Veterans For Peace has been busy working with a new coalition that was formed to stop the expansion of Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada! The coalition was initiated by folks in Nevada who were outraged that the proposed expansion would completely take over the largest wildlife refuge in the country, the Desert National Wildlife Refuge (DNWR). The coalition is made up of environmental groups, indigenous tribes that will have their cultural sites restricted, ranchers, outdoor enthusiasts, and veterans.

The Desert National Wildlife Refuge is located next to the Nevada Test and Training Range. The United States Air Force is attempting to take over and reduce access to over a million acres of the refuge for bombing and combat training. The DNWR, a protected refuge that contains hundreds of species, is our natural and cultural heritage.

The Air Force currently already controls 2.9 million acres for the Nevada Test and Training Range, a sprawling expanse of public land that was withdrawn from the refuge for military use. These lands provide ample opportunity for aerial gunnery, flight testing, and other military readiness activities. With so much public land already available to the Air Force, there is no need for the dramatic expansion into and destruction of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge.

The military has designs to use the expansion for a multitude of unlimited war training that will include wheeled- and tracked-vehicle operations and direct bombing ranges—the sort of activity that will damage this pristine environment forever.

As veterans, we know the futility of war. We know full well that the U.S. military is engaged in too many conflicts that have nothing to do with our “defense.” Furthermore, with over 800 bases and installations at home and across the globe, the U.S. military is not lacking ample space for training.

Executive Director Garett Reppenhagen recently traveled to Washington, D.C., and met with many legislators to talk about the importance of protecting our environment. He also pointed out that with over 800 bases, the military does not need to consume more space for training and certainly not to bomb endangered areas of our collective land.

On October 3, 2019, Veterans For Peace members traveled to Nellis from the Creech protests to bring attention and opposition to the expansion, holding signs that declare “Don’t Bomb the Bighorn!” [See photo above.]

Right now, the DNWR is shared and protected by environmental groups, tribes, individuals and government entities, including the military. There is no justifiable reason that the military must be solely able to access this land. With more than half our tax money already going to the “defense” budget, expecting U.S. residents to also hand over our dwindling public lands is nothing short of a greedy land grab.
**Letter to the Editor**

**Gerry Condon**

Dear Editor:

Just to set the record straight, I was with the contingent of Vets who walked Bruce Beyer back from Canada, but the guy in the top picture in shades is not me. I was further back. I’m attaching another photo with me in it. If you look closely you will see me directly across (right) from Gloria Emerson and behind the guy with a beard—I have aviator shades and long hair.

I did not know Bruce Beyer at the time, although we became friends and stayed in touch. Bruce spoke at both the Nyack Public Library and Saint Thomas Aquinas College in the Spring of 2018, and we spoke off and on until his death this year. Bruce helped me to understand how saying NO is important...and I miss him. He was always a voice in the wind and we need more of them.

Sincerely,

Gerald McCarthy

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**Letter from Viet Nam**

**Gerry Condon**

Board President, VFP

I am writing from Hanoi, the capital of Viet Nam. I arrived here three days ago with the annual tour led by Chapter 160, the expatriate chapter of Veterans For Peace in Viet Nam. This morning there is thunder and lightning, conjuring up the horrible mass bombing raids that the U.S. conducted on this city and throughout Viet Nam from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies. Hanoi is now a bustling city of 11 million people (and 5 million motor scooters). The people are very friendly and happy to see Americans. Veterans from both sides of the war are working together to mitigate the “legacies of war.” These include many thousands of unexploded bombs and landmines, and several million people who are affected by disabilities stemming from the massive U.S. “detonation” spraying of “Agent Orange.”

While some of us were meeting with the Viet Nam Association of Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA), others visited the Friendship Village just outside of Hanoi where we met with veterans and children who suffer from serious disabilities related to genetic damage from Agent Orange as well as continuing exposure. Veterans For Peace and VFP member Paul Cox received flowers and plaques recognizing our continuing efforts to heal the wounds of war in Viet Nam. Our Vietnamese friends are encouraging us to expand our relationships and to offer support and solidarity on many fronts. This very admirable and important cooperation will continue and will grow.

Opposing U.S. Intervention in Latin America

I have done a lot of traveling this year. I have had the privilege of representing Veterans For Peace on delegations to Venezuela and Nicaragua. What do these two Latin American countries have in common with Viet Nam? Among other things, all three have successfully resisted U.S. imperialism’s attempts to impose its will upon their sovereign nations. For Viet Nam it was a long war that killed three million Vietnamese. For Nicaragua, it was decades of the brutal, U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship, followed by a CIA-backed “contra” war that killed 50,000 Nicaraguans in the 1980s. The U.S. also subjected Viet Nam and Nicaragua to devastating economic warfare.

Gripping economic “sanctions” are a primary tool being used in the blatantly public U.S. attempt to overthrow the socialist government in Venezuela. Cuba also has faced decades of a U.S. economic blockade. National Security hawk John Bolton [fired by Trump in Sept.] has labeled Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua as the “troika of tyranny” that has “met its match” in the Trump administration.

Veterans For Peace and the antilaw movement must do all we can to restrain our government from intervening covertly or covertly, in the internal affairs of our Latin American neighbors. We must also continue to educate our communities about the true costs of war and to seek justice for veterans and victims of war.

Deported veterans and support for asylum seekers

Justice for veterans is exactly what the VFP Deported Veterans Advocacy Project is seeking, with sterling leadership from our Deported Veterans Chapter 182 in Tijuana, who have devoted themselves to being responsible residents and neighbors in their Tijuana community. Aside from advocating for their right to return to their families and communities in the United States, the Deported Veterans are actively advocating for asylum seekers from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela and Haiti—all of whom are stuck in makeshift refugee camps throughout Tijuana. VFP members are helping the Deported Veterans help the refugees by donating money to supply one migrant encampment with clean water on a regular basis. Veterans For Peace recently provided funding for the expansion of the Unified U.S. Deported Veterans office, adding a call center which is being used for advocacy and fundraising. We are very proud of our Deported Veterans and will continue to support them in any way that we can.

Stay tuned for more information on how you or your VFP chapter can help.

