, in a neighborhood where many veterans live. The pantry provides food to more than 200 people a week, and the breakfast, after the first two weeks, was feeding 50 people and growing each week.

Through the generosity of a local furniture dealer and other donors, we have been able to furnish half of the 52 apartments in a new Veterans Manor facility, the first permanent supportive housing project for veterans in the city. Veterans Manor was recently opened by Center for Veterans Issues (CVI), a non-profit begun by the National Association of Black Veterans.

The HVI program is almost entirely an all-volunteer, veterans helping veterans operation, with dozens of volunteers involved. More information is available at the website [www.neverhomeless.org](http://www.neverhomeless.org)

Planning is now underway for our third annual Armistice Day ceremony in the rotunda of Milwaukee City Hall on November 11, which attempts to reclaim the day first designated as a day to celebrate peace, not a day of flag-waving and support for wars, as Veterans Day has become in many communities. A program with music, poetry, speakers and commemoration of Wisconsin's war dead is being planned.

*Bill Christofferson*

**Chapter 115, Red Wing, MN**

Chapter 115 sponsored its 9th annual 2011 Peacestock conference and retreat at the beautiful Windbeam Farm, home of Paul and Trudi Schaefer on July 9th. A humid day, with alternating sun, clouds, and occasional light sprinkle, the greetings of goats, and an occasional visit by a tabby cat, was highlighted with talks by Daniel Ellsberg, Ray McGovern, and Cynthia McKinney, all of whom wowed, entertained, and educated the audience. Local peacemaker and activist, Jack Nelson-Pallmayer presented his proposal on how the costs of war affect state and local governments and how we, as peacemakers, must respond. A panel featuring Cynthia and Michael Orange, Chante Wolf, and Layne Beckman shared their stories about the lies and realities of military recruitment and service. A finish to the day included music and a dinner of burritos, chips and salsa, watermelon and dessert. Approximately 175 people attended Peacestock.



Homeless Veterans Initiative: Signing in.

Chapter 115 has committed to take part in Jack Nelson-Pallmayer's initiative, known as the Minnesota Alternative Arms Spending Project (mnasap.org). MN ASAP is a non-partisan citizen-based initiative using a simple resolution process to build political support to shift federal spending priorities from war to meeting essential needs. The goal is to build sufficient political power and influence statewide from representatives at all levels of government and from non-governmental organizations and civic groups to demand effectively a shift in priorities from war spending to meeting essential needs. Chapter 115 will present the resolution and ideas behind it to both elected bodies and the general public.

Selected chapter members will present the picture book, *NO!*, by David McPhail, to Red Wing middle school students upon clearance by the Red Wing curriculum committee. The book relates bullying to violence in general and the choice of saying no to both.

*Emma Onawa*

### Chapter 134, Tacoma, WA

On August 13, steps away from Ft. Lewis-McChord, a capacity audience attended a public forum at Coffee Strong on the issue of military suicides.

A panel discussed the circumstances that led to the death of Sgt. Derrick Kirkland at Lewis-McChord in 2010. On the panel were Sgt. Kirkland's mother and several combat veterans who served with him. Also speaking was Ashley Hagemann, the widow of Staff Sergeant Jared Hagemann, who took his own life at Ft. Lewis-McChord in July.

The testimony of panel members recounted the months that ended in tragedy: Derrick Kirkland, once a sunny personality with a natural sense of humor, returned from his first combat deployment with troubling obsessions. Diagnosed with PTSD, and facing a third deployment, Kirkland

**VFP Wooden Dove**  
Roughly 8" by 4 1/2"  
in size  
**\$20.00**



Made in Vietnam by  
Agent Orange survivors

asked for help but did not receive it.

In his last days, despite two suicide attempts, he was officially declared a "low" suicide risk. Hours before his death, he was mocked as a "coward" by his superiors. He has been denied a military memorial service.

Soldiers on the panel told of dealing with haunting combat memories of their own, as well as moral disillusionment with fighting wars based on false premises.

A persistent trend apparent from these discussions is that healing from military trauma comes through repudiation of the atrocities and the lies justifying war, invasion, and occupation.

The discussion also called upon those present to remember that the suffering of war is not limited to the combatants. Two serious studies estimate that over a million Iraqis have perished because of the American invasion. And untold living civilians now suffer from PTSD.

*John Bartley*

### Chapter 160 Hoa Binh, Vietnam

The only overseas chapter of Veterans for Peace now has a Web site. Please come to the site and check it out. We're at <http://vfp-vn.ning.com/>

*Chuck Palazzo*

### Chapter 161, Iowa City, IA

Chapter 161 is nearing completion of the first year since receiving our charter and it has been a busy time of recruiting members, fund raising and quite a number of actions to raise awareness of the true costs of war. Chapter members have had a busy schedule of advo-



**Elliott Adams addressing members of 161 during the ceremony creating Chapter 163**

cating for peace with our elected officials and established regular contact with members and staff, including Senators Grassley and Harkin and Congressman Dave Loebsack. Highlights of the first year include a veterans picnic in Iowa City where VFP President Elliott Adams and Physicians for Social Responsibility Board President John Rachow spoke, splitting our original chapter to form Chapter 163 in Des Moines, visiting elementary schools to discuss militarism, and appearance at a variety of venues to witness for peace. These include the Iowa State Fair, RAGBRAI (which is a 10,000 participant bicycle ride across Iowa), and a wide range of vigils, parade appearances and other events. In addition, members of Chapter 161 participated in the Rally for Bradley Manning when Manning was transferred to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. A small delegation attended the national convention. Overall, it was a busy year, and we are just getting started!

