



VETERANS FOR PEACE

ED Michael McPearson Stands Down “Thank You Veterans For Peace”

by Michael McPhearson

This is my last message to you as your Executive Director. By the time you receive this newsletter I will be heading back to New Jersey to continue resisting war and working for peace. Exactly how I am not sure, but I will continue to work closely with Veterans For Peace. So I want to take this last opportunity to thank you for your indispensable support of Veterans For Peace and for all you do in support of peace.

Two-thousand-nine was a busy year for Veterans For Peace. We continued our pressure on Congress and the new Obama Administration to bring the troops home from Iraq. Having passed a clear resolution in 2008 against continued occupation of Afghanistan, we increased our activities in 2009 to oppose U.S. policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We also pushed the President on issues of torture and prosecution of Bush Administration officials for war crimes. We highlighted sexual military trauma with Military Rape Awareness week and we



placed one-hundred 10 Excellent Reasons Not to Join the Military books in public and schools libraries. Of course we continue our core work to educate the general public about the full cost of war in our effort to abolish war.

Veterans For Peace did not escape the fundraising challenge faced by most not-for-profits last year. We had a \$41,000 deficit between revenue and expenditures. The reserves we put away for hard times came in handy. Unlike many of our organizational partners, we did not have to layoff employees and pull back on efforts. We continue to have a substantial nest egg set aside, but over time the deficit will exhaust it.

Veterans For Peace continues to attract new members, but we also have the challenge of retention of existing membership. The veteran community against war and for peace is small. We must communicate with each other and strengthen our community ties. If you have not been to a VFP meeting in a few months, go to the next one. If you attend most meetings, call a member you have not seen in awhile. With the Obama Administration’s decision to increase troops in Afghanistan and military operations in Pakistan, the New Year provides opportunities to organize the chapter and reconnect with members. An increase in military operations will mean more death, so there is little time to waste.

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New Year’s Eve In Cairo

by Kenneth Mayers

In the week preceding New Year’s Day 2010, nearly 1400 activists from 43 countries converged on Cairo, Egypt, in order to participate along with 50,000 Palestinians in a planned New Year’s Eve “Gaza Freedom March” to the Gaza side of the Erez crossing into Israel. At the same time, a coalition of Israel Peace & Justice groups planned to approach the Israeli side of the crossing. A team from the Steering Committee organizing the march, including Veteran For Peace Colonel Ann Wright, had been in Cairo for the preceding month, making daily visits to the Egyptian Foreign Ministry and other agencies, contracting with bus companies for transportation to and from Al-Arish and the Rafah crossing into Gaza, lining up the hundreds of hotel rooms required, and attending to all sorts of related logistical, political, and diplomatic details.

Nonetheless, within a few days of the planned December 28 departure for Al-Arish, the Egyptian government not only announced

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2009 VFP Board Election Report

There were five open seats for this year's Board of Director's election, and nine candidates. Members cast 938 ballots, of which 905 were judged valid. The vote count committee consisted of Reese Forbes, Woody Powell, Bob Schneiders, and Bill Griffith.

The final tally was as follows:

1. Michael Uhl 742

2. Mike Ferner 737

3. Cherie Eichholz 694

4. Joey King 460

5. Mike Hearington 440

Tarak Kauff 308

Chris Knight 297

Sam Feldman 288

Dave Wiley 206



Michael Uhl



Mike Ferner



Cherie Eichholz



Mike Hearington



Joey King

Treasurer Ken Mayers and former vice president Sharon Kufeldt completed two terms on the Board, and were thus ineligible for re-election. Anita Foster did not seek a second term. Since the election, Secretary Gary May has resigned for personal reason. For their service and contributions to VFP, each of these retiring board directors merits our kudos, and our gratitude. New members Cherie Eichholz, Joey King and Mike Hearington join Michael Uhl and President Mike Ferner, who were re-elected; another member will soon be appointed to fill Gary's seat.



Ken Mayers



Anita Foster



Gary May



Sharon Kufeldt

PSSST-Don't keep it secret!

Hey! You may know someone who deserves to be recognized by VFP for an annual award.

Please don't keep it to yourself.

Let us know about it as soon as possible!

We need to know and you need to share with us.

Currently we are doing outreach and revamping the committee. In particular, we need some additional diversity and someone familiar with artistic design.

We will make a better award with your help and participation!

You can contact the committee at
VFP.awards@gmail.com
Or alternately 718-805-6341

Donate Your Used Vehicle To Help VFP!

It is very easy now to donate your used vehicle to Veterans For Peace. RV's, boats and even non-running vehicles are welcome. All you have to do is:

call our office, 314-725-6005

OR

call Car Program Inc. 7 days a week, 800 237 5714

OR

fill out the on line form,

http://www.veteransforpeace.org/Alternative_support_VFP.vp.html

That's it! Within 24 hours someone will call to arrange pick up or towing

Convention 2010

Marking A Quarter Century of Veterans For Peace Activism

Mark your calendars now for the 2010 Convention, which will celebrate VFP's 25th anniversary and look ahead to the unfinished work of promoting peace and progressive politics in a time of global war and economic retrenchment. The meeting will be held from August 25-29 and, fittingly, in Maine, the birthplace of Veterans For Peace in 1985. Portland, Maine, a vibrant, beautiful coastal city located on a peninsula in Casco Bay, will be the host city for the Convention under the sponsorship of VFP Chapters 1 and 3. The Convention Headquarters will be the Holiday Inn by the Bay Hotel and Convention Center.

The 25th Anniversary Convention is a unique opportunity for progressive, activist veterans from around the country to come together to understand the organization's past, to meet and enjoy its present, and to help plan its future in these fraught times.

Come to Maine in August. Let the voices of veterans be heard in their collective strength.

Keynote Speaker: Chris Hedges

Chris Hedges is a longtime friend of Veterans For Peace, a prominent critic of militarism and advocate for peace and progressive causes. He is a Senior Fellow at the Nation Institute, the Anshutz Distinguished Fellow at Princeton University, and a regular columnist at Truthdig.com.



Hedges spent more than two decades as a foreign reporter covering Latin America, Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. He received the 2002 Amnesty International Global Award for Human Rights Journalism, and was named the 2009 Online Journalist of the Year by the Los Angeles Press Club, which cited his Truthdig essay "Party to Murder" about the December 2008-January 2009 Israeli assault on Gaza as Best Online Column.

Hedges's experience of the wars in El Salvador, the Balkans, and the Middle East formed the basis for his 2003 book *War is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*. (2003) a seminal analysis of modern warfare. Hedges has exposed the barren spiritual life and dangerous political possibilities at the heart of American fundamentalist religion in *American Fascists: The Christian Right and the War on America* (2008) and the barren scientism at the heart of much current atheism in *Don't Believe in Atheists* (2008). His most recent book *The Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle* (2009) finds in much of American popular culture a vehicle for ephemera and emptiness, destructive of the value of honest labor, and a promoter of the shoddy.

Hedges is an intellectually challenging speaker who speaks from a firm moral stance and an uncompromising point of view. We are very pleased to have Chris Hedges participate in the Opening Ceremony of the 2010 Convention.

Convention Highlights

- Poetry event recognizing the editors and contributors to *Winning Hearts and Minds*, and *Demilitarized Zones*, collections of poems by Vietnam veterans, followed by open mike.
- Opening reflections by **Jerry Genesio**, a principal founder of Veterans For Peace.
- Opening keynote by **Chris Hedges**, one of the country's most prolific and provocative progressive writers.
- A public meeting in Portland featuring the NAACP, Native American and labor organizations, and representatives of Portland's immigrant and marriage equality communities. Entertainment by Inanna, a dynamic women's drumming ensemble.
- Friday evening Island Lobster Bake on nearby Peak's Island.
- Breakout sessions to bring the concerns and ideas of the membership to the organization's leaders and to set policy goals for 2010-2011.
- Saturday Banquet, featuring **Noel Paul Stookey** of Peter, Paul and Mary fame, consummate solo performer for many years, and tireless activist for peace and justice.
- Sunday rally and march through the city of Portland ending at Monument Square.

Register On-line - www.vfpnationalconvention.org

Consult the website frequently for updated information on convention program developments. Registration at the Holiday Inn by the Bay is made directly with the hotel (800-345-5050). **Stay tuned for information on the availability of subsidies for hotel rooms and alternative accommodations.**

Preliminary Schedule

Date	Activity
Wednesday	Board Meeting
August 25	Welcome Reception Veterans Poetry Reading (p.m.)
Thursday	Board Meeting
August 26	Opening Session Breakout Sessions Exhibits Public Meeting (p.m.)
Friday	Breakout Sessions
August 27	Exhibits Lobster Bake (p.m.)
Saturday	Business Meeting
August 28	Exhibits Reception Banquet
Sunday	Closing session
August 29	Public Action in Old Port

Define Safe!!

by Mike Ferner

The Associated Press and the online *Times of London* tell us that on December 30, U.S. Special Forces or Blackwater mercenaries executed 10 people in eastern Afghanistan, eight of whom were students in what would be grades 6 to 11 here. The children were dragged from their beds in the middle of the night, some handcuffed, and then shot.

This nauseating, infuriating evil has gone mostly unnoticed in the U.S. corporate press, unlike the failed attempt to bomb an airline flight to Detroit and the eight CIA agents killed in a suicide bombing in Afghanistan.

Terrorizing and executing handcuffed junior-high students. What deeper depravity can we produce in this war?

Yes, "we." Make no mistake: whether the perpetrators were Army or Blackwater mercenary thugs, these killings belong to every one of us who pays taxes or has refused to hold our leaders accountable for the uncomfortable details of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Palestine and now Yemen.

"Safe...we want to be safe!" we demand of a government happy to fan our worst fears, even as the day draws near when we sleepwalk naked, barcodes on our foreheads, onto an airplane.

President Obama repeats the old assurances that with enough of our money and young adults, we can be safe if we do two simple things: A) seal the entrances to For-

ness America and B) bomb into submission every challenge to the American Empire abroad.

We hear this endlessly on what passes for "news," but we never listen to those who plainly tell us why, the most recent of whom is Defne Barak. She tells us her husband, a doctor and double agent in Jordan's CIA, was so outraged by the abuses at Abu Ghraib and the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan that he blew himself up along with eight of his U.S. CIA colleagues. Those grievances, along with U.S. support for Israel's occupation of Palestine, are cited repeatedly by those willing to give their lives in retribution.

We are not encouraged to know this because our leaders are more interested in the fleeting goals of domination, empire and our #1 export, weapons, than they are in justice and real security for the peoples of the world. No, more to their liking are words from Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's National Security Advisor.

In his 1997 book, *The Grand Chessboard*, Brzezinski named the Central Asian "stans" as the next center of conflict for world control. In light of Asian economic growth, he called this area, "infinitely more important as a potential economic prize: an enormous concentration of natural gas and oil reserves...in addition to important minerals, including gold."

In sync with decades of U.S. foreign policy he advised, "It follows that Amer-

ica's primary interest is to help ensure that no single power comes to control this geopolitical space," adding, "That puts a premium on maneuver and manipulation in order to prevent the emergence of a hostile coalition that could eventually seek to challenge America's primacy...To put it in a terminology that harkens back to the more brutal age of ancient empires, the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep (satellites) pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together."

Thomas Friedman, another acolyte of Empire who now tries to distance himself from what he considers a mismanaged adventure in Iraq, is more precise.

The foreign affairs columnist for the *New York Times* wrote in "The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization," that "Markets function and flourish only when property rights are secure and can be enforced. And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps."

No doubt when the first Vandals and Visigoths came together to assault the outer gates of the Roman Empire, the emperor's response was to pour more treasure into military force and violence. We are well down the road to doing the same. Shooting handcuffed schoolchildren is an ominous mile-marker.



Spending the Holidays In DC Jail

by Ellen Barfield

The anti-war action which landed me in jail from 14 December to 5 January was interrupting a Senate Foreign Relations committee hearing on the Afghan war/occupation last May, with Senator John Kerry chairing and Admiral Mullen, Chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testifying. My colleagues Eve Tetaz, Steve Mihalis, and Pete Perry, I know through years of activism and the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance.

Eve and I threw dollar bills stained with our own blood into the aisle of the hearing room (not AT anyone as was later assumed by the prosecutor and judge) and cried out

to stop spending blood money. Pete recited to Senator Kerry his own words from the Viet Nam era about telling the last soldier he is dying for a lie, and Steve added his condemnation of the war. We were whisked out of the hearing room in seconds. Senator Kerry had only said to remove, not arrest, us, but the police chose to arrest.

The formal charge was "unlawful conduct on Capitol grounds". Eve and I were mildly surprised we were not charged with more serious assault charges for the bloody money. I represented myself at trial in October, with Attorney Advisor Ann Wilcox. Eve and Pete had other attorneys.

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Newsletter

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Chapter Reports

Chapter 1, Portland, ME

Now that we enter 2010, Chapter 1 has become increasingly involved in the planning of the National VFP Convention, a celebration of our 25th anniversary, to be held in Portland, Maine, August 25-29. Look for details elsewhere in the newsletter, but know that along with our mates in 3, the other state chapter, we are committed to making this one we will all want to attend.

With Bruce Gagnon taking the lead, many chapter members are involved in a state-wide campaign to "Bring the War \$\$ Home". This effort is being replicated elsewhere and ought to be, at least, in each of the 40 states in fiscal crisis. For more information go to www.bringourwardollarshome.org.

Chapter VP and former Independent candidate for U.S. Senator, Herb Hoffman, and former chapter president Tom Sturtevant are taking the lead in our work to bring the National Guard home. Through the bringtheguardhome.org movement we are lobbying our state legislature and governor to end the unlawful deployment of our National Guard in Iraq and Afghanistan, two wars never declared by Congress.