Seeking peace and justice within VFP

“Peace at Home, Peace Abroad” has become a strategic slogan for Veterans For Peace in recent years. We stand with those who are struggling for peace and justice in our own communities—by supporting immigrants, by opposing racism, while supremacy, gun violence continued on page 4…
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

After realizing that the military in no way cares about or protects us, many of you might have questions about how we get there. Because if we are allowed to be deeply over-polarized. Better that we all take a deep breath, reflect, and regroup. We cannot demand peace and social justice in the world, without our organization-wide in 2018. Truth be told, we are all members being given the chance to share that they have conducted information about this process will be and that we might take steps to correct past grievances. For example, in past years several members were purposefully excluded from participating in delegations in an undemocratic manner. The Board of Directors has created a new delegation committee whose purpose is to ensure that delegations adhere to our mission and goals as an organization, as well as our bylaws, and that they are conducted in an open and democratic manner, with all members being given the chance to participate. We are also exploring ways to decolonize our work in Veterans For Peace, delegations included. More information about this process will be shared as we move forward. Make no mistake, these cultural changes are necessary. We want our beloved organization to continue to grow and thrive as we work for peace and social justice. We cannot demand peace and social justice in the world, without our organization. It has been a hard process, and we are not perfect, but we are working on it. If you would like to get involved, or have questions or concerns that you would like to convey to the Board of Directors, please email us at feedback@veteransforpeace.org. We are attempting to clarify communications within the organization and make it easier for members to bring concerns to the Board in a safe and secure way. This email address will be monitored by the Vice President of the organization. The Board of Directors will strive to ensure that all concerns are addressed in a fair, timely, and respectful manner.

Warm wishes for peace and social justice for all,

Adrienne Kinne
Vice President
Veterans For Peace U.S.
Introduction Our New VFP Poet Laureate, Jan Barry

Jan Barry is a poet, author, and journalist. Appointed to the U.S. Military Academy after a war tour in Viet Nam, he resigned from West Point to become a writer and peace activist. A co-founder of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, his poems and essays on the war appeared in diverse publications, from the Chicago Tribune and New York Times to 4 People and A Nation: A History of the United States.


Three decades after dropping out of school to become a teenage soldier, Jan graduated from Ramapo College of New Jersey with a degree in political science. In subsequent years, he’s taught journalism and communications courses at Ramapo College, Rutgers University, New York University, and St. Thomas Aquinas College. In recent years, he’s been the New Jersey coordinator for Warrior Writers, a nonprofit group that provides writing workshops, readings, and art exhibitions, and publishes anthologies of poetry, prose, and artwork by military veterans and family members.

POETRY PAGE

Karen Brown is a librarian, writer of poetry and memoir, and a supporter of Monterey VFP Chapter 46.

REMAINS

On the outskirts of Tucson there were no garbage men. Even when it was time for a dump run, you braised yourself rifle-steeled yourself for a piece of work.

Holding the remains of last month’s chicken, the maggots brought the smell of war jerked you to a halt, brought you to your knees, knocked you to the ground.

In Viet Nam you hoisted the remains of last month’s victims, and swore you’d never take another order.

I hadn’t imagined what might be a soldier’s duty.

In the remains of rice fields and burned out jungles. I hadn’t imagined what else might happen, that getting out alive could be less imagined than being alive, that the war was over Done with.

What can remain of a marriage when the smell of death crawls Orange in your skin easy enough to stop screaming in the night flat through the door, souls with the garbage—or the news?

In a marriage always more gear to carry more questions to ask, more understanding, more help.

More than love.
Oh yes, we did “make love” (a circle of rainbow lights tender on scars), yet couldn’t make “not war” (our flames only broke the sweet night and exposed the wounded ground)

I wanted to be a partner, but can anyone ever be more than the buddy who lived through hell with you, who gave his life for you, who you tried to save.

My rival hidden, with other secrets.

like the tortured buzzed scalp under your long hair, the scars beneath your beard, the pane behind a quiet man,
admired, but unknown.

The war continued long after the protestors stopped, long after we, fatigued, stopped trying.

And every day new orders are given and fresh recruits try to make it stop, still another Viet Nam another war against peace, against love against every two of us, abroad and back home.

—KAREN BROWN

Rumbling Fields & Wildflowers

Sonnora VFP members were among hundreds who came to honor the peace activists whose names were added to the Living Peace Wall right Sebastopol, Calif, this fall.

SUMMER WILDFLOWERS

Flaming fields of purple loose strife
Twirling in stride with fluttering Scarfs of Queen Anne’s lace
And shimmering sky blue
Clusters of chicory.

Some few poets have so consistently insist ed that peace is possible and poetry matters. In “Gold Star Grandson,” Barry sums up his life’s work in a single stanza:

Some of the most heartbreaking poems deal with the loss of his wife Paula.

You’re surely gone,
Dream alone.
Sleep alone, eat alone,
Learning to be alone,

And slam into S for suicide—
Til we run out of cutesy mots
A-bombs, H-bombs, depleted uranium
Chlorine, mustard gas, phosgene, sarin,
Spewing arsenals of chemical weapons—

I readily admit that I am not exactly an impartial critic. I’ve known Barry for forty-seven years, and he has been one of the major influences in my life. We first met when he was editing Winning Hearts and Minds with Larry Rottmann and Basil Paquette back in 1972. I was trying, with out much success, to cope with the flood of emotions coursing through me in the wake of my encounter with the American War in Viet Nam. A few years later, he and I co-edited Demilitarized Zones together, and it was during those years—1975 and 1976—that Barry showed me how to direct my rage and confusion into constructive channels through poetry and literature.

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

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

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

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

W. D. “Bill” Ehrhart is a member of VFP, Phoeni x Chapter 319 and editor-at-large of the VFP Newsletter.
VFP CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

The photos in this spread were captured by Mike S. James. Read Mike’s story on page 24.

ANN WRIGHT • THURSDAY OPENING RECEPTION

BRITTANY RAMOS DEBARROS • FRIDAY GI RESISTANCE EVENT

CAMILO MEJIA • GI RESISTANCE EVENT

GARETT REPPEHAGEN, VFP BOARD, MEMBERS • SATURDAY BUSINESS MTG

LOKE (RUTH ALOUA) • SATURDAY BANQUET

MONIQUE SALHAB • SATURDAY BUSINESS MTG

SATURDAY AFTERNOON GAZA FREEDOM FLOTILLA ORGANIZED BY ANN WRIGHT & FRIENDS • RIVERFRONT PARK ALONG THE SPOKANE RIVER

MICHAEL T. MCPHEARSON • SATURDAY BANQUET

MONEY \SUCKS!

MIKE MCDONALD & BARRY RIESCH • PRESENTE!

VFP STAFF • PRESENTING SPECIAL GIFT FOR YEARS OF SERVICE TO VFP

Find more convention photos by Ellen Davidson at stopthesewars.org/ellen-davidson/.

AUGUST 2019 • SPOKANE, WA
Standing in solidarity with protectors of Mauna Kea

On July 30, 2019, Veterans For Peace delegates visited Mauna Kea, where they were honored to meet with the elders circle and present the statement below along with a VFP flag.