*Paul Deaton*



**Demonstration at the Des Moines Federal Building by Chapters 161 and 163 the day Chapter 163 charter was awarded**

## If There Were Peace

*If there were peace, this river would be a peaceful place.*

— John Balaban, “Mau Than”

The weapon that got Ken Takenaga and me was an RPG, a rocket-propelled grenade. You’ve seen RPGs in news footage of Afghan mujahedeen or Taliban fighters. The launcher is a long thin tube the gunner rests on his shoulder like a bazooka, and the projectile sticks out the front of the tube like a bulbous cone-shaped piece of nastiness. We didn’t call them RPGs back then. We called them B-40s. But a rose by any other name still has thorns, and whatever you called it, one B-40 can screw up your whole day. It certainly screwed up ours.



**Bill (left) and Ken filling sandbags for their combination fighting hole/sleeping quarters/fortified bunker, Quang Tri, October 1967. (photo: W. D. Ehrhart).**

Ken got the worst of it: a huge gash in his scalp and a shattered right arm. He was evacuated immediately, first to Da Nang, then to Hawaii. I got some small shrapnel wounds a doctor cleaned out, slept for a few hours, then went back to the war, stone-deaf but otherwise reasonably functional. This was Hue City during the Tet Offensive. If you could walk, see, and shoot, you kept fighting. There were guys a lot worse off than me.



**LCpl. Takenaga and Cpl. Ehrhart, 1/1 CP, Hoi An, July 1967 (photo: W. D. Ehrhart).**

Ken got the worst of it: a huge gash in his scalp and a shattered right arm. He was evacuated immediately, first to Da Nang, then to Hawaii. I got some small shrapnel wounds a doctor cleaned out, slept for a few hours, then went back to the war, stone-deaf but otherwise reasonably functional. This was Hue City during the Tet Offensive. If you could walk, see, and shoot, you kept fighting. There were guys a lot worse off than me.

I finally tracked him down in 2000 (yet another story), and since then we’ve renewed our friendship as if no time at all had passed. These days, he shuttles between Japan and New York, so we get together several times a year. Ken has spent his entire adult life in the travel and tourism industry, and when he suggested we make a trip back to Vietnam, he didn’t have to ask twice.

This was not my first trip back to postwar Vietnam. But this trip was special for two reasons: I’d be able to take my wife Anne with me this time, to share with her a place she had only—but endlessly—heard about during our thirty years of marriage. And I’d be traveling with a comrade who’d literally been where I’d been and knew what I knew and needed no explanations.

It took me 32 years to find Kenny again. I didn’t even know his real first name (Kazunori) or which country he lived in (Japanese-born, he was still a Japanese citizen in 1968). He’d come to the U.S. in the midst of the Vietnam War, as a permanent alien resident was subject to the draft, got drafted, and chose to join the Marines instead, thinking he was joining the navy. When he got to Parris

Island, he asked the drill instructors, “Where are the ships?” But that’s another story.

Our journey began, however, not in Vietnam, but in Japan. Ken spent the first fifteen years of his life in the city of Yatsushiro, Kyushu, where he was raised by his maternal grandparents. Having seen where I grew up in Perkasio, Pennsylvania, Ken wanted to show us his own roots. We stood on the walls of the ruined feudal castle where Ken had climbed and played as a child. We saw the local jail where Ken’s grandfather had once been locked up for “overspending” on election day (long before Ken was born). Though the house Ken grew up in has been replaced by a newer structure, just across the street is Kangyo-ji, the Buddhist temple where his grandparents’ graves are, and where his will be some day.

We spent eight days in Japan, walking across the famous five-arch Kintai Bridge at Iwakuni (near where I had been stationed post-Vietnam in 1969), touring magnificent Kumamoto Castle, luxuriating in a private onsen (hot springs spa) at Tsuetate, making rice paper art at Shirakawa Spring, enjoying a Shinto wedding we happened upon at Aso Shrine, being decked out in traditional kimonos by a dressmaker and her two teenaged daughters (the process takes nearly an hour), dolphin-watching in Hayasaki Strait, walking amidst the awesome aftermath of the 1990 volcanic eruption of Fugendake.

Among the coolest things Ken and I did together was a talk about the Vietnam War and its aftermath to the congregants of Toko-ji Zen Temple in Amakusa. Five years ago, at the request of Morinobu Okabe, 31st priest of the temple, Ken and I had translated and adapted a poem by the late Shinmin Sakamura, which Okabe-san makes available free for visiting English speakers. A good 50 people showed up for the talk, listening attentively for an hour, and then we all had a multicourse feast washed down with beer, sake, and shochu.

Then it was on to Vietnam. After a night in Saigon—where the street scene can only be described as “motor-scooter madness”—we flew to central Vietnam, the area between Hoi An and the 17th Parallel, where Ken and I had been stationed. We drove over the Hai Van Pass, a spectacular ride that had been charged with danger the first time we’d taken it in 1967. We climbed Marble Mountain, where throughout the war the Viet Cong had maintained a field hospital right under the noses of the Americans at Da Nang. We drove over the bridge that had once connected the rest of Hieu Nhon District to the small fishing village of Phuoc Trac, displaced now by a string of luxury beach resorts.