The chapter will be holding its annual winter retreat late in January, most of which will be dedicated to National Convention planning.

Dud Hendrick

Chapter 10, Albany, NY

Chapter 10, the Tom Paine Chapter has been in high gear. In September we prepared and shipped 500 wooden crosses to Fr. Roy and the SOAW at Columbus, GA for the annual Close the SOA vigil and demonstration. In October we held our first awards dinner, honoring three outstanding peace activists in our community with the Tom Paine Winter Soldier Peace and Justice Award. This year's Veterans Day saw our chapter involved in two major community events along with the parade. We were delighted to have Kathy Kelly and Dan Pearson from Voices walk with us in this year's parade. In the evening of November 11, VFP members Dan Wilcox, Dayl Wise & Thomas Brinson read their poetry as part of a program on the effects of war at the Sanctuary for Independent Media in Troy, NY. Included on the program was

a discussion between international peace worker Kathy Kelly and photographer Nina Berman, whose photos of injured Iraq war soldiers were on display at the Sanctuary. Also on November 11, 2009, our chapter organized a veteran's panel discussion after a premier show of *The Good Soldier* movie featuring VFP's Michael McPhearson amongst others. Our chapter also provided free tickets for high school students and approximately 20 attended. *The Good Soldier* is an excellent documentary on the effects of combat on soldiers. Our veterans panel consisted of Ed Bloch, Jason Peterson, Tyler Boudreau and John Amidon. We joined with our larger peace community to protest against the Afghanistan escalation and met with our Representative P. Tonko to discuss a host of issues including the wars. Connie Houde also recently returned from Afghanistan and has been speaking to this concern and Elliot Adams has been presenting a dynamic and shocking slide show about the conditions in Gaza.

Finally we were recently involved in shipping some much needed hospital equipment to facilities near Chernobyl working with Conscience International, K. Bennett and others. Chapter 10 wishes everyone a healthy and happy New Year and best wishes for VFP's exceptionally important work.

John Amidon

Chapter 19 - Riverside/ San Bernardino Cty - CA

We had an excellent turn out of members and supporters for the annual Veterans Day parade. Like the past 4 years, VFP was greeted by enthusiastic applause from the spectators. We carried our Support the Troops, Bring them Home banner between the American and VFP flags. Congressional candidate Pat Meagher and his family were very active in the parade. We are very grateful for their help. Code Pink and Citizens Action for Peace also marched with VFP. We are so grateful Bob Fox drove the convertible.

After the parade Tom Swann and Tracy Turner drove to Claremont to watch the movie, *The Good Soldier*. After the documentary Tom and Tracy spoke with the people who also saw the movie.

Before the parade there was a poetry reading at the Palm Springs Peace Pole. Rev. Kevin Johnson reports the following:

When I arrived, one person was waiting and two others came soon after. One person arrived at about 25 minutes later. So, the four-then-five of us read aloud from a collection of peace prose that I brought. We passed the binder from one to another, reading a selection or a paragraph or two. At 11:00am, we kept three minutes of silence and finished that by saying aloud together, May Peace Prevail on Earth. Then we read an article based on Gandhis 10 Top Fundamentals for Changing the World.

The second annual Peace Readings at the Peace Pole gathering is scheduled for 11/11/2010, from 10:30 to 11:30am. Lets put it on our calendars.

Tom Swann

Chapter 21, Northern NJ

Chapter 21 member Michael Kramer traveled to Honduras October 7 to 12, 2009 with a 10 person solidarity/fact finding delegation organized by International Action Center. The delegation included 3 military veterans, community activists, clergy and academics. Violations of international law were documented through interviews with various sectors of Honduran society and first hand observations of the Armed Forces of Honduras and the National Police. Chapter 21 is now determined to raise the issue of Honduras at future activities.

Following the '09 VFP Convention - Moving From Hope to Action - Chapter 21 spent the fall engaged in activities on-going since the start of the wars on Iraq and Afghanistan. We also met with our congressman and urged him not to vote for war funding.



Chapter 19 on Veteran's Day

On December 5th we held our 3rd annual fund raiser. The Breakfast earned a donation for the VFP National office. A fun time was had by all. On a personal note: we were hoping for the change we voted for but instead, 14 hours after Obama's "surge" speech, our son, out of the army for 2 years, after serving 16 months in Afghanistan, was re-activated from the IRR. He leaves January 17, 2010, for IRAQ! WTF!! So if you note a bit of sarcasm in this report, that's the action our hope produced!

Nancy and Walt Nygard

Chapter 26, Chicago, IL

In October, Chapter 26 members demonstrated against escalation in Afghanistan in Hyde Park and member Bob Gronko spoke at a demonstration against the Afghanistan surge in Bloomingdale, IL. In November, Ken Nielsen held an IVAW organizing fundraiser at which Jeff Millard spoke. and we held our annual well attended Chapter Veterans Day Dinner and a brief Chapter Meeting on November 7th.

We held a Combined Veterans Day Ceremony with the Chicago Chapters of VVAW and IVAW on November 11, 2009 at the Chicago Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. Member Anna Stange sang folk songs prior to the Ceremony, which was MC'd by Chapter President and VVAW Military Counselor Ray Parrish. Dr. Quentin Young, an advocate of a single payer health plan, Barry Romo, a National Coordinator of VVAW and several members of Chicago IVAW spoke.

We took part in the annual Chicago Homeless Veterans' Winter Standdown in December.

Our future activities include local actions coordinated with the March 20, 2010 National March Against the War in Afghanistan in Washington, D.C., our annual LeRoy Wolins Memorial (a founder of Chicago VFP predecessor, "Veterans for Peace in Vietnam")/Elbe Day (when U.S. and Soviet forces met on the Elbe in 1945) Dinner in April, the 40th Anniversary of the Kent State Massacre and our Combined Memorial Day Ceremony in May. Chapter President and VVAW Military Counselor Ray Parrish continues to host and coordinate "Veterans Helping Veterans," a weekly public access T.V. program of interviews and call-ins on veterans' issues. The program is recorded and can be viewed online at: <http://www.chicagovfp.org/VeteransHelpingVeterans/VHV.htm>

Mike Woloshin

Chapter 27, Minneapolis MN

During 2009 Chapter 27 became an active member of the Minnesota Peace Project, a broad coalition designed to educate legislators on pertinent peace and justice issues.

The chapter, through Steve McKeowan's relentless efforts, presented 9938 petition signatures to our U.S. Senators, asking them to urge President Obama to call world leaders together at Pipestone to seriously discuss nuclear disarmament.

We expanded participation in our Armistice Day 11 Bells ceremony to envision a world no longer at war.

Our school project/counter recruitment group was organized and began to function with a presence at all Minneapolis schools career fairs.

We maintain a strong presence at the SOA, again sponsoring a bus to the demonstration, as well as at events questioning the expansion of war efforts in Afghanistan

More than 10 Chapter 27 members along with approximately 150 anti-torture activists gathered at Beth El Synagogue for a candlelight vigil to protest the appearance of Condoleezza Rice, former National Security Adviser and Secretary of State under George W. Bush.

VFP members Chante Wolf, Suzanne Asher, and Diane Wood along with local writers Michael K. Moore and Monica Haller are facilitating the following projects: Combat Paper Project, tearing the military uniform into small pieces of cloth, beaten into pulp and then turned into paper and will be an on going project in collaboration with the Minnesota Center of Book Arts.

Another is the Warrior Writers Project and a hard bound book project. The hard bound book project is facilitated by Monica Haller. Warrior Writers explore multimedia ways the veteran can put into their own words, feelings and experiences into a medium they can share with others. Their work will be published in another series soon.

Chante Wolf is involved with a therapeutic horse riding farm that is providing a safe place for women veterans. An old school house on the property will be restored

through the generosity of a supporter, so that the veteran will be able to stay during the week long sessions.

Chante Wolf



VFP31 member & banner from a demonstration at City Hall in Philadelphia the evening after Obama gave his escalation speech for Afghanistan

Chapter 31, Philadelphia, PA

Chapter 31 organized and held an all-day discussion with Philadelphia antiwar activists on how to respond to the Obama war policies. Attendees of that meeting then attended a January 31 meeting held by United For Peace and Justice on the same topic. The goal was more effective ways to get our antiwar message across. We raised \$700 for the Iraq Water Project at a 10,000 Villages store before Christmas. Members participated in a number of local vigils and attended the SOA demonstration at Fort Benning. Members have published letters to the editor and op-eds in local newspapers. Some of us are scheduled to speak in a school in early February, with others planned in the coming months. Several VFP 31 members marched with a VFP banner in the annual Philly "outfest" parade, and VFP 31 had a table afterwards. A member is working with the Philly gay community on plans to show a film on the gay Marine and IVAW member Jeff Keys. A member attended a demo in Harrisburg, the capital, opposed to a "shoot first" bill permitting one to open fire when one "felt" threatened. A member is in the early stages of developing a comic book based on IVAW testimony.

John Grant

Chapter 34, New York, NY

Chapter 34 members participated in numerous actions, including Military Rape Awareness, distribution of opt-out forms at local schools, World March for Peace &



Chapter 34 members listening to a folk-singer at our Holiday Party

Nonviolence, IAW & MFSO fundraisers, support for the Gaza Freedom March, and demonstrations against escalation in Afghanistan and Obama's Peace Prize. Three chapter members attended the annual SOA/WHINSEC events at Ft Benning, GA.

Screening of *Rethink Afghanistan* to a full house at a church in Queens

Participation in large "Out-of-Afghanistan" Rally INSIDE Grand Central Station, including leafleting and street theater

Antiwar contingent in the annual NYC Veterans Day Parade up 5th Avenue, including members of VFP, VVAW, VALB, MFSO, Code Pink, Granny Peace Brigade and Matti Mattson, 93 year old Veteran of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade. The crowd enthusiastically applauded our antiwar message.

Members participate in five weekly peace vigils, distributing English/Spanish flyers outlining peaceful alternatives to war in Afghanistan, encouraging folks to contact elected representatives, including their phone numbers.

Sadly, we lost two of our members, Julius Margolin and Richard Davis.

We ended the year with a great Holiday Party, attended by 45 members and friends.

We are currently planning demonstrations against the continuing occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, a chapter newsletter, and a benefit talk-back event at the NY premiere of a new play about the burdens war places on its survivors.

Bob Keilbach

Chapter 41 - Cape Cod, MA

This past Fall the chapter once again took part with other local veterans groups in planning and joining in the largest Veterans Day Parade and Memorial ceremony

on Cape Cod. As usual the response from the onlookers was overwhelmingly positive. We continued our outreach with the local Nam Vets organization and a program serving homeless vets. We also began work on a survey of all our chapter members, many of whom are not active, to determine what kinds of projects and actions they would join in on the local level. We already know there is a diversity of opinion about both focus and tactics and we are interested

in fostering a dialogue and increasing participation as we enter the new decade. In November we once again received a grant from the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod and in January initiated our 15th annual Peace Poetry Contest, mailing out invitations and press announcements Cape-wide. Also in January, we joined with local peace and justice groups to pressure our local U.S. Representative, Bill Delahunt to meet with us about stopping the funding for the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as shifting resources to humanitarian use and to services for veterans. The meeting was held on January 11 and our 'veteran's voice' was a critical part of the action.

Duke Ellis

Chapter 50, Northern MI

Our membership keeps growing on a monthly basis with much needed fresh views and suggestions.

We have once monthly meetings in Traverse City and have a minimum of 20 members per meeting.



Cape Cod Chapter Members join Cape Codders for Peace and Justice on Dec. 30 to demand a meeting with Rep. Delahunt to urge him to vote to end funding for the war in Afghanistan. They met with him on Jan. 11

We honor our Michigan veterans that have lost their lives in Iraq and Afghanistan on Veterans Day and on Memorial Day with our "Arlington North" display of crosses. Each with a photo, time of birth and death, and where and how the vet lost his/her life. Sadly, the number keeps growing. This display is well received in our community and gets a good amount of media coverage. We are honored to have a young bugler blow taps at noon. We then read the names and the home town of the vet. We have difficulty reading the names because we feel a great deal of grief in our hearts.

Since the President decided to send more of our young men and women into harms way, we decided we will peacefully walk the streets of downtown a minimum of once monthly. This will increase accordingly as we organize other groups.

We will have a booth with handouts at our Friday Night Live events in Traverse City. Hundreds of visitors will see us and feel our presence.

And we march in the annual Cherry Festival in Traverse City, among over 300,000 in attendance. We invite any VFP members from the country to join us. Traverse City is a wonderful place to visit. Think if we could have hundreds of Vets For Peace people in this parade. Awesome!!! And extremely patriotic.

We have new yard signs that say PEACE IS THE ANSWER. And we have new t-shirts and hats for associate members that read VFP Supporter.

Our president recently completed a hike of the Appalachian Trail (2,178 miles) as a fundraiser for a scholarship fund for a young person that will dedicate his or her life to peace. \$5,600 was raised.

Tim Keenan

Chapter 62, Southern NH

The AJ Muste Chapter of NH VFP did participate in the annual Veterans Day walk through the streets of NH's largest city - the Queen City, as some refer to it. We were 11 strong (12 when Paulie walked with us near City Hall). We carried our large VFP banner, four VFP white & black flags, a blue & white peace flag, and, of course, the US flag.



New Hampshire VFP on the march.

As folks remind me, NH VFP ought to continue our participation as we are the only voice of reason, of sanity, in recognizing the impact of militarism upon our society. When does it end -- when the US Empire collapses, when the "people" conclude that they have been played for "suckers" by Big Business and a bought-and-paid-for Congress?

What's one of our mantras? Out of the Schools and into the streets! Out of the Churches into the streets! Out of the Military and into the streets! Out of our psychic straight-jackets into the streets! Out of — you supply the rest . . .