To the Kanaka Maoli Elders,

Warm greetings from Veterans For Peace. We are an international organization in nine countries for military veterans who are now organizing for peace, not war. We are proud to stand in solidarity with Kanaka Maoli in the protection of your sacred mountain, Mauna a Waiakea.

In the traditions of Kahooolawe and Makua Valley and the ongoing pursuit for the protection of Pokaholua, your stand at Mauna Kea is an event of epic proportions.

Veterans For Peace has stood with Native Americans at Standing Rock and we have sent delegations to Okinawa, Jeju Island (South Korea), Palestine, and Ferguson (Missouri) in solidarity with those challenging militarism.

We are well aware of the United States’ history of destroying indigenous lands. As (recovering) veterans, we know it is our duty to stand in opposition to militarism. It is shameful that our military is desecrating ancestral land. Veterans For Peace condemns these atrocities against the Hawaiian people.

We are honored to be standing with Ruth Aloua, President of Malu ‘Aina, to our annual convention this August. The theme of our convention in Spokane, Washington is “Sacred Lands, Sacred Lives: Peace Knows No Borders.” We are looking forward to bringing attention to the ongoing resistance at Mauna Kea and we know we will have much to learn from Ruth’s story.

Veterans For Peace anti-nuclear sailing ship, the historic Golden Rule, will arrive in Hilo harbor this week as part of the first leg of a voyage that will take her to the Marshall Islands in December 2019, Guam, Saipan, Pagan, Okinawa and finally Hiroshima, Japan by August 6, 2020 for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the U.S. atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Wounded Knee petition: We say, “Remove the Stain”

On June 25th, legislation was introduced calling for the U.S. to formally rescind the Medals of Honor that were awarded to 20 U.S. cavalry troopers after the Wounded Knee Massacre.

The National Congress of American Indians have long condemned the massacre and have advocated for the rescinding of the Medals. In 2001, the United States Congress also officially changed the name of the Wounded Knee Battle to the Wounded Knee Massacre. However, they did not rescind the medals or compensate the victims.

Representative Denny Heck along with Rep. Deb Haaland and Rep. Paul Cook have introduced the “Remove the Stain” bill. Rep. Paul Cook have introduced the “Remove the Stain Act” H.R. 3467, which would retroactively rescind the 20 Medal of Honor medals they issue to the cavalry troopers who participated in the massacre.


Sacred Black Hills

On August 22–25, 2019, the InterNational Initiative for Transformative Collaboration (INITC) and Stories and Songs of the People co-presented a GrassRoots Gathering for the Generations to Come in the Sacred Black Hills (or Paha Sapa in the Lakota language). Believed to be the center of their universe, where Lakota culture began, the sacred Black Hills are considered home by the seven Lakota Sioux tribes. Several VFP members (non-Native) who attended the gathering, billed as an “inter-cultural, Inter-Faith Gathering for all Peoples of all Nations—Friends, Allies and Relatives,” filed the following reports. —Ed.

When We Get Together, There Is Truly Transformative Energy and That Gives Us Hope for a Good Future.

Austin Ringelstein:

The five days in the Black Hills were outstanding and transformative. So many good things came out of the gatherings of our people. It feels like all people of all colors of the medicine wheel—black, red, yellow, and white. At one point, a Lakota elder gathered wit 50 of us in a room and conducted a trauma and healing session in which each of us gave testimony about the source of our personal trauma. By the end of the night, almost every adult in the room was shedding tears and we all felt like family who had gone a little further down the road together. This was apropos to the message another elder had stated earlier, “There will be peace on earth. It will take a while.”

Also in attendance were some of the indigenous youth who were December 2016 driving down that winding, backlogged road to the Oceti Sakowin camp at Standing Rock, seeing with eyes that said, you’re right where you are supposed to be, a savior to none but being present and at service to the Native people of this land. I was in a continuous conversation with VFP members who traveled to the Vatican in 2018 to ask the pope to revoke the Papal Bulls and Doctrine of Discovery, the historical bases of colonialism and the attempted erasure of many indigenous peoples around the world. They were the first youth delegation ever to speak with the Vatican about these things, and they practiced conflict resolution using spirituality and ceremonies. They asked the Vatican, “Don’t just listen to and hear us, feel us.”

The panel, led by a 20-year-old Lakota woman who gave a powerful declaration that her generation will do to revoke the problems, received a thunderous standing ovation from our audience. Others spoke about the state of the world and how “the earth, rock, and stone are telling us things we need to know... It’s an exciting time to be alive. Young people are so awake.”

I had a profound conversation later with VFP member Matt about the transformative power of such gatherings. Matt, who helped me haul a 4,000-pound generator to and from the gathering, talked about our responsibility, as white males of privilege, to “work alongside people [especially traditionally marginalized communities] and not in front of them.” For example, we can use our positions of privilege to help raise up and empower communities by carrying some of the burden on our shoulders. The founder of the Two Spirits Camp at Oceti Sakowin, gave a riveting talk about how she inspired Jane Fonda to do just that. Matt and I also discussed how VFP can be better allies, an ongoing and dynamic question that we continue to explore.

At the gathering, a Lakota elder said, “It is an exciting time to be alive,” and I agree. Because when we get together there is truly transformative energy and that gives us hope for a good future. Special thanks to VFP members Garrett, Matt, and David for facilitating the movement of the generator for this important gathering, so that the events could take place in their full transformative power capacity.


David Cooley:

This story didn’t begin or end in August. Nor did it begin on that early December morning in ‘16 driving down that winding, backlogged road to the Oceti Sakowin camp at Standing Rock, seeing with eyes that said, you’re right where you are supposed to be, a savior to none but being present and at service to the Native people of this land. I was in a continuous conversation with VFP members who traveled to the Vatican in 2018 to ask the pope to revoke the Papal Bulls and Doctrine of Discovery, the historical bases of colonialism and the attempted erasure of many indigenous peoples around the world. They were the first youth delegation ever to speak with the Vatican about these things, and they practiced conflict resolution using spirituality and ceremonies. They asked the Vatican, “Don’t just listen to and hear us, feel us.”

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The Proud Legacy of GI Resistance

by Maj. Danny Sjursen, USA (ret.)

As I’m sure many VFP members know, and feel, antwar dissent can be a lonely endeavor. In a society infused with militarism, with a public often glibly war-profited by apathy and a government intent on squashing even peaceful opposition, antwar activists, even we veterans, can feel quite alone. But we are not. We have not only each other, but a proud legacy of GI resistance throughout the centuries to call upon for support in times of need.

When I was a youngster, only I knew how I felt about the invasion of America’s sovereign neighbor. Indeed, few remember this aspect of his career, future President Ulysses S. Grant stated, “I do not think there was ever a more wicked war than that waged by the United States on Mexico. I thought so at the time, when I was a youngster, only I had moral courage enough to resign.”