In Hue City, the old Imperial capital of the Nguyen Dynasty, we visited the Citadel, made famous by the Tet Offensive of 1968, and the Holy Lady Pagoda, where we saw the actual Austin automobile Thich Quang Duc rode to Saigon in before immolating himself in protest of Ngo Dinh Diem’s suppression of Buddhists in 1963. We drove up to the old DMZ and descended into the tunnels of Vinh Moc, where an entire village of 70 families had lived underground for six years to escape U.S. bombardment.

But the most amazing thing of all was finding the very building Ken and I had been in when we were wounded. During the war, it had been some bigwig’s mansion—the mayor or provincial governor—a two-and-a-half story house surrounded by a yard and a wall. The bigwig had skipped town when the shooting started,

**If There Were Peace continued on page 15**

## Human Costs of War: Summer 2011

### DoD Press Release August 11, 2011

The Army released suicide data today for the month of July. Among active-duty soldiers, there were 22 potential suicides: three have been confirmed as suicide and 19 remain under investigation. For June 2011, the Army reported nine potential suicides among active-duty soldiers. Since the release of that report, three cases have been confirmed as suicide, and six cases remain under investigation.

During July 2011, among reserve component soldiers who were not on active duty, there were 10 potential suicides: none have been confirmed as suicide and 10 remain under investigation. For June 2011, the Army reported five potential suicides among not-on-active-duty soldiers. Since the release of that report, one case has been added for a total of six cases. Four cases have been confirmed as suicide, and two cases remain under investigation.



## Iraq Water Project Update

Last spring VFP Iraq Water Project took a body blow. After receiving a string of credible death threats, two of our three-man Iraqi installation team left the country and the remaining engineer got out of Baghdad. For quite a while we had no communication from anybody, and did not know what had become of them. We are since informed that the two expats went to Belgium to apply for asylum, and we wish them all possible luck. I don't want to take up a lot of news space with this item; there will be a posting on [iraqwaterproject.org](http://iraqwaterproject.org) with more information. It's all part of working in a vicious war zone. Other western aid organizations are reportedly receiving the same threats and the situation is getting worse. IWP has made or renewed alternative partner alignments and the work will go on. Thanks to all who have helped this project over the last decade. The book's final chapter has not gone to the printer quite yet.

*Art Dorland, Project Chair*

## Convention Continued from page 5

hotline" phone-answering task to an enthusiastic gadget user who isn't hard of hearing (i.e. not me)

- ensuring that the designated entrance for wheelchair users was actually open every day
- collaborating earlier and more closely with IVAW and MFSO and finding ways to build more and better bridges of communication between all of our organizations
- including an "In Memorium" section in the program booklet or on a display
- working toward increased cultural diversity in programming
- arranging for professional-level videography to ensure higher quality, and more complete streaming and archive productions
- making a point of viewing the art show that fellow chapter member Dan Shea worked so hard to arrange—which, according to all reports, was a big hit (luckily for me, local video producer

Joe Anybody put together a great little "Art & Music" slideshow and posted it on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CbdujbvBRLc>)

Extra copies the Portland chapter's souvenir broadsides — three versions of letterpress posters featuring quotes by Howard Zinn and printed on Combat Paper — are available for sale at \$5 apiece plus shipping on the [VFP72.org](http://VFP72.org) website. Click on the 2011 convention tab to see samples and ordering info.

Of course the program at best stirs meaningful conversation that can help lead us further down our individual and collective paths toward peace. To that end, some of us in Portland Chapter 72 are already plotting a way to get ourselves to the 2012 convention in Biscayne Bay, Miami.



*Becky Luening has been an associate member of Veterans For Peace since about 1997. She also serves as a board member of Vietnam Friendship Village Project USA.*

NOTE: Additional photographs of the convention taken and posted online by Allen Hallmark of Rogue Valley Chapter 156, Grants Pass, Oregon, may be viewed via this link: <http://www.bit.ly/vfp2012>

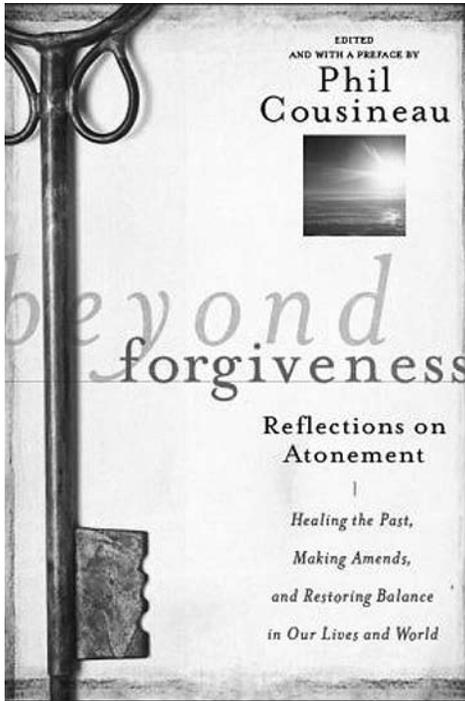


**Doug Zachary casts his spell at the Saturday night banquet. (Photo by Mike Hastie)**

**Ed Tick looks on as Marine Corps veteran Jessica Goodell talks about her personal experience with PTSD after serving in the Corps' first official Mortuary Affairs unit in Iraq in 2004. (Photo by Mike Hastie)**