Will Thomas

Chapter 63, Albuquerque, NM

Iraq Veterans Against the War held a retreat and strategy session in Albuquerque, New Mexico Friday January 15 through Sunday January 17. National IVAW Executive Director Jose Vasquez and over 40 other members from across the country attended. They laughed, ate, planned, organized and came together in mutual understanding and support. Don & Sally-Alice Thompson Chapter 63 VFP gave a small financial donation and much encouragement to the effort.

The assembled group decided to hold a candlelight vigil at the site of the tragic shooting death of an Iraq veteran. The 25-year-old father, son, brother was slain by the Albuquerque police while he threatened suicide on January 13. The purpose of the vigil was to offer comfort to the family of the young vet and bring attention to the awful mess war makes of so many lives. Kenneth Ellis III had been dropped from a PTSD program at the VA because he arrived late. A single bullet ended the young man's life but the causes of death are many: the war, the abandonment of the army, the inadequacy of the VA, etc.

Chapter 63 will have its float in the 2010 Dr Martin Luther King Parade in Albuquerque on Sunday January 17. The VFP float will have members marching in front and riding on board. IVAW members will meet VFP at the civic plaza where the parade ends and a commemorative ceremony begins.

Charles R. Powell

Chapter 72, Portland, OR

At 11:11 a.m. on the eleventh day of the eleventh month, taps was played from the ledge overlooking the Pioneer Courthouse Amphitheater in downtown Portland.

VFP members gathered with members of the community to commemorate Armistice Day as a day of peace. Following poignant speeches by Grant Remington and



Peace rocks at Pioneer Square on Armistice Day

Bob Goss, stones decorated with messages of peace by elementary school children were put on the ground in the shape of a peace sign.

VFP was well-represented at the Portland School Board meeting on November 23rd demanding equal access with military recruiters.

A fundraiser in December at a local nightclub raised money that was donated to Coffee Strong, the VFP Iraq water project, and Save Iraqi refugees project. Entertainment featured local hip hop artists.

Marion Ward

Chapter 87, Sacramento, CA

In response to Pres. Obama's announcement

of his plans to send more U.S. troops to Afghanistan, VFP Ch. 87 sponsored demonstrations in front of the largest local shopping mall. At the very hour of the announcement, and on the next night, we expressed our displeasure and disagreement with this new surge policy.

About 18 demonstrators each night was a pretty good turnout for these days. Although the event was sponsored by VFP we invited everyone from the local anti-war community to join us and many did. We had folks we hadn't seen before and some different ones each night.

Even more encouraging was the great response we got from the public as they drove by. Lots of honking, waving, smiling, peace signs, etc. Three local media stations covered the event and interviewed participants. All very encouraging!

Two VFPers traveled to Red Bluff, CA, for a World March for Peace event. I spoke for Vets For Peace, talking about the need for justice as a prerequisite for peace, about the tremendous costs of war, and the fact that all the civilian contractors are "profit opportunities" for corporations who have a financial interest in prolonging the conflict. The talk seemed to be well received by the fifty-plus attendees. I spoke with three or four vets just after the event. They were very happy about having a VFP speaker. One had tried unsuccessfully to get a VFP chapter going in that rural, conservative area.

We continue our outreach to the homeless, especially homeless vets, and we are supporting other anti-war actions here in Sacramento.

John C. Reiger

Chapter 90, Broome County, NY

Chapter 90 had a busy fall joining the World March for Peace and Non-Violence in September. We actually had the Bing-



Weekly Vigil outside the Binghamton NY Federal Building



Chapter #91 was well received during the 2009 San Diego Veterans Day parade.

hamton, NY City Council issue a Proclamation in the support of the World March Principles that we had advocated (vote on the council was 7-0). On November 30th we filled a bus with over 50 people including our Mayor of Binghamton Matt Ryan, to march with some of the International marchers across the Brooklyn Bridge to NYC City Hall. We were featured in several newspaper articles as well as several local TV newscasts reporting our "Armistice Day" observance on November 11th. One of our WW II Vets Stu Naismith was featured in a local column regarding his experience in the occupation of Japan. Stu recalled that meeting Japanese people brought him to regard those Japanese citizens as "being no different than Americans". He was appalled at the devastation of post-war Yokohama, which had been fire-bombed. Chapter President George McAnanama was the lone veteran invited to speak at the nearby Chenango Bridge elementary school Veterans Day Assembly. He spoke of the combat experience of George Mizo and how Mizo had gone on to be one of the founders of Vietnam Friendship Village.

George McAnanama

Chapter 91, San Diego, CA

Chapter 91 fall activities started on Labor Day with an informational outreach booth at the USS Midway Museum, which is a focal point for the large military footprint here in San Diego. On Veterans Day, November 11th, fifteen members of Chapter 91 set up our portable Arlington West Memorial on the grassy area in front of the USS Midway, this time recognizing the 917 service members killed to date in Afghanistan, and then marched in the 2009 San Diego Veterans Day parade, where we

received an overwhelmingly positive response from the 30,000 parade spectators. December 12th found Chapter 91 at the annual "Peace on Earth Bazaar" hosted by 30+ San Diego peace groups, always a good outreach and fundraiser. December also found SDVFP members in two local high schools in support of Project YANO, a group that provides an alternative viewpoint to military enlistment, passing along our personal experiences

with recruiters and our personal service experiences. On January 16th, Chapter 91 will be marching in the Martin Luther King Day parade here in San Diego. On a sad note, Chapter 91 lost two of its most senior



VFP 92 members pictured are Gerry Condon (far left), Dorli Rainey (in middle), and Peggy Hotes (in pinnie).

members, Bob Curry (82) and Henry Levy (91), both of whom had been active in VFP and other peace related events even as they declined. We salute them, their courage, and they will be missed.

Gil Field

Chapter 92, Seattle, WA

VFP 92 members provided food, blankets and clothes, and then were arrested with residents of Nickelsville homeless tent camp while making a stand against their eviction from Port of Seattle property.

We marched in the big Auburn Veterans Day parade. Many chapters, including Bellingham, Seattle, Tacoma, North Olympic Peninsula, and Portland came, making it a regional event with around 30 VFPers.

VFP 92 had an Armistice Day ceremony at the Veterans Memorial Wall in downtown Seattle, where we also joined a ceremony honoring veterans who are survivors of Military Sexual Trauma (MST). Other participating organizations included VetWOW, Vietnam Veterans of America and Disabled American Veterans.

VFP 92 helped organize united emergency actions to protest against President Obama's escalation of the U.S. war on Afghanistan War.

VFP 92 participated in a public reading of poetry and prose, where several members read their work.

Newly elected chapter president Gerry Condon was outside the gates of Fort Lewis to receive war resister Leo Church as he was released from the brig and the Army.

Helen Jaccard

Chapter 99, Asheville NC

Chapter 99 now has a weekly TV show (to complement its Veterans' Voices radio program). VFP-TV is broadcast on URTV (www.urtv.org) Channel 20 in Asheville, NC, Tuesdays at 5:30 then re-broadcast in five different times slots. We broadcast live on the first two Tuesdays of each month.

VFP-TV focuses on material not usually found on mainstream media. For example, a recent program featured some great films that several chapter members brought back from

the School of the Americas November vigil.

Another was devoted to the Creating a Culture of Peace workshop the Chapter hopes to make available to the community in 2010. And another was about military rape.



VFP-TV crew (l to r) Kasha Baxter, Ronald Harayda, and James Latimore.



Veterans For Peace Chapter 101/San Jose Peace and Justice Center host Iraq veterans Conor Curran (left) and Josh Steiber (right).

We also cover news of chapter activities, such as publication of the *War Crimes Times* and the fund-raising for a start-up work project for Iraqi women.

The VFP-TV crew includes producers Ronald Harayda & Kasha Baxter (technical), David Ireland (editing transformations), and James Latimore (long term planning content & research guru). James and chapter officers rotate as hosts.

We ask national VFP members to submit ideas, advice, videos, or themselves (for interviews). Contact info: (828) 252-1967 or vfptv@live.com.

James Latimore

Chapter 101, South Bay/ Peninsula CA

In 2009, Chapter 101 tabled at public events which gave us the opportunity to provide printed information and speak to people outside of the peace community. We were able to speak to students in several classes at one school, were interviewed by one student on the telephone and did a video-taped interview for a high school project. We also collected books and video tapes to be distributed to local VA hospitals. We attempted to table at the 4th Annual Veteran & Family Resource Fair hosted by the San Jose Vet Center Saturday April 18, at the National Guard Armory in San Jose. Unfortunately due to a scheduling problem we were not able to have a table to place our literature but some of us did at least attend the event.

In November, chapter 101 was honored to host two Iraq veterans, Josh Steiber and Conor Curran, who were traveling across the country on foot and on bicycle, to talk about their experiences in the military in Iraq while promoting peaceful problem

olving. VFP101 invited the public to hear the vets and join in a pot-luck dinner at the San Jose Peace and Justice Center. Josh and Conor received a standing ovation at the end of their presentation, then answered questions and spoke with the audience.

In June of 2009, with tensions rising between the United States and Iran, Chapter 101 sponsored a public showing of the Rick Steves video, "Iran: Yesterday and Today" at the San Jose Peace and Justice Center.

The Rick Steves video puts a human face on the people of Iran as opposed to the sensational news clips that demonize people of other countries whose governments are in disagreement with ours. (<http://www.ricksteves.com/iran/>)

Chapter 101 is looking forward to an exciting project for the New Year. The San Jose Peace and Justice Center has embarked upon a video project in which they will provide an hour of video each month to be broadcast on a San Jose cable channel. They have invited our chapter to participate. See this link for details: <http://www.creatvsj.org/>

Phil Pflager

Chapter 111, Bellingham, WA

Jonathan Santos Memorial Chapter 111 spent November and December honoring the fallen with 2009's last display of Arlington NW on Armistice Day, and protesting the current Afghanistan escalation by supporting Western Washington University's Socialist Alternative rally opposing Obama's troop surge.

The Chapter's Arlington NW display was set up at Bellingham's Memorial Park, and drew large crowds all day on November 11th. If you're a Nora Jones fan you might want to view the event on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NcuGJCZKK5M>.

WWU's students organized a December 1st protest rally and marched to the downtown offices of US House Representative Rick Larsen in opposition to the Nobel Peace Prize surge.

Chapter members joined a line-up of speakers in front of nearly 200 peace coalition participants in the university's Red Square. After marching downtown, a petition/letter demanding de-escalation was delivered to Larsen. View rally on <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AcwiMOBcSMA>.

Closing out the year, Bellingham's Food Co-Op announced that VFP-111 is one of 12 community non-profits recognized with a community shopping day in 2010, with 1-2% of shopping proceeds on March 17th going to the Chapter. And to close out January, VFP-111 is co-sponsoring a Hunger for Peace MLK Brunch and March, with a donation breakfast and peace march to the MLK commemorative at Bellingham's Municipal Court.

Plans for the upcoming months include hosting a Global Domination for World Peace (Risk) tournament in February and, of course, our annual Iraq War demonstrations in March. Just staying engaged in Bellingham – the City of Subdued Excitement. Stay tuned and check www.vfp111.org for updates.

Gene Marx

Chapter 112, Ventura/Oxnard CA

A peacemakers social was arranged at a chapter member's home. The purpose of the social was to informally bring together local area individuals who are members of peace community and social justice organizations. David Rovics was invited, and sang a song or two.

Chapter 112 is preparing along with other chapters a Central Coast Regional Conference.

Three events were arranged with courageous Dahr Jamail. He spoke at two venues, Moorpark College and the U.U. Church in Ventura, and joined the peace



Chapter 112 Dr. Al Holtz; Michael Cervantes; Carl Smith; Laura Holtz; chapter president Anthony Whitaker; Sheila Smith; Armando (behind the sign). Our peace tree (fig tree) is in the center.

community at a house gathering in between speeches. The Combat Paper Project film and artwork were a part of his presentations. Chapter member, Frank Peterson, (inventor of our Iraq War Memorial Wall), was honored at the U.U. Church presentation.

We joined peace cohorts in temporary weekend peace rallies and marches down Main St., Ventura, in support of ending the war in Afghanistan

We tabled twice in Oxnard: once for the Multicultural Festival and once for the Tamale Festival, a Christmas time event. We also formally dedicated our fig peace tree. In addition to the tree, a concrete bench was added and donated by member Laura Holtz.

A chapter member encouraged us to attend the weekly City of Camarillo farmer's market. He grows poinsettia flowers which enables him to make donations to the chapter.

Michael Cervantes

Chapter 115, Red Wing, MN

At the end of 2009, Chapter 115 in the Red Wing, MN, area celebrated the success of Pigstock 2009 where we had Chris Hedges as our keynote speaker who spoke about his newly released book, *Empire of Illusion*. Also, another very important part of the program was led by Chante Wolf, VFP Chapter 27, and noted author and educator, Helen Benedict, who wrote the book, *The Lonely Soldier*. They spoke of the very alarming issue of women's persecution in our military. Michael McPhearsen, our national Executive Director gave a very moving talk about where we need



Heather Mello in front, Peter Morgan behind her to the left.

to go from here. Over 300 people attended the event and many said they will be back for the eighth annual Pigstock on July 17, 2010, so mark that on your calendars. All are welcome to attend.

Our work for 2010 will include holding local public events on the costs of war, helping local citizens who need assistance with yard and garden work and of course planning for Pigstock 2010. We will continue our weekly peace vigil in downtown Red Wing, which we have not missed since November, 2002.

Our VFP members are also active individually in actions for peace and justice. Bill Habedank, the executive director for Chapter 115 will be joining a delegation of twenty or so Minnesotans doing peace action in Washington DC January 25th thru the 27th. The delegation will be joining the National Campaign for Nonviolent Resistance at the White House as well as lobbying its elected officials in Washington, DC.