During America’s century-long Indian Wars, some U.S. Army officers and soldiers found the conduct of the government abhorrent. Indeed, some historians, such as Robert Utley, have argued that though overall U.S. Army actions against Native Americans were often brutal, there were indeed instances when sympathetic army leaders and units actually stepped in to temporarily halt settler encroachment on Indian lands and, counterintuitively, act as “the only friends the tribes had” in those moments.

For instance, during the War of 1812, upwards of 330,000 Americans officially evaded the draft, many of them deserters unconvinced to war with Germany was necessary, or that the U.S. should enter the maelstrom on behalf of British, French, and Russian empires in a war that was truly one of empire versus empire, rather than the official American story of a “war for democracy.” Thousands of war objects were held in what were termed, in Orwellian fashion, “Conscientious Objector Prison Camps.” When socialist leader Eugene Debs earned a one-year prison sentence for his opposition to World War I, he began to speak of his “ringleaders” shot.

In the Mexican War, an Irish-American unit switched sides and fought for Mexico against what was clearly an aggressive Anglo invasion and land grab. Those captured from the self-declared “St. Patrick’s Battalion” were also executed, but not before they’d successfully exposed American brutality and conquest. Though few actually resigned, many later prominent Civil War generals who had served in Mexico as lieutenants and captains publicly expressed their own disenchantment with the invasion of America’s sovereign neighbor. Indeed, though few remember this aspect of his career, future President Ulysses S. Grant stated, “I do not think there was ever a more wicked war than that waged by the United States on Mexico. I thought so at the time, when I was a youngster, only I had moral courage enough to resign.”

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Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, war is a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism.

The ill-advised, illegal, and immoral Vietnam War produced perhaps the golden age of GI resistance, a living history experienced and contributed to by millions of veterans alive today. When discussing the reasons for the end of that war, few historians or pundits admit to the seminal role of internal military dissent and opposition. Thousands of aggressive soldiers were “injured,” “forbidden” units refused to patrol outside the gates of their bases, and grassroots antiwar, GI Resisters, and Veterans Against the War (VVAW), infected protests, lobbed Congress at the famed “Winter Soldier” hearings, and threw their medals over the White House fence in an act of powerful defiance. With the U.S. military in Vietnam on the verge of collapse and mutiny, GI dissenters contributed mightily to the final end of that war.

Without a draft in place to motivate large-scale citizen resistance to America’s now ongoing, really forever, wars on “terror,” the antiwar movement may appear weak. In one sense it is, in comparison to the Vietnam era. That said, there remain thousands of vets opposed to these wars, including VFP members. About Face (formerly Iraq Veterans Against the War) members, and plenty of unaffiliated dissenting veterans. It remains incumbent on us to provide a home, a “landing pad,” a

Sacred Black Hills …from p. 11

To run sound equipment. Special thanks are in order to the VFP brothers and sisters of Colorado for their financial generosity and generosity of heart that made this particular effort come together. Deep gratitude is offered to all involved in rallying support for the INIITC-sponsored gathering.

A place has been made to exist for the possibility of collab-orative service for and with the national organization of Native veterans. GI resistance, a living, national, and multigenerational resistance, a transformative force. I recommend investigating two websites thoroughly—cinet.net and storiedandsong.org—to gain a sense of how it all operates. (At the latter site, click on “presenters” to see a first-name listing.)

Lastly, I want to suggest a VFP Circle be created based on INIITC that down the road could be joined by our Native brothers and sisters. A circle is a place where the gradual shedding of a colonized mind begins, and a paradigm shift becomes possible. I welcome interested members to contact me, David Cooley, at dacooley@usinternetc.com.

Veterans For Peace | Fall 2019

13

Follow him on Twitter at @SkepticalVet. [©2019 Danny Sjursen]
As always, Chapter 21 had a busy summer. On June 23, we joined with friends and allies in the Filipino community and took part in an anti-imperialist/pro-migrant contingent at the annual parade and festival organized by that community in Jersey City. The next day we made our way to Palisades Park to mark the 69th anniversary of the start of the Korean War with an information table in the heart of Koreatown in New York City.

We had a good turnout at the 4th of July parade in Teaneck, as part of a contingent of progressive organizations. On August 3, we got together with NYC Chapter 34 at what has become our annual barbecue; we always look forward to this event as it gives us an opportunity to share projects and activities with our NYC brothers and sisters.

On August 7, two of our chapter members, Soobok Kim and James Yee, met with U.S. Congressperson Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-9th CD) to advocate for the signing of a peace treaty with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to finally end the Korean War.

Wendy Fisher

Chapter 23 began the summer with an informational table at the main farmers market, which attracts 60,000 to 70,000 visitors, and was highly visible with our magic button-making machine. Doug Rawlings read poetry at opening receptions for Ron Carver’s amazing Waging Peace in Vietnam exhibit in New Bedford and Boston, Massachusetts. The photo exhibit of GI resistance started out in Vietnam, and was on display at the VFP convention in Spokane.

Chapter members continue to work with Moms Demand Action to rid our culture of assault weapons. We are also supporting student-led climate strike actions.

Doug Rawlings

The Tom Paine Chapter has been busy! Our chapter supports the Kateri Peace Conference in Fonda, New York. This year’s theme was “Defying Extinction: Nurturing a Garden of Resilience in the Face of Climate Crisis,” and the conference was well attended. It featured Dahr Jamail, author of The End of Ice: BEAR Witness and Finding Meaning in the Path of Climate Disruption. The two-day conference focused on our need to dramatically alter our consumption of fossil fuels and reduce war and militarism or face extinction in the not-too-distant future. Jamail’s book is highly recommended and has received excellent reviews.

The Daily Gazette published a letter written by VFP member John Amidon under the title “Don’t be confused about climate change,” which read, in part, “Being a USMC veteran, I wondered what the U.S. military is doing to prepare for climate change. Online, I soon found ‘A War Plan Orange for Climate Change,’ by Commander T. McGehee from the U.S. Naval Institute. One chilling quote from this report reads, ‘Rising global temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, climbing sea levels and more extreme weather events will intensify the challenges of global instability, hunger, poverty and conflict.’ We all need to address climate disruption immediately.”

John Amidon

The Tom Paine Chapter has been busy! Our chapter supports the Kateri Peace Conference in Fonda, New York. This year’s theme was “Defying Extinction: Nurturing a Garden of Resilience in the Face of Climate Crisis,” and the conference was well attended. It featured Dahr Jamail, author of The End of Ice: BEAR Witness and Finding Meaning in the Path of Climate Disruption. The two-day conference focused on our need to dramatically alter our consumption of fossil fuels and reduce war and militarism or face extinction in the not-too-distant future. Jamail’s book is highly recommended and has received excellent reviews.