## BOOK REVIEWS



### **beyond forgiveness: Reflections on Atonement**

**Edited by Phil Cousineau**

Josey-Bass, San Francisco, CA 2011 226 pp

*'beyond forgiveness: Reflections on Atonement* is an anthology of stories and insights into the common theme of forgiveness and atonement. The book's purpose is to explore, promote, and create inspiring dialogue around the practice of atonement as an integral step in the process of reconciliation and healing and offering resources for personal action and transformation, looking at universal means to "end the vicious cycle of war."

Atonement – making amends, going beyond forgiveness to repair damage done. Mr. Cousineau summarizes "...to make amends for, but also carries connotations of, being 'at one with, in harmony'." "In every situation that calls for reconciliation all of us, regardless of political or religious orientation, can move forward through bold acts of forgiveness and atone. If we can, together we will heal the world." As regards war, Dr. Edward Tick: "When we go to war we declare that we are not and cannot be at one with the other... We no longer cooperate or try to get along... We believe the other has become a threat [such that] we must resort to violence...and make ourselves safe again... War destroys Oneness in every aspect of our existence. Atonement is necessary for soldiers and nations to

return home and to heal from war."

You will be drawn into this book's contributors' stories of wrongs that have occurred in their lives and the solutions that became part of their healing. Through their stories we are able to feel how powerful is the shift from retaliation and revenge to that of forgiveness and atonement. A few examples:

Arun Gandhi (grandson of Mohandas Gandhi) tells stories of his grandfather's childhood that give insight into Gandhi's non-violence. One, where Gandhi, at approx. age 12, after sneaking and stealing for a year to obtain meat – not available in his vegetarian family – because he believed it would give him a more muscular stature, confesses. His father's response, after Gandhi presented to him his acts in writing, was to break into tears and embrace his son. Pause. After reading Gandhi's childhood stories one cannot help but reflect on the impact of punishment vs. the possibility for empowerment, as in incarcerations – and war.

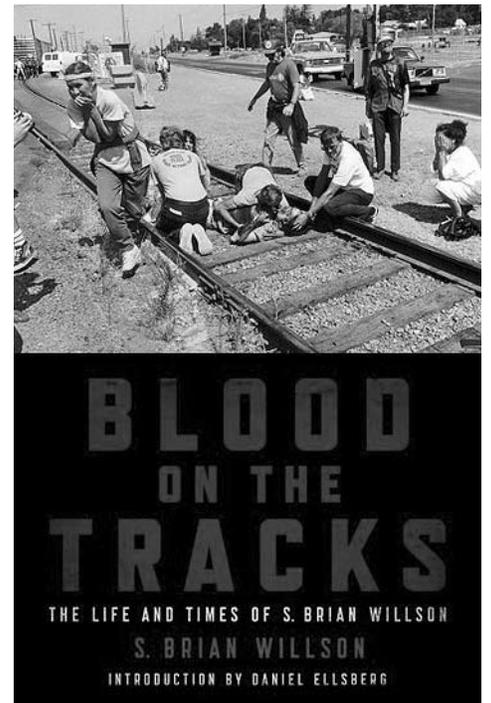
Azim Khamisa (president of the Tariq Khamisa Foundation) writes that after the murder of his son by a 14-year-old he chose forgiveness and created a foundation whose work is speaking nationally and internationally to keep other young people from making the same mistake. Mr. Khamisa, formerly an investment banker, collaborated with the grandfather of his son's murderer in the foundation work and formed his new life's purpose – "...opposing forces that collide to create a monumental shift in order to help rebalance the world. We are teaching non-violence, peacemaking, empathy, forgiveness, and atonement. If I had gone the other way, where would I be?"

This book is life-changing. Each story reinforces the power of forgiveness and atonement. It certainly left this long-time (*and many times angry*) activist wanting to put on a Gandhian cloak before I step out my door desiring it to permeate my every action. For personal transformation and resources read the book, see the websites – [www.beyondforgiveness.org](http://www.beyondforgiveness.org) / <http://reflectionsonatonement.com>, and the companion projects.

*Phil Cousineau, writer, filmmaker, editor and lecturer, and TV host, has published twenty-six "soulful" nonfiction books,*

*written documentary films, and is host and co-writer of Global Spirit on Link TV. He collaborated with Association for Global New Thought and the Gandhi King Chavez Season for Nonviolence and others to create a Wisdom of Atonement Study Course; see <http://reflectionsonatonement.com/resources/> The book was inspired by Richard J. Meyer, Southern California businessman, and founder of The Atonement Project.*

*Nancy Delaney River, Associate Member of San Francisco VJP, Chapter 69*



### **Blood on the Tracks: The Life and Times of S. Brian Willson**

**S. Brian Willson with a foreword by Daniel Ellsberg**

PM Press, August 2011, 500 pp

He's most known for the horrific 1987 train assault during a peaceful, ongoing protest on the tracks of a California weapons base that cut off both his legs just below the knees. But Viet Nam war veteran Brian Willson logged many, many years of anti-war activism both before and after that infamous incident. Thus the title of his just-released book *Blood on the Tracks: The Life and Times of S. Brian Willson*, plus its shocking cover photo taken seconds after the amputation and attempted murder, sets the focus for his gripping life's story.