Bill Habedank

Chapter 118, Salt Lake City, UT

Chapter 118 in Salt Lake City has just celebrated 3 years of having the G.I. Rights Hotline. We have helped 144 troops on active duty and the reserves with calls to us. We have also assisted over 20 veterans file for compensation to the VA over the past 6 years. We have helped them obtain \$62,000 in benefits so far. We continue to work for veterans everyday at www.homefrontvet.org.

Aaron Davis

Chapter 125, Atlanta, GA

Chapter 125 member Mike Hearington took part in the Gaza Freedom March. He said that it was different than protests in the U.S. "It's not like Washington. A lot of people were hurt." We're proud that Mike has been elected to the national board of VFP.

Our chapter marched in the Atlanta Veterans Day Parade. Member Heather Mello said: "Although I had heard that we've been ill-treated by parade staff and by the folks on the pass-in-review stand, this was the first time I experienced it. They named and thanked the groups before us and after us, but not us."

Heather and another chapter member, Peter Morgan, attended the Veterans Day Banquet that night. There was much jingoism, they said. A Glock pistol and an M-4 rifle were waved before the audience as raffle items. Veterans Day is supposed to be



Left to Right- supporter Walter Therriault, Pueblo Chapter #129 vice president and president, Tracy Lay and Chuck Butler respectively at the Veterans of All Wars Memorial in Pueblo, CO.

a celebration of the concept of peace!

George Sossenko, our chapter president, celebrated his 91st birthday on December 27. It's not every chapter who has a president who's a veteran of the Spanish Civil War. At 16, George left his home in Paris to fight against fascism. He says he sleeps like a baby now because he fought for the proletariat. Viva el Sossenko!

Reid Jenkins

Chapter 129, Pueblo, CO

At our year end Holiday Dinner Party, Tracy pointed out: "'09 was a good year". We put on two major memorial services: Memorial Day and Veterans Day. On Memorial Day with the peace songs of professional musicians and singers and speakers preaching peace, our sixth annual Memorial Day Service at "Viet Nam Minemorial", engraved with names of Pueblo veterans killed in action, was most reverent. The sight of the field of white crosses in the background added to the emotional moment. On Veterans Day at 11:00 AM we held our first memorial service at the "Veterans of All Wars" Memorial in Mineral Palace Park. We had to help restore the monument as it had been neglected for many years. Both memorial services emphasized, may they rest in peace, without sound of rifle shot, were well received. Our community education program included monthly evening free public showings of

DVDs, *Cost of War*, or speakers, e.g., peace worker just returned from Gaza. Groups of Pueblo VFPs have several visits to make position statements and present documents and papers to office representatives of US Senators Udall and Bennett and Congressman Salazar. VFP Charles Paulsen has been successful getting letters to the editor published.

Pueblo VFPs were fortunate to have former President of VFP National, Elliott Adams, present his excellent workshop on "Chapter Development" with all his extras.

Chuck Butler

Chapter 132, Corvallis, OR

In response to President Obama's announced troop surge in Afghanistan, VFP 132 led a noisy protest the following evening. The local press covered it here: <http://tinyurl.com/yfqjr2w>.

A local college student joined hundreds of others on the Gaza Freedom March aimed at protesting the blockade of Gaza by Israel and to deliver school supplies to Gazan children. Despite Egyptian government resistance, our local student was able to enter Gaza. VFP 132 and other local groups held a solidarity event, during which we conducted a live online chat with our student and gained a better understanding of the tragedy in Gaza.

Visits to three local high schools continue. In keeping with court rulings, we requested and were granted access to the students at the same locations used by recruiters. This led to many more contacts with students. One student emailed us her thanks, saying "...it's really important for students to have access to the other side of the story."



Chapter 132 member Leah Bolger (r) talks with David Swanson (l) during his "Daybreak" book tour visit to Corvallis, Oregon. Photo by: Bart Bolger

VFP 132 volunteers staffed the men's winter homeless shelter for one week. Three chapter members drive vans transporting homeless to shelters when buses are not running. We also volunteered at a one-day event to connect homeless persons to local and state services, involving health, employment, and housing.

Bart Bolger

Chapter 136, Central FL

St. Augustine/Jacksonville members have been involved in a number of local projects aimed at grassroots organizing around peace and social justice issues. The largest is our Impoverished Veterans and Other Victims of War Project. Viewing all who suffer from the war economy as victims of war, we endorsed and participated in the first ever effort to accurately survey and count the unsheltered homeless in St. Johns County. The Second Annual March of the Impoverished, the Society of St. Andrew Gleaning Project, the local Food Not Bombs' seven-day-a-week meal servings and the Food Not Bombs' Christmas Extravaganza served close to 300 meals on Christmas Day to the homeless, working poor, unemployed and impoverished.

Members are also participating in the Seeds for Afghanistan and Afghans for Afghans projects.

Independently, we initiated projects to restore constitutional rights in the public areas of St. Augustine, provide community service opportunities to veterans on probation, provide outreach in rural areas to veterans on behalf of the local Veterans Service Office and took homeless vets to the free Veterans dinner at Applebee's on Veterans Day. We also continue to work with veterans on an individual basis to resolve problems with the VA, the Courts, Immigration, etc.

Phil Restino

Chapter 147, Saratoga, NY

Our chapter has decided to be more community oriented this year by offering to volunteer at the local soup kitchen, food pantry and rape crisis center. Also a shelter is going to be built in the area for homeless female veterans and our chapter has offered to help in any way, even in the actual construction phase. Also, an action is planned

in front of the local congressman's office in February to reflect the crimes against humanity in this ongoing war.

David LaCarte

Chapter 156, Southern Oregon

We are actively working with other local peace organizations such as the Ashland WILPF and Peace House to initiate the Southern Oregon SafeHaven, which will be working with returning National Guard units to lessen the effects of war on the soldiers and their families, as well as with candidates referred by giresist.com.

We are working with a new peace group conglomerate organized to advocate the abolition of nuclear weapons and to carry that message to President Obama.

We have obtained the endorsements of three local organizations that are in consonance with our 'Straight Talk' program of working in/with local schools.

At Southern Oregon University, we co-sponsored The Contagious Love Experiment, featuring Iraq War veterans Josh Stieber and Conor Curran, who biked cross-country on a personal mission of peace spurred by their war experiences.

On November 11, 2009, Chapter 156 members Daniel Guy, Jim Woods, and Hal Anthony spoke at the public library in Cave Junction, Oregon, and co-hosted a showing of the movie *Rethink Afghanistan*.

In November, we hoisted our banner and the VFP-national flag up over the freeway in Grants Pass, Oregon, and received scores of honks, air horns blasts and peace signs!

In December, we carried on an Oregon VFP tradition of presenting a VFP flag to the newest Chapter formed within the State, in this case to Chapter 159.

Also in December, we sat down for a one-hour meeting with Senator Merkley's staff to present our Chapter position on a number of issues.

On December 12, 2009, we applied to the ACLU-Southern Oregon branch for an endorsement highlighting our 'Straight Talk' and ASVAB campaigns, presenting the fact that the current approach of testing students within the State of Oregon is not uniform and very often violates student privacy. We are grateful to ACLU assistance over the years to VFP and other organizations working for equality, justice and constitutional rights.

Hal Anthony



Iraq Water Project Goes To Prison

by Art Dorland

Readers of this VFP newsletter have not heard from Iraq Water Project in a long time, and many others will never have heard of us at all. But no one out there, excluding the comatose and the dead, will not have heard about Abu Ghraib prison. IWP, now in its tenth year, has installed two water sterilizer units at Abu Ghraib.

For those of you who have somehow escaped the scintillating palaver on IWP's website (iraqwaterproject.org), let me summarize recent work. Late in 2006 we started sending small 8 gallon per minute ultraviolet sterilizers to Iraqi clinics, schools and other institutions. Starting with a hospital at alQaim, Anbar Province, to date we have dispatched over fifty such units into many areas of the country. One of our proudest recent achievements is providing clean water for pilgrims to the sacred alAskari shrine at Samarra. You will recall, two

violent attacks on this beautiful building in 2006 by alQaeda (or...?) set off tectonic waves of sectarian atrocities that have not died away even yet. The rebuilt shrine did not have provision for safe water, and now it does.

The project has a team of technician/plumbers in Baghdad who purchase and install each unit. They are also the primary contact for institutions requesting our help. One of these indispensable coworkers has a brother employed at Abu Ghraib prison. [Note: I do not use personal names---it is dangerous for Iraqis to be publicly associated with any foreign enterprise, even us, such is the resentment of the occupation. So much for Winning Hearts and Minds.] From this source we understand Abu Ghraib now holds about 3000 prisoners, and when US occupation authorities turned it over to Iraq's Ministry of Interior, the water filtration system was no longer work-

ing, and has not since been repaired. Even though the facility imprisons some very dangerous and violent people---along with many others who probably should not be there at all---we are grateful for our opportunity to make this improvement. A couple of thousand dollars from our tiny project accomplished what billions of dollars of US reconstruction could somehow not manage.

Anyone wishing more information about IWP can check the website listed above, especially the "What's New" chronology. I wish to express profound gratitude to several of our members such as Tom Yusha Sager (and his family foundation) and Dr Marcus Erickson who have kept the project solvent and operating, as well as to the International Service Society of Lansing, Michigan. We have also enjoyed determined support from a number of VFP chapters that pumped a lot of plasma into our bloodstream. Perhaps your chapter?

◆◆◆

Chronicle Of A Struggle Foretold

A tour through Latin American politics

by John Grant

As we in the United States look to Latin America, one struggle rises above all else and links the hemisphere: the reality of entrenched power and the overdue need for reform. We are living it here in the US. This struggle between top-down power and bottom-up democracy is, of course, an eternal struggle that heats up in cycles, and we seem to be in the midst of another heated cycle.

On June 28 in Honduras, the leftward shift across Latin America was put on notice that the days of reform-killing military coups are not a thing of the past. While nothing like the brutal 1954 Guatemala coup, so far the coalition of military, business and church elements behind the Honduran coup have been successful in employing blatant repressive means to quash President Manuel Zelaya's reform efforts.

Let's not forget the legacy of US intervention in Latin America and the murky involvement in the coup of US elements within the State and Defense Departments. Let's resurrect a 19th Century term and call these slippery interventionists filibusters, which comes from the Dutch word for

"plunderer" and made it into Spanish as filibustero, an outsider who stirs up trouble. William Walker, who invaded Nicaragua in the 19th Century, was our most famous filibuster. There is little question US filibusters like Otto Reich and Bush-appointed Ambassador Hugo Llorens, worked the back channels behind the Honduran coup, as these same US filibusters were involved in the 2002 Venezuelan coup.

Next door to Honduras, in El Salvador, the FMLN President Mauricio Funes was inaugurated less than a month before the coup. Aware of his precarious position, he had already made it clear he was not planning radical change and would follow a moderate left line, something the coup certainly reinforced.

Maybe more amazing than Funes' election, in 2007, Guatemala elected a leftist president, Álvaro Colom. This being Guatemala, however, his presidency immediately encountered a very bizarre turn. A lawyer made a video just before he was gunned down that accused Colom of ordering his murder. In January, the plot turned even more bizarre when a United Nations report on the case revealed evidence the man had set up his own suicide/murder, presum-

ably to ruin Colom. We'll see if Colom can wriggle out from under the scandal and improve conditions for the poor, which he said he wanted to do.

Nicaragua is back in the hands of the Sandinista Daniel Ortega, who is aligned with Bolivia and Ecuador in the far left Chavez wing. In Costa Rica, Oscar Arias, Nobel Peace Prize winner for his peace-making efforts in the 1980s, is also back in the saddle again as president. His recent efforts to solve the Honduran coup failed miserably, and, in the end, he seemed a tool of the shameful, two-faced Obama/Clinton policy.

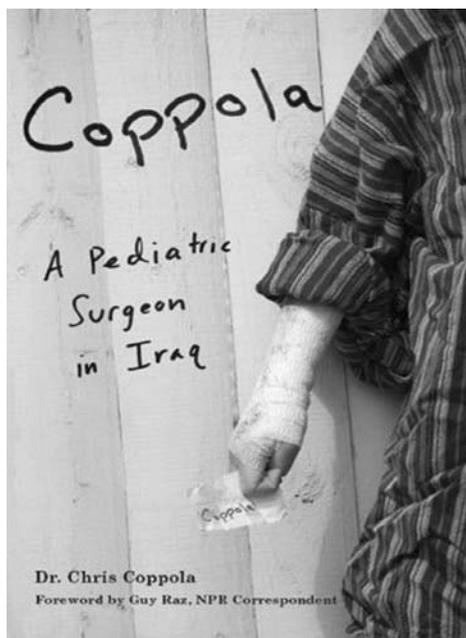
In May last year, the CEO of the Super 99 supermarket chain paid \$35 million and took the presidency of Panama from the left. He ran on crime issues. Before him, President Martin Torrijos, son of the famous Omar Torrijos who died mysteriously in a plane bombing that gave the world Manuel Noriega, had met with Raul Castro and called for the independence of Puerto Rico.

Latin America's long dance between repression and reform, according to Osvaldo Hurtado, president of Ecuador from 1981

Chronicle continued on page 24

BOOK REVIEWS

by Will Shapira



Coppola: A Pediatric Surgeon in Iraq by Dr. Chris Coppola

NTI Upstream books
265 pages, \$24.99 hardback
www.ntiupstream.com

“It doesn’t make any fucking sense. She can’t be more than twenty,” mourned Dr. Coppola after an American soldier died of bomb wounds on his operating table during one of his two tours in Iraq.

“She was a soldier,” consoled a colleague. “She did her duty as well as she could tonight. Just like you did.”

And not just for our troops but for civilians and especially children, the most innocent of war victims, always the children. Bomb wounds, gunshot wounds, illnesses of many kinds, trauma. Trained as a pediatric surgeon, Lt. Col. Dr. Coppola treats them all. You win some and, most definitely, you lose some.