The Daily Gazette published a letter written by VFP member John Amidon under the title “Don’t be confused about climate change,” which read, in part, “Being a USMC veteran, I wondered what the U.S. military is doing to prepare for climate change. Online, I soon found ‘A War Plan Orange for Climate Change,’ by Commander T. McGehee from the U.S. Naval Institute. One chilling quote from this report reads, ‘Rising global temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, climbing sea levels and more extreme weather events will intensify the challenges of global instability, hunger, poverty and conflict.’ We all need to address climate disruption immediately.”

John Amidon

As always, Chapter 21 had a busy summer. On June 23, we joined with friends and allies in the Filipino community and took part in an anti-imperialist/pro-migrant contingent at the annual parade and festival organized by that community in Jersey City. The next day we made our way to Palisades Park to mark the 69th anniversary of the start of the Korean War with an information table in the heart of Koreatown in New York City.

We had a good turnout at the 4th of July parade in Teaneck, as part of a contingent of progressive organizations. On August 3, we got together with NYC Chapter 34 at what has become our annual barbecue; we always look forward to this event as it gives us an opportunity to share projects and activities with our NYC brothers and sisters.

On August 7, two of our chapter members, Soobok Kim and James Yee, met with U.S. Congressperson Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-9th CD) to advocate for the signing of a peace treaty with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to finally end the Korean War.

Wendy Fisher

Chapter 23 began the summer with an informational table at the main farmers market, which attracts 60,000 to 70,000 visitors, and was highly visible with our magic button-making machine. Doug Rawlings read poetry at opening receptions for Ron Carver’s amazing Waging Peace in Vietnam exhibit in New Bedford and Boston, Massachusetts. The photo exhibit of GI resistance started out in Vietnam, and was on display at the VFP convention in Spokane.

Chapter members continue to work with Moms Demand Action to rid our culture of assault weapons. We are also supporting student-led climate strike actions.

Doug Rawlings
VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

#035 – SPOKANE, WA

The Spokane chapter is still in Recovery and Gratitude Mode after experiencing the exhilaration of hosting the 2019 National VFP Convention. Many helpers created a container that held some amazing ideas and possibilities, some of which grew beyond our expectations into exotic creations! Big shout out to Ann Wright for the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in Riverfront Park! And to Seattle Chapter 92 for much-appreciated financial backing. Tacoma Chapter 134’s installation of Arlington Northwest was another over-the-top event.

Before heading into a fall retreat for reorganizing and re-focused planning, we accepted the invitation to join the Student Climate Strike on September 20, with the Sunrise Movement and Spokane 350. Our lifestyles must become Fossil Free immediately!

The fantastic opening of Ron Carver’s Waging Peace in Viet Nam exhibit held in Spokane at the start of the convention is the way all conventions should begin; we plan to support a reading of the companion book at our own independent Aunties Bookstore soon.

Meanwhile, Operation Mobility Guardian is taking place at nearby Fairchild AFB. War planes have been gathering since September 9. The expense and the pollution are unacceptable. And the American Redout is strapping up, locking, and loading in a five-state area.

Care 4 Peace 4 All! Hollis Higgins

#046 – MONTEREY, CA

On September 21, Chapter 42 members gathered in West Hartford to observe UN International Peace Day. The organizing group, Campaign Non Violence, has been supported by Rev. John Dear, a member of VFP’s Board of Advisors.

Dave Iono and Steve Fourner continue to produce their Hartford Public Access TV show, Voices of Veterans.

Jim Brasile

#055 – SANTA FE, NM

The Joan Duffy Chapter continues to prepare for the 2020 National VFP Convention to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in collaboration with the Albuquerque chapter. We are coordinating with another peace organization that is setting up for a demonstration at Los Alamos in the same timeframe as our convention to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

We have contacted a local movie theater to show the documentary, An Endless War: Getting Out of Afghanistan, presently scheduled to run on October 23.

We will walk in the Armistice Day Parade here in Santa Fe, where we have always been well received!

We continue to hold regular street vigils on the corner of St. Francis and Cerrillos Road in Santa Fe. Many thanks to our associate members who provide a great deal of help to make this happen. Ruth Sabiers and French Leger

#057 – GREEN MOUNTAIN, VT

Summer activities of Will Miller Green Mountain Chapter 57 consisted of participating in three parades with seven signs reading, “Stop the U.S. Wars in: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and Niger.” We marched with these signs in the Montpelier and Warren 4th of July parades, and in the Northfield Labor Day parade, where we march behind 1200–plus military cadets from Norwich University.

Along with 35 other cosponsoring organizations, Chapter 57 participated in a protest rally in Burlington, Vermont, where F-35s are to be based starting this month. Several speakers spoke out against the detrimental local impacts of the basing (health-threatening noise, risk of accidents, potential target of the area by enemy strikes due to the nuclear capability of the F-35). I spoke out against the whole F-35 program as it promotes an escalation in militarization around the world. The Department of Defense’s Foreign Military Sales Program is aggressively marketing the F-35 around the world, having sold and/or established contracts with nine countries, with potential sales to eight other countries. I argued that the billions of dollars wasted on F-35s would better be used to cope with the climate crisis.

Richard Czaplinski

#069 – SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Chapter 69 member Paul Cox is the recipient of The Howard Zinn Lifetime Achievement Award for 2019, awarded during the VFP convention in Spokane, Washington. The award is to recognize a person who has made significant and outstanding contributions to the cause of peace, and made exceptional efforts to increase public awareness of the cost of war.

Paul is a founding member of Veterans Speakers Alliance in San Francisco. He was the chief organizer of VFP Chapter 69. He is one of a few people who have worked to put together the annual Viet Nam Tour hosted by Chapter 160. He is president of Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute. He is on the Board of Directors of Swords To Plowshares. He is chairman of the San Francisco War Memorial Commission. He is a member of the Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility campaign. He is a civil engineer with an unsurpassed capacity for detail and quick solutions. He is compassionate and helpful and does not hesitate to go out of his way for another person regardless of their station in life.

Here’s to Paul Cox!