It must be a very long journey indeed to

## BOOK REVIEWS

come from a family background in upstate New York of conservative, blindly patriotic Christian Republicans to becoming an absolutely unstoppable “upright human being in a world of violence and lies,” as one reviewer called him. Perhaps the review by William Blum, author of *Killing Hope: U.S. Military and CIA Interventions Since World War II*, sums it up best, “The 1960s to the 1980s... for progressive activists in the United States there perhaps was never a period quite like it – Viet Nam to Nicaragua to El Salvador, one long protest against the barbarity of American imperialism. S. Brian Willson was there, here and everywhere, devoting his life, sacrificing his legs to a munitions train. A marvelous ‘journey,’ he calls it, for the boy who was ‘convinced that the United States could do no wrong,’ a loyal anti-communist, who served in Viet Nam, then travelled the length of Latin America to oppose U.S. foreign policy and support the numerous victims of that policy. Sadly, that policy continues, but Willson’s memoir can well serve as a guide and inspiration to a new generation of progressive activists. We’ve learned a lot.”

Orders can be placed with PM (Printed Material) Press: [www.pmpress.org](http://www.pmpress.org)

*Nadya Williams, Chapter 69 San Francisco*



**Binding Their Wounds: America’s Assault on Its Veterans**  
**Robert Topmiller and T Kerby Neill**  
Paradigm Publishers  
April 2011, 224 pp

As a student of history, veteran of the Marine Corps and Army, and veterans activist and advocate, reviewing this great book by fellow VFP members Robert Topmiller and T. Kerby Neill was a natural fit for me.

My favorite chapter is the last chapter titled, “Help us doc, to avoid the next war. We urgently need skilled peacemakers and negotiators in our polarized legislatures and government service...based on caring and partnerships. Working for peace is the only alternative. Peace is the public health for veterans and for us all.”

These words resonate deeply in my soul as many emotions flow back and forth.

Anger and sadness wash over me as I read co-author Vietnam Veteran, history professor and peacemaker Robert Topmiller left this earth before the final publication of this book. His words pierce my heart and cut to the core of all war veterans who truly are left with the human costs of war. Doc said once, “I have dreaded ...others discovering the depth of my trepidation.” All of us need to be available to listen, connect and understand the utter personal destruction of post traumatic stress disorder. The book advises us to “remain open to each other... extend ourselves to those who close their doors...” addressing the isolation of those with PTSD.

History is rife with examples of denial, misdiagnosis, mistreatment and underfunding for veterans programs from Daniel Shays, the WWI Bonus March, and a reluctant passage of the Veterans Readjustment Act by FDR (known as the G.I Bill.) The VA didn’t recognize PTSD until 1980, and has stone-walled the investigation Agent Orange for decades, to say nothing of Gulf War Syndrome. Recent funding of the VA has improved slightly, but depending on the current climate of anti-government public opinion and political rhetoric; these gains are fragile at best.

Read this book. Get involved in veterans issues. Become a veterans advocate. Above all establish social networks with all veterans whether anti-war or not. Work for peace, stand and march for peace, and as Gandhi says, “Become the change you want to see in the world.”

*Aaron M. Davis*



**The Trials of Adrian Wheeler**  
**By Steve Shear**  
**L&L Dreamspell Publishers**  
[Lldreamspell.com](http://Lldreamspell.com)  
332 pp, paperback

In this first novel by poet, painter, and sculptor Steve Shear (an associate member of Veterans for Peace), the “trials” refer to the physical, mental, social, and legal tribulations that face a young ex-Marine who returns from the war in Iraq bereft in body, mind, and spirit. Adrian Wheeler returns from Iraq with a twisted knee and without his left arm; he also returns

without his brother, a fellow Marine who was killed in the battle in which Adrian was wounded, a failed reconnaissance mission in which other Marines and Iraqi women and children were also killed. He returns to post-traumatic stress disorder, a feeling of sexual inadequacy and a fractured love relationship, to guilt, and finally a legal trial in which the responsibility of a nation is tried in the person of one returning broken Marine.

The novel is an examination of the troubled relationship of father and sons, of the physical and emotional relationship of a couple radically changed by war and loss, of the relationship of brother and brother, and the relationship of a former military member to his government and those who sent him to war. The relationship of Adrian and his father, a stern, distant, harshly judgmental former Marine who pushed and bullied his sons to join the military and who berates Adrian when he returns alone, is especially well done in the book. The sad reality facing the returning “hero” from our latest and most problematic adventure in nation-building at the point of a gun in a distant and culturally foreign land provides a background for the author’s serious examination of the pathologies of the modern American way of war.

There is some very good writing in this book, and the story, though complicated and multidimensional, is told with an economy and a taut structure that builds to the resolution of the mystery story that is at the novel’s center. Adrian Wheeler finds himself at the center of the most important court-martial of the Iraq war, and the verdict reveals much about the individual man, the military, and the country. It is the novel, rather than the factual reports from the ground, that will likely reveal to us this war and its effects in all their complexity.