I’m not a doctor, and as an Air National Guardsman, I was on active duty only at our two-week summer camps long ago in the Wyoming foothills and Wisconsin woods, and when it comes to understanding medical terminology--liberally sprinkled throughout the book--I am suffering from terminal craniorectal intussusception.

This book may, in a way, be the updated, other side of M*A*S*H, and one cannot read it without wondering: how do Dr. Coppola’s experiences differ from what his colleagues are doing this very minute,

as you read this, in Afghanistan and who knows where else? Undoubtedly, someone is taking notes and writing their story of heroism and heartbreak in the ER and the OR in Afghanistan and maybe Pakistan and maybe even still in Iraq.

In a literary sense and in a medical sense, they can build on what Dr. Coppola has established for all future writers about practicing medicine in war zones. In its own way, “Coppola” is a compendium of “best practices” under very difficult conditions.

I hope someone sends a copy of Dr. Coppola’s landmark book to President Obama, his staff and his military advisers and to those handling veterans’ affairs, to show them how truly horrible war can be and how tirelessly and heroically our medical personnel work to save and heal its victims, young and old, military and civilian, no matter the alleged “noble causes” for which each war is fought.

Will Shapira is a member of Twin Cities Chapter 27, Veterans for Peace. He was honorably discharged as A/2C in 1958 after serving four years in the Minnesota Air National Guard.



You Can’t Do That!
Marv Davidov,
Non-Violent Revolutionary
by Marv Davidov and Carol Masters
Nodin Press, Minneapolis
304 pages, \$19.95 paperback
www.nodinpress.com

First, some “full disclosures”: I’ve known Marv at least casually since we were at the University of Minnesota together for a time in the mid-1950s. Today, we belong to Twin Cities Chapter 27, Veterans for Peace.

Marv Davidov: you either love him or hate him. He makes it easy for you to decide. He never holds back his views on any (controversial) topic. He’ll tell you as he has told thousands in person and via the media that war-mongering, militaristic Capitalism is at the root of most America’s problems. (www.kfai.org “Truth to Tell” Nov. 25, 2009.)

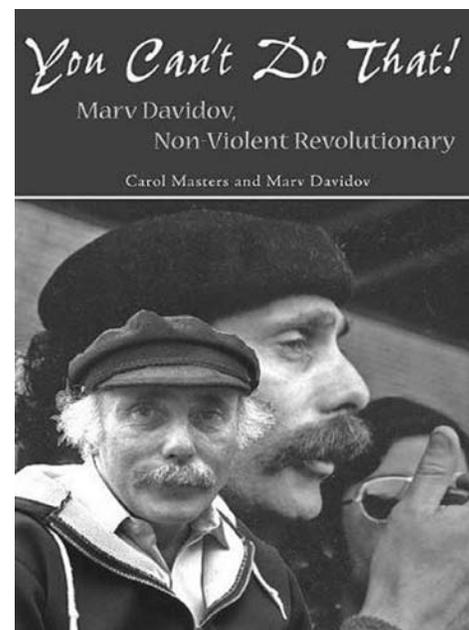
In this biography, which Ms. Masters told me makes liberal use of Davidov’s prepared materials for classroom lectures and

other hortatory purposes, we learn the story of a person who has devoted his entire adult life to social activism. There is hardly an area in which Davidov has not participated: civil rights, military rights, illegal and immoral weapons, economic domination, and more. As such, whether he intended to or not, he has shown what one must give up to become a permanent, fulltime social activist and how to fight what at least he and others think is the good fight. “We have to make connections between issues,” Davidov emphasizes. “Every particular struggle exposes one more aspect of the United States’ military, Capitalist system.”

Born and raised in a Jewish household in a city (Detroit) where anti-Semitism was virulent, Davidov’s background prepared him not for the rabbinate but for (always) non-violent street “fighting” and for preaching for peace and justice. His shul was and is the streets and the classroom.

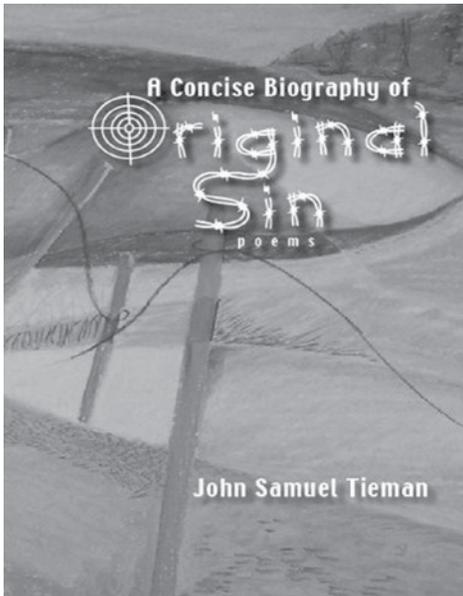
No less a lifelong, world-renowned peace activist than the highly respected author Howard Zinn (*A People’s History of the United States*) says, “Marv Davidov has always left me in awe. I know of no other American who has for so long, in so many ways, on so many fronts, exemplified the happy activist, the tireless protester, the apostle of non-violent direct action and through it all has remained endlessly good-humored. He has been the dauntless scourge of generals, industrialists, and

Can’t Do That continued on page 20



BOOK REVIEWS

2010 Convention Flash!!! Honored poets *W.D. Ehrhart* and *Jan Barry*, whose respective book reviews appear below, will host a Poetry Event on Wednesday evening, August 25, following the welcoming reception, at our 2010 convention in Portland, Maine. The program will honor the two landmark collections of Vietnam Veteran poetry, *Winning Hearts and Minds* (*Rottmann, Barry, Paquet, eds.*), and *Demilitarized Zones* (*Barry, Ehrhart, eds*) and feature readings by contributors to each volume. This will be followed by an open mike for all who wish to share works of their own.



A Concise Biography of Original Sin
by John Samuel Tieman

36 pages
BkMk Press, 2009
www.umkc.edu/bkmc

I've spent most of my adult life working with the poetry of war and of the Vietnam War in particular. And every time I think there can't possibly be anyone else out there writing about the Vietnam War whom I don't know about, somebody else shows up to prove me wrong.

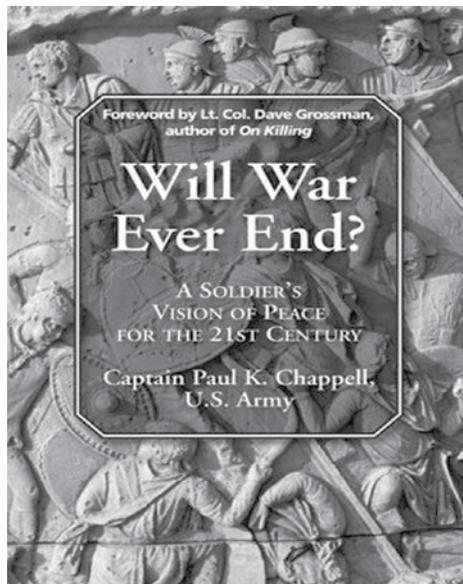
This time, it's VFP member John Samuel Tieman, whose slim collection of poems ranges from the unrelentingly blunt to the touchingly tender. The title poem begins, "I'll tell you a little horror story. / There's nothing people won't do. // It's always been like this, / the muzzle, a puff of smoke, / someone muttering Justice, justice. . ." The next poem, "Editing," set in the burn ward of a military hospital, describes men screaming in agonizing pain "'cause all the napalm left was / no skin. Nuthin'. Not even no boots."

Tieman, who teaches in the St. Louis Public High Schools, handles language and form with great skill, delighting and surprising by turns. Lamenting dead comrades in "At My War's Wall," he concludes, "Let the birds of prey alight. / Who can kill

you? / I will wear your name like a bracelet. / I will make flutes from your bones." When his wife stops breathing in "4am," he writes, "for 7 seconds I know all there is to know / about love and the meaning of love and loss and all there is to lose / and she breathes again and again I know God[.]"

When managing editor Michael Uhl sent me this book to review, he asked me to send it back. Fat chance. I like this book too much. He'll just have to get another. You should, too.

W.D. Ehrhart



Will War Ever End? A Soldier's Vision of Peace for the 21st Century
by Paul K. Chappell

84 pages
Ashoka Books, 2009
<http://www.wagingpeace.org/>

Army Captain Paul K. Chappell attended West Point with an usual goal, "determined to study war the way a doctor studies an illness." What he found in his studies and in a war tour in Iraq was a pragmatic way of envisioning what it would take to create a cure for war fever. "In the U.S. Army, as in ancient Greece, the most admired trait in soldiers is not their ability to kill but their willingness to sacrifice for their friends," Chappell notes in his new book, *Will War*

Ever End? A Soldier's Vision of Peace for the 21st Century (Ashoka Books, 2009). His book argues that soldiers and folks at home, in order to protect each other, should mount a concerted campaign to wind down warmaking, due to the massively deadly threat of military escalation in the nuclear age. A better way of dealing with international disputes, he contends, is to adapt nonviolent tactics to produce conflict resolution that de-escalates violence.

In an essay titled "How Patriotism Can Save America," posted on *The Huffington Post* and other websites, Chappell summed up his call for peace actions in terms that echo the stance of Veterans For Peace and other antiwar vets groups: "With the survival of our planet now at stake, our country needs patriotic Americans to question, think critically, and pioneer this democratic experiment. Now more than ever, our country needs us to help it become a beacon of hope that exports peace instead of war." Chappell, who served seven years on active duty after graduating from the U.S. Military Academy in 2002, is the Peace Leadership Director for the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation.

In his book, Chappell argues that the war on terrorism "can never be won with an army alone, because terrorism is not a place we can occupy or a dictator we can overthrow." He also notes "how multiple deployments have pushed many soldiers to the breaking point." He argues that military actions are stoking the hatred, fueling angry people who use terrorism as a tactic in fighting for their beliefs and causes. "If we are going to win the war on terrorism ... the United States will require many more soldiers, and not just soldiers who are armed with guns. ... During the challenging years ahead, our planet will need soldiers of peace who understand this truth of our brotherhood, because our survival in an interconnected world will not depend upon our ability to wage war. The fate of humanity will depend upon our willingness to wage peace."

***Will War Ever End?* continued on page 23**



P O E T R Y

When Sgt. Nguyen Tri Lai Died

I buried him in my sheet; I didn't have the heart
 to kill some tree for a coffin. After I flopped Lai
 in the ragged hole I'd hacked, I decided to get dignified,
 give him a one-gun salute. You could tell
 from those echoes and the empty shell case that fell
 in his face that no one much missed him anyway.

how to go blind

there are maybe two ways around light
 one is to close both eyes
 the other my student tells me
 she says my best cousin was tortured till he dies
 his crime was being Albanian
 I blind myself every night since I found him
 stare into a bulb till it makes that little sun
 that blots out his yellow black body

John Samuel Tieman,

from the book A Concise Biography of Original Sin

When You See Millions of the Mouthless Dead

When you see millions of the mouthless dead
 Across your dreams in pale battalions go,
 Say not soft things as other men have said,
 That you'll remember. For you need not so.
 Give them not praise. For, deaf, how should they know
 It is not curses heaped on each gashed head?
 Nor tears. Their blind eyes see not your tears flow.
 Nor honour. It is easy to be dead.
 Say only this, "They are dead." Then add thereto,
 "Yet many a better one has died before."
 Then, scanning all the o'ercrowded mass, should you
 Perceive one face that you loved heretofore,
 It is a spook. None wears the face you knew.
 Great death has made all his for evermore.

Charles Hamilton Sorley (1895-1915)

(Sorley was killed in action on the Western Front at the age of 21.)

Memorial

After the parade, after
 the black wall with everybody's name
 after the dirt has taken them
 off with the given

And you've folded the flag
 and it's found a drawer
 and you've had supper
 the late news
 then a bath

You lie down
 recognize the heart beats
 You want to hear a story
 learn the rescue
 say the names
 repeat them

DF Brown

Spring 2009, Houston

In the fairy tale that sets you free
 It's Dodge truck month in Texas
 April pushes the pink tea roses thru chain link
 Pecans flesh out lime green
 Purple irises surround the patio
 The black smoker/broiler sets there cold
 So it is difficult to see our Iraq war
 Clotted in the shadows near the white picnic table.

DF Brown

The Children of Gaza

by Cherie Eichholz and Gerri Haynes

“If you plant a cucumber seed, the plant that grows does not yield tomatoes. Similarly, if you plant violence, you will not reap peace.” (Reem Jabr, 38) Reem was one of hundreds of Gazans that members of Veterans For Peace and Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility met in October in the Gaza Strip. Reem is the Director of the Qattan Centre for the Child. She uttered these words shortly before



Elliott Adams visits with children outside the Qattan Centre in Gaza City.

introducing us to Kanan Somouni, a young man who held a relative in his nine-year-old arms as that family member died – a casualty of Israel’s Operation Cast Lead. The Samouni family lived in a compound outside Gaza City; most of their block homes were destroyed and dozens of family members were killed in the January, 2009 attacks by Israel.

Everyone we met in Gaza was touched by Operation Cast Lead and Gaza continues to be ravaged by the ongoing siege. The effects of last winter’s attacks, which killed over 1,400 Palestinians, injured over 5,000 and destroyed or damaged more than 14,000 homes, are exacerbated by the siege. Only 31 items constituting “humanitarian aid” and mostly food, currently are allowed through the borders. Import of other essential items such as medical supplies, educational materials, and building supplies is almost totally denied. Rebuilding is nearly impossible.