Chapter 69’s award-winning Paul Cox. A jolly good fellow! [Photo: Mike S. James]

Denny Riley

continued on page 18…

The Sonoma County VFP Chapter 71 information booth occupied a prominent spot in Petaluma’s Walnut Park at the 22nd Progressive Festival. Supplying printed material and talking to many of the 500 in attendance were Chapter 71 President Fred Puchta, Dominick Favuzzi, Bob Bulwa, and Terry McNeill. The main topics of interest for those who visited the booth were the war economy and how it is affecting North Bay residents, the continued on page 18…

The Sonoma County VFP Chapter 71 information booth occupied a prominent spot in Petaluma’s Walnut Park at the 22nd Progressive Festival. Supplying printed material and talking to many of the 500 in attendance were Chapter 71 President Fred Puchta, Dominick Favuzzi, Bob Bulwa, and Terry McNeil. The main topics of interest for those who visited the booth were the war economy and how it is affecting North Bay residents, the
Chapter 71, Sonoma County, CA, continued…

Afghan war in its 17th year, and how military spending could influence the 2020 elections.

Sonoma Chapter members participated in a Living Peace Church ceremony in Sebastopol, California, on September 7, and in Santa Rosa events organized as part of the worldwide Strike for Climate Action on September 20. In the works is a presentation Santa Rosa events organized as part of the worldwide Strike for Climate Action on September 20. In the works is a presentation Sonoma events organized as part of the worldwide Strike for Climate Action on September 20. In the works is a presentation.

VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

## #090 – Broome County, NY

For Memorial Day 2019, Chapter 90 organized a special event at Mark Twain’s grave in Elmira, New York. After a short-lived stint as a soldier for the Confederacy, Twain decided he didn’t want to kill anyone and so, as he put it, “I skedaddled.” Two of our chapter members, Rev. Art Suggs, our Chaplain, and Jim Dune, a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, read and acted out Twain’s famous prose poem, The War Prayer. Area TV covered the event and followed us afterward to film Chapter 90 Vice President Larry Evans laying flowers on his great-great-great-great uncle’s Union Army grave. Curiously, it was just a few feet away from the massive Elmira National Cemetery where 3,000 Confederate soldiers are buried. Those soldiers, who died by the thousands between late summer 1864 and late spring 1865, were POWs in Elmira, and called their disease-ridden frozen ground, Hellmira.

On Hiroshima Day, August 6, VFP Chapter 90 worked with Peace Action of Broome County and the First Congregational Church to create the First Annual Children’s Peace Fair. It was a huge success. It was so great to see children streaming into the outdoor event to first ring a huge ground bell to remember the tragedy of August 6, 1945, and then join in a celebration of peace and hope that included music, dance, live parrots, games of peace, contests for the best sidewalk chalk drawings of peace symbols, and painting of rocks to take home as souvenirs or in public parks.

We look to the children for a peaceful 21st century. They have known war all their lives. We think they know the truth—that war is not the answer—and this 2 generation will become not warriors but truly, the greatest generation.

Jack Gilroy

## #091 – San Diego, CA

San Diego Chapter 91 has had an active summer and looks forward to a whole host of fall activities. On Memorial Day, May 27, we set up our Hometown Arlington West Memorial at the USS Midway Museum downtown, honoring the nearly 300 service men and women from Southern California fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our chapter continues to support Chapter 176 in Tijuana, Mexico, with goods and visits. With them, we support the many undocumented folks who remain trapped in Tijuana while awaiting hearings in the U.S.

On July 13, members of Chapter 91 walked in the San Diego Pride Parade, the largest event of its kind in San Diego. We continue to raise funds to buy new Coleman sleeping bags, which we hand out to the estimated 1,000 homeless folks in downtown San Diego. We’ve distributed 4,200 sleeping bags to date since December 2010.

Now in our fourth year of educating the public on the many downsides of the popular Miramar Air Show held here in late September, we have been demonstrating twice weekly at two freeway overpasses, while gaining press coverage and local group endorsements each year.

We look forward to our traditional fall activities and hope to continue being a beacon for peace and justice in this heavily military-oriented city.

Gilbert Field

## #104 – Evansville, IN

Chapter 104 modernized our website <vfpevansville.org> in 2019; it is being maintained admirably by John Michael O’Leary. Another big change; we voted to hold quarterly, rather than monthly, business meetings, and began hosting public presentations in between to better acquaint locals with our mission. Well attended with lively Q&A sessions, presentations included:

- February 28: “Elections Have Consequences,” presented by Political Science professors Robert Dion (University of Evansville) and Matthew Hanka (University of Southern Indiana).
- August 22: “Militarism and the Environment,” presented by Science Prof. Dr. Edith Hardcastle (Univ. of Southern Indiana).

Our 11th annual Armistice Day observance will feature author Suzanne Gordon and VFP Board President Gerry Condon as the main speakers. Gordon is an award-winning journalist whose latest book is, Wounds of War: How the VA Delivers Health, Healing, and Hope to the Nation’s Veterans. Condon, a Viet Nam-era veteran and war resistor who spent six years in Sweden and Canada after refusing orders to Viet Nam, has a long history in the veterans peace movement.

Bill Christofferson
Chapter 104, Evansville, IN, continued...

In April our annual “Pasta for Peace” fundraiser was a tremendous success, thanks to events chair Mark Atchison. At our Spring Cookout at the local VA Clinic on May 15, we provided hot dogs, drinks, and snacks for clinic attendees and staff.

Thanks to the hard work of member Lynn Kinkade, we produced two PSA videos featuring local members, “Peace Is Possible” and “Why Veterans For Peace,” which National graciously promoted for us. Member Leslie Eades and Matt Wagner helped us gain extra recognition and funding through the local Roller Derby Veterans’ event on July 20, where members Alan Williamson and Stan Lightner made our presence known.

#106 – Dallas, TX

Bre Jackson, Zen Biasco, and Bob Fusinato, flanked by Olinka Green and counter-protesting activities.

Greetings from Ventura County! Here are a few humble actions that keep our 15-year-old chapter going.

Two members attended a joint Veterans Administration-U.S. Representative-sponsored meeting informing us of the guidelines for the new VA Mission Act, listening to grievances, and announcing the planned expansion and upgrade of our area’s VA outpatient clinic.

One member continues to work in counterrecruiting, including making an annual check of VFP brochure literature supplies in nine area high schools.

We participated in the annual Juneteenth Festival in the city of Oxnard. Members continue to support anti-gun violence rallies and efforts, including a visit with a local California State Assembly member.

We have contributed $100 each to individuals promoting solutions to immigration and climate change. VFP associate member, Cindy Pester (vfpcampaignaction@gmail.com), has created a climate change presentation from the perspective of U.S. Military involvement. Former VFP national Vice-President, Sharon Kupeik, encouraged a national tour. Cindy is also anticipating membership in a possible VFP National Climate Working Group.

In July, Marine veteran and chapter president Joe Acevedo arranged for tabling at a Native American Pow-Wow. Joe also attended this year’s national convention in Spokane. Occurring on the same weekend as the convention was our local celebration, the 50th anniversary of Woodstock! (Michael Cervantes)

We’re part of a campaign against war with Iran and have demonstrated at city hall, on a busy Dallas street corner, and on a freeway overpass bridge adjacent to the Bush Presidential Center (“Lie-bury”).