Adrian Wheeler is a fine, fully drawn character, large enough to carry the weight of the many aspects of this book. Steve Shear has created a fine representative of our troubled time. A screenplay of the book has been written, and plans to do a film version of the book are in the works.

*Chuck Rossi*





# P O E T R Y

## Two poems by James Wright

(HQ Co. 15th Med Bn, 1st Air Cav (AM) Phuoch Vinh 1970-71):

### **Nameless Hootchmaid of the Goat Shed**

(Phouc Vinh, RVN, 1970)

The face that holds these eyes  
is not a face for me--  
faceless, nameless, tissue-scarred,  
her's is a mask  
burned and pushed aside.

Only the eyes remain  
to remind us as she comes  
each morning to shine our boots  
that someone else—  
my countryman no doubt,  
had burnt her dreams  
cauterized her thoughts  
to the deepest recess of her mind.

Yet she shows us in her eyes  
she will still look out  
for the friendly glance  
the honest face,  
and finding it she peers up and grins.  
The sun glows on her golden teeth.

### **Golden Women**

the women with golden baubles in their ears  
and golden trim around their teeth  
look with peace-filled eyes inquiringly  
as to whether I am an honest man:  
as honest as they are people  
who scrape, bow, shine shoes,  
clean rooms and hang around speaking:  
“tenkyoo hancho, tenkyoo.”

### **Chu Lai**

(For Robert Lee Hennel)

After missions  
He could wash choppers out  
But not memory.

### **Michael Gillen**

From: *Wild Geese Returning: Haiku and Photographs*

## If There Were Peace

Continued from page 10



Ken and Bill giving a talk on the Vietnam War to the congregants of Toko-ji Zen Buddhist Temple, Amakusa, June 2011. (photo by Sachiko Akama)

and we Marines were using it as a battalion command post. We'd spent several days trying to dislodge some North Vietnamese from the houses across the street, and were just marking time that morning, waiting for flame tanks to come and burn the block down. Ken and I were posted in a second-story bedroom. I was making a cup of C-ration coffee and Ken was cleaning his rifle when a North Vietnamese soldier put an RPG through the window.

It took some work to find the building—a lot can and does change in 43 years—but we found it. Completely renovated and refurbished, the house is now the business offices for the four-star, six-story Duy Tan Hotel. The yard is now a tiled driveway and parking area for the hotel with a motor-scooter rental operation and an outdoor coffee shop. Only the configuration of the windows, and the location of the house itself, allowed me to be certain we had the right place.

Indeed, aside from the ubiquitous cemeteries for the war dead and the occasional monument or statue, one has to look hard to find any evidence of the American War (as the Vietnamese call it). The population, double what it was in 1975, is young, dynamic, and ambitious. There is new construction everywhere. Roads, bridges, in the cities, in the countryside, 20-story office buildings, single-family homes. Grass-thatched roofs have been replaced by ceramic tile. Most farmers plow their paddy fields with motorized if primitive tractors. Roads are paved, cars are commonplace, and motor-scooters and cellphones abound. The beaches up and down the entire coast of Vietnam are lined with resort hotels. VietBank and PetroVietnam are juxtaposed with Hyundai and Sheraton. The gap-toothed bridge over the River of Perfumes that the Viet Cong blew up during Tet has been rebuilt, and is lit nightly with an array of colored floodlights that makes the lighting on Philadelphia's Ben Franklin Bridge look anemic.

Anne, Ken, and I, together with photographer Sachiko Akama, who traveled with us, visited a fish farm and an aquarium on Hon Mieu, the Cham-built Hindu temples of Po Nagar (the oldest dating back to the 8th century), the summer palace of Emperor Tu Duc, and the tomb of emperor Khai Dinh. We went swimming in the turquoise waters of Nha Thang Bay, took a sunset cruise on the Song Cai, and ate a barbecue of fresh prawns, squid, beef, tomatoes, and cucumber on Hon Mun.

One evening in Hue, we went for a boat ride on the River of Perfumes, accompanied by eight singers and musicians in traditional dress performing traditional folk music. One can hardly imagine, let alone describe, the beauty, the profound tranquility, of such an experience, especially for two ex-Marines who had nearly died next to that river so many years ago.

Later that night, Ken and I stood on a hotel balcony overlooking Hue. We could see the university that had been used as a refugee center, the roof of the building we'd been in, now dwarfed by the hotel built around it, the roofs of what had been the MACV compound. But the streets were crowded with noisy, jostling, energetic people. The river flowed with colorful tour boats. The bridge glowed yellow, then green, then blue. We did not speak. There was nothing to say. This is what we had come to see. A country. Not a war.

*Bill Ehrhart, a member of VFP Chapter 31, teaches at the Hav-erford School in suburban Philadelphia.*

A longer version of the article, with additional photos, is accessible at <http://www.wdehrhart.com/kbea-pages/introduction.html>.

### Temple Poem

Amakusa, Japan

The sun comes up each morning in silence;  
the moon disappears, but nobody sees.

Flowers dance by the roadside unnoticed;  
birds twitter sweetly, but nobody hears.