The effects of the offensive and the siege are everywhere. The six physicians and

palliative care nurse comprised our medical team and witnessed these effects in clinics and operating rooms. They told stories of horrendous injuries and compromised care. Our team’s cardiologist examined a man who critically needed heart surgery. Because a nephew had been jailed for throwing stones, the man will not be allowed to leave Gaza to have surgery in the West Bank. This surgery is not available in Gaza and the man will almost certainly die.

Another delegate offered classes to caregivers focused on grief and bereavement. These caregivers from Gaza described difficulties in providing care when the caregivers are also traumatized by the siege and at-



Will Covert and friends in Gaza.

tacks – but each was courageous in seeking ways to be helpful and therapeutic in their community.

The humanitarian team witnessed the consequences of the siege everywhere they went - in offices, homes and through countless conversations as they traveled throughout this small land. Some of the most poignant moments came in visiting with children. In one encounter we visited an after-school program where we interrupted a tutoring session. We visited first with a group of boys and then with young girls. Through an interpreter we asked what they want to be when they grow up. The boys responded doctors and engineers; the girls want to be doctors and teachers. In both groups, more than a few stated they want to be resistance fighters.

We asked these same children if there

was anything they wanted us to know about them or Gaza. Slowly, hands raised. “My brother was killed last winter.” “My home was destroyed.” “Three of my family members died.” Becoming a resistance fighter may be an expected response.

On the final evening of our visit, we were treated to songs and traditional dances by children at the Cultural Center of Jabalyia Refugee Camp. One group of solemn-faced children sang this song – which was written as part of their therapy following the winter attacks:

Don't cover the sunshine. We want to speak loudly. Don't make childhood die. On behalf of children in the world, who are crying, not sleeping, die. With the death of consciousness, desperate to have independence and freedom. War, strikes and sound of bullets, Where are you the world? Without Feeling, we are prevented to dream, no freedom, No peace. Children in the world

have the right to study, to read, to write and speak. But we have been prevented education and are suffering with pain. We are hungry, feeling cold, don't eat, Can't sleep. The Feast Day is coming. Nothing new. No playing. No sleeping.

A sobering finale to a heart wrenching trip and the question lingers in our minds: what is being sown in Gaza? Are Palestinians today living lives nurturing their families, their culture and their future? Or are they running fearful to the next day, wondering when the next bomb will explode, the next tank roll in or the next relative be killed?

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Combatants for Peace

by Will Thomas

It took the killings of their daughters to bring them together and to move beyond fear and hatred. Bassam Aramin is a former Palestinian Fatah fighter whose daughter, Abir, age 10, was killed in 2007 by Israeli soldiers close to her school in Anata, just outside of Jerusalem.

Rami Elhanan is a former IDF soldier who fought in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and is the son of a Holocaust survivor. His daughter, Smadar, age 13, was killed, along with three of her friends, by two Palestinian suicide bombers.

Once enemies who despised each other, both men arrived at the same conclusion – that violence only begets more violence. Thus, in 2005, was created a joint Israeli-Palestinian organization called, ironically, “Combatants for Peace.” As part of a Global Exchange delegation that travelled to Israel and Occupied Palestine in December, I had an opportunity to meet with Rami and Bassam.



Bassam Aramin (l) and Rami Elhanan (r).

During his seven years in Israeli jails where he received beatings, Bassam had a life-changing experience. First, he saw a Holocaust film and cried when he saw innocent people about to be killed. Later, one of his jailers recognized Bassam’s humanity, and provided him with books by Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Despite this, Bassam said his first meeting with Israelis in 2005 was difficult as both sides were suspicious of the other as there was much distrust. Israelis saw Palestinians as “terrorists” and Palestinians saw Israelis as “jailers” and “occupiers.” Nevertheless, both sides educated each other and agreed to work for a common goal – to create a peaceful society for all their children. Combatants for Peace agreed that the Israeli Occupation is the source of most of the on-going violence and they agreed to work to educate Israelis and Palestinians to understand the hopes and suffering of the other side so as to create dialogue and reconciliation.

Combatants for Peace has grown to 600 members as they aspire to change the dynamics between Israelis and Palestinians by employing peaceful, non-violent means. Tellingly, Einstein Institute Scholar Gene Sharp’s 198 methods of non-violent resistance was cited by Bassam. As for revenge towards the Israeli soldier who killed his daughter, Bassam said he still seeks justice, not vengeance, despite learning all charges were dropped against the accused IDF member. This grieving father said that “Israelis will never feel free unless Palestinians feel free” as he cited Dr. King’s

words “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”

Rami was a tank commander in the 1973 Yom Kippur War and related that he had a lot of friends who were killed. Leaving the IDF, he married, had children, and settled in Jerusalem. On September 4, 1997, two Palestinian suicide bombers killed four young girls, including his daughter, Smadar. Seven days of mourning followed while his grief and rage persisted. And, yet, as Rami reflected, he wondered what good it would do to pursue vengeance as he knew it would never bring his daughter back to him.

Rami had seen two paths: one, revenge, or two, choose the path of trying to discover why these young men would kill themselves and other innocent people. He soon met a Jewish religious leader whose son, Eric, had been captured by Hamas and killed. This religious leader invited Rami to his house for a meeting. A hundred people came, and all were grieving parents. What shocked Rami, though, were the Palestinians who came to this meeting. For the first time in his life, he shook hands with Palestinians, and that night, he said, he had a religious experience. He was 47 but had never seen Palestinians as people, as human beings.

Many of the people he met became part of a group called the “Families Forum,” an Israeli-Palestinian organization for bereaved families. Rami offered our delegation this insight: “There is a wall in all of us of fear and hatred. We hate them because we fear them – and we fear them because we do not know them. In the end, it will be with courage that we learn to love one another as we love ourselves.”



Abir Aramin
2007-1997



Smadar Elhanan
1997-1983

In closing, Rami agreed with Bassam, who is now one of his dearest friends, that the occupation must end and the on-going repression must be stopped. He reminded us that Jews are not evil, but that they are fearful and afraid, especially when the second Intifada occurred in 2000. Israelis were living in terror, he said, so the government put up the 25-foot high walls. Yet, as Rami said, the walls in our heads are more critical as they lead to the dehumanization of the “other,” in this case, of all Palestinians.

Two men, former warriors, Bassam and Rami, who had a common bond of grief, anger, and hatred for the “other” found the courage to move beyond hate and violence as both have become part of the community of people who seek peace.



Agent Orange Update

by Paul Cox

From the middle of April to the middle of May, the Vietnam Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign will host a delegation of Agent Orange victims on a tour of several cities throughout the US. The delegation will be led by Mr. Pham The Minh, a 33-year old Vietnamese English teacher with severe deformities. Minh's parents were exposed to Agent Orange in Quang Tri Province during the war, and everyone in his family has faced the resulting hardship of their medical conditions. Minh has become an important voice in the campaign for justice for Agent Orange victims. He testified last May in Paris

at the International Peoples' Tribunal of Conscience In Support of the Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange, as did VFP member Frank Corcoran. The delegation will be hosted by VFP chapters in many cities, but the schedule has not yet been set at the time of this report. If your chapter is interested in hosting the delegation contact the us at info@vn-agentorange.org. For more information on the upcoming tour go to www.speakoutnow.org or www.vn-agentorange.org

There have been two excellent and important mass-media articles on Agent Orange recently. The first was a five-part series by the *Chicago Tribune*, "Agent

Orange: a Lethal Legacy" and the second was a four-section article in the *Washington Monthly*, "The Agent Orange Boomerang." They are part of an effort by friends of Vietnam and of Vietnam veterans to raise the profile of Agent Orange in the US with the goal of pressuring the US Congress to address the problems in Vietnam and in the US. The articles are available on line at www.chicagotribune.com/health/agentorange and www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2010/1001.spc-rep.html. If you cannot access them online, let me know and I will mail you copies.

The remainder of this column will summarize **Agent Orange continued on page 20**

Homeless Wayne – A Field Report

by Stephen S. Noetzel
on Veterans Day, November 11, 2009

"I'm all set", he answered, "... I got Agent Orange".

It was Veterans Day Eve – Tuesday the 10th of November. I was an Intake Clerk at the all-day Project Homeless Connect event at the VA facility in San Francisco. All morning, the homeless vets had crowded into the Reception Room and waited impatiently for their turn.

My little 'tic sheet' indicated that the gentleman before me was the 47th homeless veteran I had interviewed that day. Crowded as it was, the room was noisy and pungent, taking on the faint smell of urine.

"I'm sorry Wayne" I answered, "I didn't get that. Lean in a little closer, and tell me that again".

I looked down at the Intake Form in front of me. We had gotten through about half of it. We had established that Wayne was a Vietnam veteran: "Army – '69".

We had established that he had indeed registered for Veterans Administration services – he proudly showed me his white plastic VA photo ID card, and pointed at the Account Number.

When I asked if I should check off 'Caucasian', he had answered: "Yes...and Native American too". Done.

Then came the first tough question. "Are you homeless now Wayne?"

"Yes" he answered, dropping his eyes

from mine, looking straight down at the table between us.

Gingerly, I continued to Sensitive Question #2. The form said: In what neighborhood do you live? That was followed by a series of check-off boxes. Bayview/Hunters Point; Golden Gate Park/Haight, etc.

We agreed on the nefarious Tenderloin District.

We had gotten through the MEDICAL SERVICES Section.

Flu Shot? "No thanks....well, maybe...do you have the Swine Flue shot?" Negative, sorry.

Hearing Test? No

HIV Rapid Test? No

Mental Health Services? No. Again, eyes drop toward a sullen stare at table.

Podiatry? "Yeah, I'll take that...My feet are kind of swollen and my toenails...."

I interrupted. "We'll get you to the Podiatry Station right away".

Substance Abuse? No.

TB Test? "You got that?" he asked. "Yes, we have that."

"I'll take that" he answered. "You never know. I've been coughing a lot lately"

I reversed my earlier 'lean-in'. Did he notice my 'back away'?

"Help with Employment Wayne? Job Listings? Resume Writing?" No, no, and no.

Next on the list: SSI / SSDI / Medi-Cal.

That's when Wayne dropped the bomb.

"I'm all set", he answered, "...I got Agent Orange".

I leaned in closer, TB-breath or not. "What was that Wayne? I didn't get that?"

"Agent Orange" answered Wayne, "...I get a check every month for Agent Orange. A hundred percent".

Now I got it. That's how Homeless Wayne was 'makin' it' on the mean streets of San Francisco. A monthly disability check from the VA, as a result of his diagnosis of Dioxin Poisoning from Vietnam Service Related Proximity to the herbicide, 'Agent Orange'.

How long did it take him to get such a Disability Rating? What kind of epic struggle did it take so that Wayne could subsist on the streets, by dint of his monthly Agent Orange check?

The bottom line for Homeless Wayne? He's dying. Told me so himself. He needs a new kidney "...and various other internal parts". He knows he's not likely to get the replacement organs he needs.

He won't be the first, nor the last, but when Wayne does his 'fade away', it should be noted somewhere that he died of 'friendly fire'. He was 'hit' a long time ago, hacking his way through Level One of a triple-canopy jungle in 'the Nam' – breathing hard and sucking in the sweet smell of US administered dioxin defoliant as it dripped off the broad green leaves.



Agent Orange **Continued from page 19**

marize an important study released in November, 2009, *Comprehensive Assessment of Dioxin Contamination in Da Nang Airport, Vietnam: Environmental Levels, Human Exposure and Options for Mitigating Impacts* by Hatfield Consultants. Hatfield is a well-respected environmental research company in Vancouver, BC, that has been studying AO in Vietnam for more than 20 years. Their report details contamination at the Da Nang airport—the most important of twenty eight hot spots identified to date—because the exposure potential is high for many people. Vietnam also wants to extend the airport runways into the contaminated areas. Da Nang was a key herbicide staging site during the war, and the contamination came from sloppy storage and handling of defoliants.

The Hatfield study, commissioned by the Vietnamese government with funding support from the Ford Foundation, confirmed that the greatest concentrations of dioxin are typically limited to the top 4 inches of soil. This indicates that dioxin does not easily migrate far into the ground, which is good for cleanup planning. Conversely, dioxin trapped in the surface soils means that animals and people are more easily ex-

posed. The report confirmed that the main source of dioxin at the airport is Agent Orange and other herbicides, and not other sources (pesticides, etc.) as is sometimes alleged by deniers.

In 2008, Vietnam set a dioxin action limit of 150 ppt (parts per trillion) in sediment while the US EPA limits dioxin in sediment to between 1 and 10 ppt, depending on region. The Vietnamese levels are far higher than ours, but they are useful because for the first time they set measurable thresholds for restricting access to sites and for planning treatment. The most heavily contaminated area at the airport is a pond at the northern end where runoff from the staging area concentrated the dioxin in the sediment. Dioxin levels in the pond sediments ranged from 670 to an incredible 8,600 ppt. Samples from other nearby lakes were all under Vietnam's 150 ppt action level.

Dioxin can be absorbed through skin contact and inhalation of dust. It also moves into the food chain from sediment through ducks and fish, and eventually concentrates in humans. The study used blood samples to determine the dioxin levels in 101 airport workers and nearby residents. Some individuals and families who worked or fished in the contaminated areas of the

airport have very high levels of dioxin, but those people who lived and worked more than a kilometer from the airport are not contaminated much above background levels.

Breast-milk samples were analyzed from 14 women, and dioxin was found as high as 232 ppt in one woman. This means that her child could be ingesting as much as 2,300 picograms/kilogram of body weight/day (pg/kg bw/d). All 14 breast-milk samples exceeded the World Health

Organization's (WHO) allowable dioxin threshold of 4 pg/kg bw/d. The WHO has determined that fetal or childhood exposure to dioxin exceeding their threshold greatly increases the chance of deformities and developmental issues.

Dioxin is toxic, stable, and persistent in the environment, so it must be isolated or eliminated, or it will continue to wreak havoc in the population of Vietnam. The report concludes with recommendations to immediately begin cleanup of the Da Nang airport to protect the local population and allow expansion of the runways.