The Islamic Association of Collin County very generously put on two garage sales benefitting VFP Chapter 106. Thanks to Dr. Shahrukh Kureishi for organizing!

We are participating in the #GlobalClimateStrike and, most recently, joined light brigades to display messages promoting the #GlobalClimateStrike at Fort Worth’s Federal Building, the Tarrant County Courthouse—and in the street. The same night, the NRA was holding its “Personal Protection Expo” at the Ft. Worth Convention Center, and VFP 106 was there to project the message NRA ENABLES DOMESTIC TERRORISTS onto the building.

Member Leslie Harris

#112 – Ventura County, CA

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Member Leslie Harris

#113 – Hawaii

Chapter 113 participated in the first Veterans Summit Conference in Hawaii in June where we met members of many other veterans organizations in Hawaii.

Chapter member Ann Wright was in Hilo, Hawaii, with VFP President Gerry Condon and Golden Rule Operations Manager Helen Jaccard to greet the VFP historic anti-nuclear sailing ship, The Golden Rule, upon her arrival after her 20-day voyage from San Diego. The Golden Rule will be in Hawaii until early December, when she sets sail for the Marshall Islands, the site of 54 U.S. nuclear detonations in the 1950s and ’60s. We also hope to have a VFP delegation in Japan to greet the Golden Rule when she arrives in Hiroshima in August 2020 to participate in events surrounding the 75th annual commemoration of the horrific U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Chapter member Pete Doktor attended the VFP convention in Spokane with members of Okinawa Chapter 1003 and Heno- ko (anti-base) supporters.

Ann was on the Veterans For Peace delegation to Nicaragua in July and also spoke in Guantánamo, Cuba, in May at the sixth seminar on the abolition of foreign military bases. She was citizen-to-citizen diplomacy delegations to Iran and Russia this year.

Ann Wright

Pete Doktor, Sandy Yee, and Ann Wright represented Veterans For Peace at the first Hawaii’s Veterans Summit in June.

#114 – Sheboygan, WI

Chapter 114’s 96-year-old WWII vet, Mr. John Behlen, waved to thousands of cheering fans from a 1931 Auburn roadster (owned and driven by Jim Nicholson) in the 2019 Sheboygan Memorial Day parade.

Greetings from the freshwater surfing capital of the Midwest. This has been a busy year for our small chapter. On March 30, we hosted our 15th annual Concert for Peace and Justice at the 8th Street Ale Haus in Sheboygan, where musicians donated time and talent to entertain and inform a packed house full of local lefties, progressives, and peaceniks.

On a chilly Memorial Day, fourteen of our members marched in our city’s parade. Signage focused on PTSD and veteran suicides.

We continue to support development of our local peace park, Associate member Frank Koczan and his wife Mary have devoted many hours to the effort. One unique feature is a special path honoring heroes of peace and justice, using 37 engraved paver stones. Names on these stones will include well-known individuals such as John Locke, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as less famous people like Paul Robeson, Oscar Romero, and James Chipman, who led the struggle for civil rights and fair-housing laws in Milwaukee in the 1960s. (We will invite his widow, Peggy Rozga, 2019–2020 Poet Laureate of Wisconsin, to speak at the unveiling of his stone.)

At the urging of two new members, we revived our “Free Speech Corner” demonstrations for the first time in ten years, addressing a different topic each month—“War with Iran” in July, “Justice for Migrants” in August, and “Climate Crisis” in September.

Peace Out!

Tom Contrestan

continued on page 22...
#149 – MEMPHIS, TN

On September 19, 2019, Memphis Veterans For Peace Chapter 149 planted a Peace Pole at the First Congregational Church, Part of Campaign Nonviolence Memphis, the ceremony involved peaceful and productive ways.

Speakers included: Alexis Pugh, director of the Memphis Animal Services, which has greatly improved its rate of adoption in the past few years; Stephanie Rollen, Coordinator of the First Congregational Church Food Ministry, which has served 20,000 hot meals to the hungry, and provided groceries for 8,400 families throughout the community; Edith Ornelas, Coordinator of Mariposas Collective, which organized relief for the influx of asylum seekers at the Memphis bus station last fall, providing food, clothing and toiletries to thousands of migrants monthly; and Brad Watkins, Executive Director of the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, who works with the Memphis Living Wage Campaign, the Coalition Against Private Prisons, and the campaign to end the war in Iraq.

The seven-foot-tall VFP Peace Pole displays the message “May Peace Be In Our Communities” in English and seven other languages. More than 200,000 Peace Poles have been placed around the world in 200 countries.

#160 – HANOI, VIET NAM

Veterans For Peace Chapter 160, the Hanoi Branch, hosted an 11-person group of VFP members (including VFP National President Gerry Condon), and guests on a busy and productive tour of Viet Nam from September 7 through 22, in which the delegation met with a number of Vietnamese officials and with the United States Ambassador to Viet Nam, Dan Kellenbrink. The theme of the tour was to work on remedies for the legacy of the American War in Viet Nam—the after-effects of Agent Orange, unexploded ordnance, and massive numbers of Vietnamese MIA’s. The group was led by Chapter 160 President Chuck Seany, Chapter 160 Secretary-Treasurer David Clark, and Paul Cox, a longtime member of VFP San Francisco Chapter 69 who also serves on the board of Chapter 160.

A full report of this tour will appear in the Winter issue of the VFP Newsletter.

Robert Neuman

#162 – EAST BAY, CA

Chapter 162 members Cathe and Fred Norman and Janet Chisholm attended the Hiroshima Day anti-nuclear demonstration at Lawrence Livermore Labs in Livermore, California, on August 6, joining Denny Riley and Paul Cox from San Francisco VFP Chapter 69.

Eugene Ruyte continues his efforts to spread the word about peace and VFP at UC Berkeley. He is assisted in this by volunteers from the Oscar Grant organization, Students Against Fascism, and folks from Peoples Park.

Daniel Borgstrom continues to work with Radio Station KPFA to promote programs for peace.

Maurice Martin presented workshops at the recent VFP convention in Spokane on both Homeless Vets and Deported Vets. He joined a fact-finding tour to Nicaragua in an effort to explore the illegal intervention by the USA in the government affairs of the Nicaraguan people. He also participated in the fall gathering and training of military counterrecruitment presenters in San Francisco, along with Grandmas Against the War and the Raging Grannies, to speak out about alternatives to military service. This program is aimed at middle and high school students.

We still have a few VFP license plate frames to sell. Contact Cathe Norman at 925-858-9153.