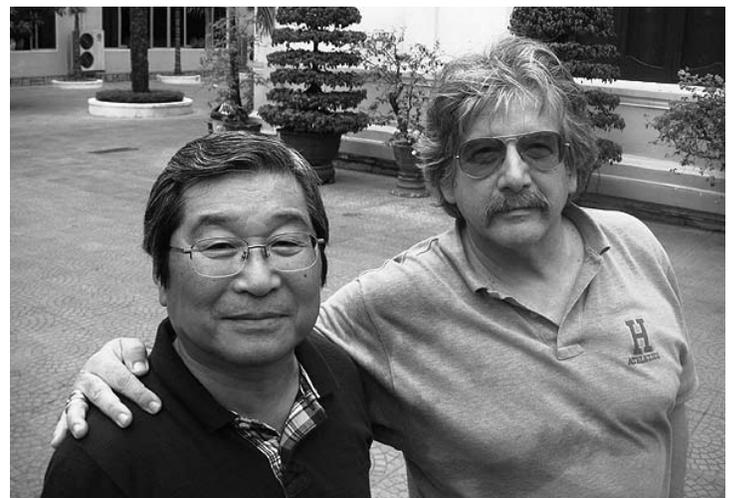
People don't stop to consider what matters.  
People work hard all their lives to achieve

a dream of success that will make them happy:  
position or power, fortune or fame—

until they are old and they realize too late  
that the beauty of living has passed them by

while the river travels alone to the ocean,  
the wind sings alone in the tops of the trees.

*From the original Japanese by Shinmin Sakamura, translated by Kazunori Takenaga and adapted by W. D. Ehrhart at the request of Morinobu Okabe, 31st priest of the Zen Buddhist Temple of Toko-ji.*



Ken and Bill in Hue City. In the rear is the building where they were wounded. (photo by Sachiko Akama)

we can expect from our membership.

The program

Attracting donors requires a solid, clear program. And not coincidentally, a solid, clear program will give us a greater sense of purpose and direction.

If you attended the convention, you may recall that my report during the Saturday business meeting included mention of a locally-based organizing campaign, organized by VFP chapters and active members who want to participate, on the key issue of the war economy and how it's killing us in so many different ways. Not every family and community has had to welcome back a coffin or a wounded member, but every single community has suffered cutbacks in libraries, schools, health care and the dignity that comes with having decent public services.

Some of our chapters and active members are already organizing around these issues, building local coalitions with growing political power. But we can always do it better, more methodically, more purposefully. At the convention I said I'll be seeking funding for this kind of organizing campaign, but I'm not waiting for it to get started.

As I'm writing this, tomorrow I'll be on the road to Asheville, NC, where Chapter 99 is heading up a couple days for VFP members and others in the Asheville area to take a break from activism, see what this kind of organizing might mean for them and how to go about it. I have great expectations! One is to initiate a pilot project with partners who can help design and refine a program that will move forward VFP's mission, provide purpose and direction for the organization, and attract serious donors. And you know the old saying, "So goes Asheville, so goes the nation!"

Onward!

Mike

(\*) One element of any good development plan is "Planned Giving." If you've not made arrangements to make a bequest to VFP, please consider doing so. I've been going to do that for years and finally did...it's actually painless.



mass consumers be passed on.

Values can provide motivation – Family and community; clean air, water and soil, community self-sufficiency in energy, water, and food.

Youth need to be involved – The past few generations have given us the greed-driven problems and we need youth with new ideas to move us forward.

Volunteers are key – Volunteerism on a large scale is key to expanding the good work of Non-Governmental Organizations and holding governments accountable.

Measure growth differently than GDP – combine with sustainable development goals and social development – measuring only the production gives a distorted picture and doesn't take into account the depletion and pollution of resources – we make and spend money but we also spend resources to do so.

RIO+20: The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development will take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on June 4-6, 2012. Commonly referred to as "Rio+20," it takes place twenty years after a similar conference, also held in Rio, that called for drastic action to save the planet. It will also mark the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. Rio+20 is seen by many as perhaps the last chance for the planet, or at least for the survival of our species along with a lot of other species. The UN conference will take place alongside the World Social Forum in nearby Porto Alegre, Brazil, the site of the first World Social Forum in 2001.

The Bonn NGO conference passed a 16-page declaration of goals to take to Rio as our input to their declaration. Due to the participation of several peace activists at the conference, the wording for peace was made stronger and moved toward the beginning of the declaration to RIO+20.

VFP member Helen Jaccard spoke to the entire assembly to make the point that efforts to build a sustainable future must include stopping war, since control of scarce resources is a major cause of war, and war is a major destroyer of the environment as well as entire societies of people. Several other delegates made similar remarks, including Alfred Marder, a VFP member from New Haven, Connecticut who is president of the International Association of Peace Messenger Cities.

As a direct result of these interventions, Lines 68-70 (of a 595-line document) read as follows:

*Recognizing that peace is a precondition for sustainable development and that high expenditures are being allocated in warfare, and that military activities, in particular the use of nuclear weapons, represent a serious threat to the planet*

You can download the declaration here: <http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/ngoconference/resources/final>

Many delegates at the conference were receptive to an antiwar perspective, but that was not on the agenda of the NGO's they represented, so they could not promote it themselves. Groups like Veterans For Peace can help assure that concerns about war and peace are included in all appropriate venues. Peace needs champions, in the environmental community, as everywhere.

Helen Jaccard



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## Report from Hebron

Continued from page 4

so that it is now physically impossible for Palestinians to openly display their wares! Following the massacre, Israeli military orders had forced more than 500 shops in the city center to close.