Many countries have dioxin contamination through burning of plastics, use of pesticides, factory accidents, and even forest fires, Vietnam is unique because of its heavy concentrations of contamination and because almost all of its dioxin contamination was inflicted upon it as a chemical weapon, not as a byproduct of its own development. Now is the time to put pressure on the US to acknowledge its responsibility to clean up this mess in Vietnam, to help those 3 million Vietnamese sickened by dioxin, and to make sure that our exposed veterans and their children are taken care of.

In the next column I will report on the Veterans Delegation to Vietnam to Study Agent Orange that will take place in March.

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Can't Do That **Continued from page 14**

politicians, using his imagination to baffle those in power." His laugh is his weapon of first and last resort.

Now in his 70s and beset with health problems, Davidov battles on. We may well not see his like again so you'd better enjoy him (or despise him) while you can. I think after you read this book, you'll respect and admire him.

Marv doesn't have a computer but I know he'd welcome a call from a sister/fellow VFPer and-or P&J activist:(612)-874-7715 or a note, 2615 Park Av. Minneapolis MN 55407.

If you call, be prepared for a long and interesting conversation. Marv Davidov has lots to tell you and a lifetime of activism upon which to draw. And he ain't done yet!

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Agent Orange spokesperson Pham The Minh testifying at Paris tribunal.

Executive Director

Continued from page 1

Before I go I would like to share with you some of my feelings about Veterans For Peace. Our organization is special to the peace movement because we are veterans. We have a kind of legitimacy because we have prepared for and or fought in war. Society has bestowed on us a certain prestige and privilege. It may not be fair or right, but it is what it is. I see my responsibility as a veteran to speak out against war and for peace as similar to White privilege. Like White privilege, in many ways it does not matter how I feel about my privilege as a veteran; if I take advantage of it or not, it is there. Unlike White privilege, no one knows I am a veteran unless I tell them. Like us veterans on war, there are a few people who recognize their White privilege and have dedicated their lives to actively use it to end racism. By joining Veterans For Peace we have proclaimed to the world that we are veterans and we are using our privilege to end war. We as an organization must remember that our stories and experiences as veterans are our most potent tools and that when we determine what issues to speak out on or what actions to take, unless we bring something special to the table as veterans perhaps it is not our organization's place to step in, or if we lend support we must not take the lead.

I first learned about Veterans For Peace when I saw our late President David Cline speak in Jersey City about civil liberties in America Post September 11. David's direct manner, the clarity of his position and command of the issues impressed me. It was clear to me that this man knew what he was talking about. I went on to meet members of the local chapter; all of them my senior by fifteen to twenty-five plus years and all White. So I was skeptical that VFP was right for me, but the passion and friendship of the members drew me in. My attendance at the San Francisco convention in 2003 sealed it for me. What Veterans For Peace lacks in ethnic and color diversity it has in political diversity. The veteran speak-out was a showcase of viewpoints. Veterans For Peace is a big tent. It includes just war theorists, pacifists, Republicans, Democrats, Greens, Independents, no

faith in politics, Communists, Socialists, Anarchists, believers, non-believers, anti-imperialists and more. Our diversity is one of our greatest strengths because we can bring various viewpoints and ideas to bear when developing strategies, tactics and policies to bring about peace. It is also one of our greatest challenges as it is difficult for various political views to stand in solidarity. Constructive debates, arguments and critiques help build a model for peace making. We must learn to disagree in an agreeable way. Foremost, we must remember we are veterans united in our cause to end war. We need each other. No single one



of us has all the answers. No single one of us is fully righteous.

Over the past seven years we have found that turning the nation from a road of war to a path of peace is a supreme challenge. We have not succeeded in our most important tasks to end the occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and to bring the troops home. However, we have accomplished much in that we have turned public sentiment against both occupations and helped create political space for progressive minded people to gather and develop a peoples' movement. Now we have the challenge of building that movement.

Since the build up for the invasion of Iraq, Veterans For Peace has been highly visible in our protest against war. These acts of protest have been extremely important. By using our status as veterans we carved out space for many others to stand in protest, including returning veterans and active duty that have and are participating in the "Global War on Terror." We made room for military family members to feel safe and know that they do not have to choose between their principles and their

loved ones. They can speak out against the wars, occupations and atrocities in support of their deployed family member. It is also important that the government sees citizens speak out against its unjust policies. Dissent and protest is essential to democracy. Veterans For Peace has been an indispensable member of the anti-war/peace movements. Our actions and our voice have helped provide clarity, legitimacy and inspiration.

As we move forward to abolish war and develop a lasting peace and build the people's movement I spoke of, we must understand that resistance is essential but it is not enough. We must also build peace. We must build peace between us in the peace movement, interacting with mutual respect and constructive criticism. We must provide the world with alternatives to violent conflict resolution and build this new vision ourselves between people. Governments will never build a peaceful world. We must do it. We must understand that building peace is a form of resistance. It may be the highest form because it builds a new way of life and replaces the old.

I ask that as we continue our work as Veterans For Peace we remember the importance of using our privilege as veterans to work against war and for peace, that we are a big tent and that our political diversity is vital to our success and that we must combine protest with peace building.

Thank you Veterans For Peace for everything you have done and everything you do.



Women's Fitted T-Shirt
Short sleeve black
ladies' style cut
\$12.50



These t-shirts look like they run smaller rather than larger, but are made of stretchable fabric.

that they would prevent the internationals from going to Gaza, they took a variety of steps to hamstring all operations of the Gaza Freedom March. The bus companies that had committed to providing transportation were forced to cancel the contracts. The college where we were all to gather for briefings the day before departure was required to revoke our arrangement to meet there. No similar venues for a large scale meeting were allowed to be made available. We were informed that any gathering of six or more people on the streets was a violation of Egyptian ordinances.

In spite of these obstacles, an ad hoc structure of delegations and delegates emerged to handle planning and communications functions, resulting in a week of non-violent direct action on the streets of Cairo at such venues as the National Journalists' Syndicate and the embassies of the United States, France, and Israel. In each case, the direct action generated a rapid response by the Egyptian police and security forces. While there were a few isolated instances of what might have been excessive force by the police, in general they were well-disciplined and firm but respectful. For the most part, the activists responded in kind.

The following account describes my personal experience of the largest of the direct action events, the New Year's Eve Gaza Freedom March in Cairo.

On the evening before New Year's Eve, I once again attended the delegates' meeting as the VFP representative. Unlike all the previous meetings, this one was not run by one of the Code Pink women, but by a Scottish trade-unionist named Mick, a veteran of labor, peace, and justice movements for many years. Mick is one of those people who somehow carries the impression that he is physically much larger than his measurements convey. His family background was originally Irish way back before they were driven out of Ireland by the English and fled to Scotland. So resistance to the powers that be is in his blood. He has a mischievous grin, a delightful Scottish burr and a ability to project. So imagine all this in a booming, Scottish burr.

(This is obviously paraphrased from memory but not far off the mark.)

"Now here's our plan. Of course we

like to do things democratically with lots of dialogue, but we haven't got time for that now. So you can accuse me of being a bit of a dictator if you like but this is what the steering committee has come up with and this is what we are going to do. Are you with me on this?" (Cheers of consent. We are all obviously happy to have some leadership.) "We are going to be a bunch of mosquitoes. You know what mosquitoes do. They swarm. They come from all over the place and there's nothing you can do about it.

So that's what we are going to do. At ten o'clock tomorrow morning we are going to swarm in at a point near the front of the Egyptian Museum. Be in position at 9:30 in groups of two, three, or four and look like tourists. Do tourist things. Don't wear anything on the outside that identifies you as part of our rabble. Right around 10:00am you'll see several flags go up. That will be the signal. So be sure to have a line of sight to the general area of the front of the museum. Now we all know the police are listening to us. There are no secrets here. But there's nothing they can do about it unless they arrest every tourist in the area. So we'll swarm to the flags and start marching in the general direction of Gaza. We may go three minutes before they stop us. We may go three hours. We'll go as far as we can, and then we'll sit down - and stay there. And while they are listening let me make one more thing perfectly clear. The Egyptian authorities may try to use this as an excuse to get at some of Egypt's progressive organizations. They may claim that those folks have put us up to this to embarrass the Egyptian government. Nothing could be further from the truth. They've got to know that we are just a rag-tag bunch of foreigners from 43 different countries doing this because of the injustice being done to Gaza. Now those of you who can make it, follow Lisa Fithian for a walk through the area. Then contact your constituencies and pass on the plan. Oh, one last thing; if they bottle some of us up in our hotels, just sit down and protest there."

As it happened, I was delayed and didn't get to follow Lisa, with the result that in the morning it wasn't entirely clear where we should be with respect to the Museum. Wandering around like a tourist, linked up with a couple of other VFPs, I was pleased to see that indeed there were little clumps of folks I recognized just about everywhere spread out around Tahrir Square. (There were also police EVERYWHERE!) I was

less pleased to get a text message from the steering committee telling people to get out of their hotels as quickly as possible. The police had already barricaded the Lotus Hotel, headquarters for the operation. It turned out, however, that all but about 20 people had already left the Lotus, and those 20 quickly organized a protest at the entrance to the hotel. Then I got a cell phone call from Mike Hearington, another VFP, who suggested we meet him at Starbucks. So we started looking for Starbucks. As a result, when the flags went up we were pretty far from the action. At first the protesters were able to block the road, but the police put a lot of pressure on them and considerable force and were able to push them all back onto the broad sidewalk area by the time Will Covert and I reached the scene. There had been a couple of injuries in the initial fracas: one broken nose, one dislocated shoulder, and a number of scrapes and bruises. Will and I asked a couple of cops to let us into the confinement zone, but they weren't willing. They were standing close together holding hands in a continuous chain. We waited for an opportunity to break through. It came when the squad in front of us was instructed to move a bit to their left. Two of the soldiers in front of us spread out just enough so that we were able to duck under their hands and scoot in with the hundreds of folks already in there.

Will had managed to smuggle a VFP flag and several sections of PVC pipe into the gathering in his back pack. So we immediately got to work assembling the flag pole and unfurling the VFP flag that flew over the encampment for the rest of the day. Gradually the encampment got more and more organized. One corner was designated as a smoking area, another corner in the shade a rest spot for folks who needed it, another area was the medical center and a fourth area was screened off with ponchos and plastic sheeting as an emergency toilet area.

Another of our comrades had brought his accordion and a few others had drums. So there was singing and chanting and cheering much of the day as we settle down to a relatively stable standoff with the authorities. Two of the senior security officials actually entered the protest area and spent part of the day in there with us. By this time we all knew who they were. At one point they started to light up cigarettes and we all shouted, "Over there" and

pointed at the smoking area. They smiled at us and laughed and went on over as we demanded.

The spot the leadership team had selected for the protest was strategically located at what may well be the most visible, heavily trafficked area in Cairo. I'm sure that tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of Egyptians saw us in the course of the day with our array of Free Gaza, Free Palestine, End the Blockade and other banners as well as the VFP flag.



Will War Ever End?

Continued from page 15

Chappell grew up in a military family, where his view of war's widespread consequences was shaped by his father's raging threats to shoot himself. His mother, he adds, grew up in Japan during World War II and then moved to Korea, where her family endured the Korean War, where Chappell's father began a 30-year military career, which also included combat in Vietnam. "Throughout my childhood, I watched my father lose his grip on reality ... Rage overshadowed his once peaceful nature, and when I heard him complain about violent nightmares, I realized that something called war had taken my gentle father from me ... when I was a teenager, I wanted to know if war will ever end."

At West Point, Chappell studied peacemakers as well as warmakers. Gandhi, he discovered, was a British army medic during the Boer War in South Africa, where he took close measure of the British military culture that he outmaneuvered to gain India's independence with a nonviolent campaign. Chappell found that some other West Pointers had come to the same conclusion as Gandhi. His book quotes General Dwight Eisenhower's farewell address as president, in which he warned that "another war could utterly destroy this civilization" and that people must learn "to compose differences" without war.

Chappell found a model for banishing war in the 19th century campaigns to ban slavery. "Slavery existed on a global scale for thousands of years, but due to the courageous actions of our ancestors who fought this injustice, no country today sanctions slavery. Together we have the capacity to create a world where countries no longer sanction war."

He was struck by how hard the military has had to work to train and prod soldiers to fight a battle, rather than flee for safety. This is proof, he argues, that humans don't have a gene for waging wars. And he took note of General Omar Bradley's comment after leading armies in World War II: "Modern war visits destruction on the victor and the vanquished alike. Our only complete assurance of surviving World War III is to halt it before it starts." Reflecting on his own military career, which started at West Point and spanned two world wars, Bradley stated, in a 1948 Memorial Day speech: "Wars can be prevented just as surely as they are provoked."

In the foreword to *Will War Ever End?*, Lt. Col. (ret.) Dave Grossman noted "there is cause to hope, and believe, that there can be an end to war. The West has won the Cold War without resorting to mega-death ... In recent years we have exercised the choice to step back from the brink of nuclear destruction." Chappell is currently finishing a sequel titled *The End of War*, designed to offer what Grossman calls a "toolbox" of information on peace actions.

Jan Barry



Holidays In Jail

Continued from page 4

Steve's charges were dropped because the government used a C-Span video as their evidence, and you could not hear Steve well on the video. We were amused that the government did not trust their own Capitol police to testify as to what they saw us do.

Sadly, this jury did not have the courage to do a jury nullification, where a jury simply refuses to convict because they appreciate what the defendants did, or don't agree with punishing them. DC is particularly firm in preventing mention of jury nullification in court, so the jury has to figure it out on its own, and this one couldn't.

The very slow pre-sentencing investigation (PSI) process to collect one's record of arrests and to examine one's standing in society pushed our sentencing date back to December 14th, frustrating, as this judge was a hard sentencer and I was signed up for the Gaza Freedom March in late December. I would have waived the PSI had I known at the time that I could, because I was ready in October to do the jail time this judge seemed likely to give me.

Judge Lynn Liebovitz is quite the scolding lecturer, and she went on at great

length justifying her pretty harsh sentences. With quite a long record of civil resistance arrests in DC, I have never before gotten any jail time, fines, or supervised probation. This time I was sentenced to 75 days suspended to 25, \$500 fine, and a year supervised probation. I am ordered to "stay away" from the entire Capitol Hill area for the duration of my probation.

I was "stepped back", or taken immediately to the courthouse holding cells through the door in the back of the courtroom a little after noon. It was about 7pm before 9 of us were transported to the DC Jail, where the processing took until about 4am the next morning before we saw our beds, such as they were.

The DC jail is arranged in pods containing 2-person cells, 8 cells to a tier, or hallway, another tier above and 2 more at a right angle, with a large common dayroom. Each tier has 2 toilets, 2 sinks, and one shower. The cells are about 6 feet by 10, with 2 narrow bunks and one small locker. Inmates are only locked in the cells during the frequent count times for about an hour.

Getting into and out of my top bunk was difficult because there were no bars. The inmates said the bars had been removed because male inmates had torn them off for weapons. I had bruises on my lap and my shin the whole time I was in due to having to roll across the steel edge of the bed to get in and out. We were clothed in short-sleeved t-shirts, scrub pants and tops, and only issued one blanket. Most inmates complained of the cold, but I was warm on the top bunk, one advantage of it.

My cell-mate was, predictably, a black woman. There were only four or five white women among the 45 or so in the pod. Most of the women were in for drug charges. Many of them individually came up to me and said I didn't look like a druggie and asked what was I doing there. They were loud and rowdy, but mostly very nice. My cell-mate and I discussed everything under the sun during the frequent count times, and I came to really like her.

When I went in I was issued a small piece of soap and small bottle of shampoo of a brand no one ever heard of. I was never able to buy any from the commissary because my money was not credited in time. I had cash in my pocket going in which I was told would go into my account, but it was not credited until over 2 weeks later. Because of the holidays the money

Holidays In Jail continued on page 27

to 1984, is due to inherent character flaws reaching back to the days of the Spanish conquistadors and the creation of huge haciendas that exploited native labor. The military rose out of this exploitive class, which the Catholic Church also aligned itself with.

Hurtado says six areas are key to Latin America's troubles: work, social trust, public service, rule of law, authority and opportunity. Work is not rewarded; authority is not trusted to do anything but look out for itself and, thus, tends toward swings between paternalism and populism; the notion of public service and justice are jokes; and the law is "a kind of Potemkin Village ... that only fools and foreigners take seriously"; education is not encouraged and is often feared; and, finally, reform threatens those in power.

As arguably dumb as some of President Zelaya's political moves may have been, the sorts of wealth re-distribution reforms he tried to make in Honduras fit well into Hurtado's vision of a dysfunctional Latin America where, without reforms, things like trust, justice and economic growth are impossible.

"Such growth would create more jobs," says Hurtado. "And there is no more effective way to reduce poverty than for a poor person to obtain a steady and honest job." The point is, give a poor person a job that pays a reasonable wage and he has greater resources to buy things, which is fuel for an economic engine.

This struggle is going on in various ways from Mexico to the southern cone of South America, expressed as a battle between the political left and right. The United States watches it all with a history of intervention on the side of business and military control and the imperial reality of over 700 bases and two on-going wars on the other side of the globe. Its military relationship with Latin America is characterized by a failed Drug War, which is more and more being linked with the War On Terror.

Our Drug War has pushed Mexico into an atavistic, anarchic war with itself, where well-armed drug gangs are strong enough to take on the state, as they creatively outdo each other in baroque violence. One favorite is boiling opponents into a pozole or stew; in one case recently, a dead man's face was sewn onto a soccer ball. The Mex-

ican state is so inept and corrupt, only one in every 1000 crimes ends in punishment. The bloody absurdity of it all has begun to give credence to the question why supply is the problem and not demand in the US.

In Colombia, the Drug War has led to the support of a US-friendly garrison state soon to feature up to five new bases for operations as far away as Africa. This is in addition to the Navy's 4th Fleet now steaming around Latin America in an update of the old gunboat diplomacy. The effort to crush FARC, the Colombian guerrillas, is intense.

Meanwhile, next door in the oil rich state of Venezuela, President Hugo Chavez is replacing Fidel Castro as the US's major boogie man in the hemisphere. Just talking to Chavez, as was the case with leftist candidate Andrés Manuel López in Mexico and Zelaya in Honduras, is grounds for failure at the polls or overthrow, respectively.

The right wing is currently demonizing connections between Iran and Venezuela, with belligerent talk of Chavez mining uranium for nukes, mysterious Iranian factories in the jungles and nefarious money laundering. With so much right-wing paranoia and the US military so enamored with its rapidly developing drone technology, the possibility of surveillance drones over Venezuela is real – as is the possibility of Chavez shooting one down, raising a right-wing driven crisis in Washington. What Chavez will do when his term ends in 2012 is everybody's question.

Chavez might be seen as the belligerent leading edge of a fifth generation of post-WWII left reform movements in Latin America. Before him there was Arbenz in Guatemala, Castro in Cuba, Allende in Chile and Ortega in Nicaragua. Ortega once said, "I'm not interested in post-mortem solidarity," referring to the fatal decision by Allende earlier not to arm his left reform movement. Chavez, with significant oil resources, has assumed this attitude to the max and has purchased fighter jets, missiles, tanks, submarines and 100,000 spanking new AK103 assault rifles from Russia, China and other countries. He is said to be negotiating a contract to manufacture Kalashnikov rifles in Venezuela.

Rightist elements in the US are salivating over post-Castro Cuba. The Obama administration is currently in a spat with Cuba over the arrest of a US worker for an AID contractor to bring "development" and "democracy" to the island. Cuba, in turn, is upset we have imprisoned five Cubans

caught spying on anti-Castro groups in Miami. Given past incidents, Cuba's quite reasonable response is that they were there to prevent terrorist acts against Cuba. But it seems the US is only allowed to have spies in this 50 year war with Cuba. So while a prisoner swap could be brilliant diplomacy for opening relations, President Obama's fear of rightist reaction makes that unlikely.

Brazil is approaching first world status and is fast becoming a major diplomatic counter-weight to the US in the western hemisphere. President Inacio Lula da Silva, a former union leader, is also seen as an effective check on Chavez's worst instincts. Lula has hosted President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad from Iran and the Presidents of Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Brazil has been awarded the 2016 Olympics, which can only accentuate Brazil's stature and push it to clean up some nasty human rights issues in its cities.

Lula cannot run again in the upcoming 2010 election, and he has designated his chief of staff, Dilma Rousseff, to run on the Workers Party ticket. She's not well known, and a center right candidate, Jose Serra, is leading in the polls. But Rousseff has a compelling story of struggle and torture by the police and may gain in popularity; plus, she may benefit from a very popular movie just released on Lula's life. The electoral balance could shift in her favor.

Following a tumultuous decade of revolving door presidents in Ecuador, President Rafael Correa, a 47-year-old economist, is quite popular and was re-elected in 2009. He sent the US military base at Manta packing; the last drug surveillance flight was July 17 last year. Asked if he was open to a new deal, Correa said, "We can negotiate with the U.S. about a base in Manta, if they let us put a military base in Miami." While linked with Chavez, he seems more of a statesman.

In Peru, former President Alberto Fujimori is serving 25 years in prison for human rights violations from the 1990s, while the former President he replaced, Alan Garcia, won the presidency in 2006. The center-right Garcia beat a leftist candidate in a runoff by smearing him as an "instrument" of Castro and Chavez.

In December, President Evo Morales in Bolivia was re-elected in a "landslide" and seems secure in power with a base majority of poor, indigenous elements. Minority moneyed interests in the country are



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Chronicle

Continued from page 24

strongly opposed to his rule, and there is a struggle with Chile over access to the Pacific Ocean. Gas production is a key to the economy, which grew last year by 3.7%. He and Chavez are close.

In what was for a long time the heart of darkness in Latin America, landlocked Paraguay elected a liberation theology Catholic bishop named Fernando Lugo as president. Following the notorious horrors of the Alfredo Stroessner dictatorship that lasted from 1954 to 1989, when he was thrown out by a military coup, instead of reform, Lugo speaks in terms of “resurrection”

“I do believe we will resurrect this country, a country deeply drowned in misery, poverty and discrimination,” he said on being elected. The luster is somewhat off him now after three women came forth claiming he had fathered their children.

President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner of Argentina -- half of a tag team presidency with her husband Nestor -- fared badly recently in mid-term elections. Economic troubles and their close relationship with Chavez have become burdens, and they may go down in the 2011 elections, when Nestor is presumed to be a candidate, to a center-right candidate.

Next door in Chile, which has Latin America’s most stable economy, center-left President Michelle Bachelet was replaced after a January 17 runoff by the rightist candidate she beat in 2006, billionaire Sebastian Pinera, who beat former leftist president Eduardo Frei,

Elements of the American right-wing press have crowed that the southern cone nations of Chile, Argentina and Uruguay will turn to the right. It is true in Chile, and Argentina may go that way. But in Uruguay they were dead wrong.

Uruguay just elected maybe the most interesting leftist president yet in Latin America, a former Tupamaro guerrilla named Jose “El Pepe” Mujica. He is more Lula than Chavez and is known as a flexible pragmatist -- an “anti politician.” He served 14 years in prison for killing a police officer, two of those years reportedly confined at the bottom of a well. He escaped once and, during his capture, was shot six times. He is to be inaugurated on March 1.

So the struggle for reform goes on in Latin America. Political life within all these nations is far more complicated and richer than can be suggested here. As Ronald Reagan famously put it, “All those countries down there in Latin America – they’re all different.”

John Grant is a member of VFP Chapter 31 in Philadelphia.

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Holidays In Jail

Continued from page 23

my husband put in for me was credited slowly too and the once-a-week ordering cycle never allowed me to order anything. Fortunately for my cleanliness, we got Salvation Army gift bags for Christmas with some more soap and shampoo, and the treat of a York Peppermint Patty!

The food was not generous and boringly repetitive, and I never accessed the junk food from the commissary that people pigged out on once a week, so I lost 6 or 7 pounds. The very best food was the good juicy oranges we got more than half the time. I have never gotten fresh fruit in jail before.

The worst thing about being in for me was the lack of info about the rules. I heard from people I went in with that a rules booklet is supposedly being rewritten, but has been for ages. So not infrequently I broke a rule because I didn’t know any better, like going in someone else’s cell. Fortunately incurring no punishment, but fear of that occasionally. And the next worst was the lack of regular access to books. There was no library that I could ascertain. Books were circulating among the cells (a seeming foolish security risk) so I more often than not had reading material, but a lot of them were gangster/sex junk, with only a few good books. And I watched more TV than I probably have in the last 10 years, with, by choice, no TV at home. Which confirmed my aversion to the electronic garbage!

A day or two after I went in I had to fill out a form with the names, addresses, and phone numbers of whoever I wanted to be able to telephone or have visit me. Since I had not known that was how it worked, I only had my husband Larry’s info in my head. Processing the list and checking the people on it was of course slow, and those first 8 or 10 days before I could call Larry were hard. Attorneys can visit anytime so Ann came often, and Eve’s attorney kindly visited too, and a VFP friend who is a minister got in. Women can only get family

visits on Mondays, so I had just 2 visits with Larry, along with the joy of the strip searches afterward. (Not!)

Larry and I don’t pay much attention to the holidays because they are so awfully commercialized so I didn’t much mind being in jail then except for missing the Gaza trip, but I felt for the many women who were really missing their children at that time. We could only spy from the windows the unusual 20 inch snowstorm DC got while I was in, and talk about how we wished we could be playing in it. Recreation was rare, with only 3 or 4 gym visits happening while I was there, and that only consisting of a pickup basketball game by the few good players and a weight room with no weights.

The very best thing about my time in was the many cards and letters I got, beginning on the third day, from friends and strangers, nearly 100 pieces total, as many as 25 in a day. All my organizations had put my jail address on their websites, and many people kindly wrote. A tremendous THANK YOU to all of you! The guards and my sister inmates were amazed, and several expressed admiration for the support peace movement members give each other.

I ended up getting out 2 or 3 days early, a nice surprise as no one had told me. They woke me up about 3am on my 23rd day, and I walked out at 7:30, in an enormous size 3X pair of sweat pants I had to hold to keep from falling off me, since the clothes I wore in had been sent home. That was all they had to issue me, where most of the inmates are men and women are an afterthought. I figured it was one last kick from the system as I rode the Metro subway during morning rush hour with the fare card they had given me, getting eyed by many commuters.

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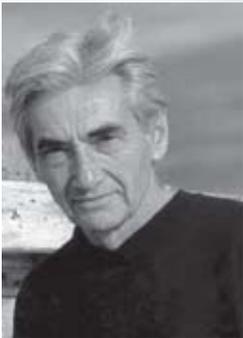


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Long Time VFP Member
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Activist, author, veteran, and historian Howard Zinn passed away Wednesday, January 27 of a heart attack.

A member of VFP since the late 1980s, he was an active member of the Smedley Butler Chapter (009) of VFP.

Howard was 87 years old.

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 - Leave a gift for Veterans For Peace.
 - Less than 3% of all wills contain a charitable provision.
 - Consider using assets for your charitable gift.
 - Name VFP as the beneficiary of your IRA or pension account.
 - Name VFP as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy.
- Support the mission of Veterans For Peace to create a sustainable future for generations to come.
For more information call our office in St. Louis at 314-725-6005.