While walking through the old market, we observed as we looked above our heads some Israeli flags that flew from windows in houses that overlooked the market. A number of Jewish families had bribed some Palestinians to sell property while other Israelis had obtained eviction notices since owners of Palestinian houses had not obtained the required permits from the government to build additions to their homes. Thus, we saw Israeli flags flying above the passageways that led through the old market. We also observed the netting that was placed over the streets in the market. This heavy wire mesh (see photo below) is designed to protect Palestinians from being hit with bottles, bricks, chairs, and other debris that the settlers routinely throw down upon any persons who take this route while shopping in a very limited area of old Hebron. In addition, Hebron residents must place wire meshing over their windows to protect them from armed settlers who walk by and throw rocks that would shatter the windows without such protection. Incidentally, Palestinians with houses on Shuhada Street are not allowed to walk on this street. In 2000, the IDF sealed the front doors of these homes and shops in the name of "security," requiring Palestinians in these houses to find alternative routes through other houses or via their rooftops in order to access their own community.

Many of the merchants whose shops were welded shut have moved away as they have no way to display their goods or easy access to another location because of the blocked off streets. Business, therefore, has slowed to a trickle as nearly a thousand more have closed their shops. No access, no business.

We IFPB delegates learned that Israeli settlers verbally harass and sometimes, physically attack Palestinians, including school children who walk to school. Thank goodness for members of Christian Peacemakers Team (CPT) and International Solidarity Movement people (ISM) who often act as escorts for the children and provide protection. We met a gutsy pair of CPT who documented the many human rights abuses inflicted by settlers who have taken over much of Hebron and nearby lands. Within one month after we returned home, the Israeli newspaper, *Haaretz*, re-



Hebron: Old City.

ported that two of the CPT staff were assaulted while attempting to video record an attack on Palestinian shepherds by Israeli settlers. Moreover, we learned from Issa that Anna, a German national, was attacked and beaten as was George, a Greek national, and even a disabled Palestinian child. All this occurred in this "Hell on Earth" city. Americans should be outraged to discover that when Palestinians are being attacked, beaten, even shot, the IDF usually looks the other way. This is the military that our tax dollars are supporting.

Who supports these settlers? One major donor is the Hebron Fund (a 501.c.3 organization) which collects monies (tax-free) to maintain and support Hebron settlers and those who live in adjacent areas. To view a glimpse of the injustices we have described, we recommend going to [www.Openshuhadastreet.org](http://www.Openshuhadastreet.org). Moreover, the photos that accompany this article show what we have mentioned: the netting over the passageways in the old market; the concrete blocks that are examples of resistance.

Our IFPB group was allowed to walk on Shuhada Street which is well-kept and refurbished by money from the Clinton administration with the stipulation that it must be shared by all citizens of Hebron. However, the water and electricity which were supposed to serve both the Hebron settlers and the residents of the Old City are no longer available to the Palestinians. Contrary to the agreement (the Hebron Protocol), when we were there in June, Shuhada Street was closed to all traffic except for the military and settlers. There are still some Palestinians clinging to their homes on Shuhada Street but they have had to cover their windows with heavy reinforced screens to provide protection from religious zealots in Hebron.

We questioned if settler damage is ever reported to the Israeli occupying authority and Issa told us that attacks by settlers on native Palestinians are rarely investigated, even if these attacks result in serious injury or death.

We conclude by stating that the oppressive Israeli policy we witnessed firsthand does little or nothing for Israel's security but, instead, has the opposite effect of inciting anger and encouraging insurgency among Palestinians. So many of the ideological settlers carry US weapons which have been used to terrorize or kill Palestinian families. Settlers also cut down olive trees, poison Palestinians' animals, as well as their water supplies, and fields.

Help to bring peace and justice to Israel/Palestine. Get involved. Do your own research such as visiting the websites of UN OCHA, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian affairs; B'tselem, Israeli Information Center for Human Rights ([www.btselem.org](http://www.btselem.org)); If Americans Knew ([www.ifamericansknew.org](http://www.ifamericansknew.org)); Ha'aretz, Israeli newspaper; The Jerusalem Post, Israeli newspaper; and ICHAD, Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions ([www.icahd.org](http://www.icahd.org)).

Finally, we believe it is in Israeli's best interest that people worldwide support the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Campaign (BDS). We say take the profit out of Illegal Occupation and support the nonviolent international movement to pressure the government of Israel with a tactic that aided the collapse of South African Apartheid. For additional information on this campaign, go to [www.BDSmovement.net](http://www.BDSmovement.net)

*Vince Stravino, Veterans for Peace, Bethlehem, PA.*  
*Will Thomas, Veterans for Peace, Auburn, NH*



## VFP NEWSLETTER FALL 2011

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In July, *Business Insider* reported that two Navy ships that cost \$300 million are headed to the scrapyard without having seen a day of service.

**"We, having dutifully served our nation,  
do hereby affirm our greater  
responsibility to serve the cause  
of world peace."**

*from the VFP Mission Statement*

In August, the Commission on Wartime Contracting estimated that as much as \$60 billion in U.S. funds has been lost to waste and fraud in Iraq and Afghanistan over the past decade.



## HOW IS THE WAR ECONOMY WORKING FOR YOU??