Cathe Norman

#168 – LOUISVILLE, KY

The Louisville chapter continues to produce our Veterans For Peace Radio Hour program, broadcast monthly on the fourth Monday (4pm), Tuesday (7pm), and Wednesday (8am), on WFMP 106.5 FM, and available for streaming or download at <forwardradio.org>. Recent shows have covered militarism and climate change, fraud in the DoD, and VFP news—all hosted by member Patrick King—and member John Wilborn did a show on American exceptionalism.

Members Carol Rawert Trainer and Harold Trainer participated in Congressman Tim Ryan’s (D-OH) event with Mom’s Demand Common Sense for Gun Control. Carol has been organizing support for our peace efforts via the Give For Good Louisville campaign. Harold had a letter to the editor published in the Louisville Courier-Journal titled “Trump’s Economy.” Both Carol and Harold tabled for VFP at the at a local Minor League baseball game. Harold contributed to member Hart Hogan’s Climate Report (also on WFMP) with a report titled “Cost of War in the U.S. and the Middle East.” Hart’s show takes on issues essential to understanding emerging issues central to war and peace in the twenty-first century and can be downloaded at <forwardradio.com>. Member Steven Gardiner spoke on “Consequences of 9/11” on the Sound and Fury show on IBISRADIO on Wednesday, September 11.

Steven Gardiner

#182 – TIJUANA, BAJA, MEXICO

On Saturday, September 21, Veterans For Peace Sgt. Barrios Memorial Chapter 182 had the honor of leading the UN International Day of Peace march in Mexico carrying the Mexican flag and an American flag with a peace sign instead of stars. It was very humbling to be allowed to carry this flag and represent a great peace organization, Veterans For Peace.

Veterans For Peace lead the way in the UN International Day of Peace procession in Mexico.

Robert Vivar
Bagram Air Base to Kabul, in that claustrophobic personnel carrier. Once again I witnessed humanitarian and environmental catastrophies on a grand scale. Kabul had all the potential to be a glorious, high-altitude city which I caught small glimpses of in the faces of hard-working, family-loving Afghans and in the magnificent mosques and rose gardens and pomegranate trees at the presidential palace and American embassy. The vast majority of what I witnessed, however, was orphaned children, starving and disease stricken; amputees and heroin addicts spare-changing on the pavement in rush hour traffic; roadside bakers with their Provost Marshals Office insignia and soot from endless convoys of MRAPS and armored cars. It occurred to me that military intervention had been tried endlessly in both of these dystopian landscapes, not just in the recent U.S. occupations, but for decades before; it simply wasn’t working. I began to feel ashamed; it was obvious that I had fallen into the wrong side of history. I had become an imperial stormtrooper. Even worse, as a propagandist, I was constantly emotionally and mentally compromised in the most valuable role.

After a year in Kabul leading armored convoys, rubbing elbows with generals and Pentagon officials, and propping up that horrific status quo, I returned to the States and shortly thereafter received orders to Defense Media Activity at Fort Meade, Maryland. My career as a Navy Communications Specialist was bright! I was highly decorated among my peers, Air Warfare qualified, with strong evaluations describing me as a “rising star.” I was being groomed to become senior management and had every opportunity to do so. It was just all wrong though. All shiny exterior but deeply corrupt and festering inside. As much as I enjoyed the salary, benefits, and camaraderie, I knew I had to go.

After finally separating from the military a few years later, I drifted back to Ohio and struggled to make sense of my place in history and how I got there. Sitting off the flightline of my military career, I’m still very much battling those dark experiences and ensuing negative self-talk while slowly taking steps toward healing. The progress I so desperately need to alleviate the shame and conflict in my heart has come partly from my understanding of history, imperialism, militarism, and the blind allegiance endlessly in both of these dystopian landscapes, not just in the recent U.S. occupations, but for decades before; it simply wasn’t working. I began to feel ashamed; it was obvious that I had fallen into the wrong side of history. I had become an imperial stormtrooper. Even worse, as a propagandist, I was constantly emotionally and mentally compromised in the most valuable role.

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When I left the military at the age of 23, all I could do for a while was focus on basic survival within an imperialistic nation. I became a vegetarian, joined food co-ops, and managed cheap rents for homes, and experimented with psychedelics, mainly mushrooms and mescaline. Other things that helped were good of American music, reading books, some very understanding people, a great Grandma, and being polite. I am a parent to a grown son and friend to a few young ones. I went through employment like crazy. I do not lay claim to any trade. I keep moving forward.

I joined VVAW in the late 1970s, then dropped away. Then, during the Reagan Authority, I learned of Veterans For Peace through a friend and joined in 1986. I was aware of the military that I would not just join anything. Well, here I be, and I am a Life Member.

As a young veteran I walked a lot. I did walkabouts by myself for about 12 years. I just kept returning to nature to share my grief and anger. Later I began walking with others. I participated in two spiritual walks this year. Both these walks help me to deal with my shame.

The Sacred Peace Walk (Nevada Desert Experience) was from Las Vegas, Nevada, to the Nuclear Test site. This action was put on during the week of Easter, and culminated with civil disobedience leading to arrests on Easter Sunday. The Northwest Peace Walk was put on by Rev. Senji Kanaeda Nipponzan Myohoji Temple and the Nevada/Oregon/Washington Catholic Workers, with one lone Quaker assisting in Salem. We caravanned and walked starting in Eugene. From there we went to Corvallis, Salem, Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, ferried over to Bainbridge Island, and finished at Ground Zero (G2.org), next door to Naval Base Kitsap. We assembled a good crowd at the gate to this nuclear naval base. Three VFP fellows numbered among those who finished. Dave Patterson and I were together for both walks; Victor White joined us in Seattle for the NW Peace Walk. The final ceremony for the NW Peace Walkers was at Green Lake in Seattle, where we gathered to honor the victims of the two atomic bombs dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Br. Sengi Kanaeda led our group in prayer and Buddhist drums. At the end our group began the floating of the lit candle lanterns. VFP Seattle tabled at this event.

So yes, I live with anger and being pissed off about the lies that keep issuing forth. And being in the streets helps me a lot. In the last five years I have made some good bonds with VFP members through the Golden Rule project, attending the annual conventions, and participating in public actions sponsored by VFP, Catholic Workers, and Code Pink.

Showing up is key! See you in the streets!

RAY CAGE
WALKING IT OFF
MEMBER AT LARGE SINCE 1988

I am a 72-year-man and a Viet Nam combat veteran. Anger is always present within my core being, though the terms be- long to the medical field. Moral Injury and PTSD are the reality for many of us. Denial is a cruel world, and not taking respon- sibility for one’s action is also cruel. I have had to find my own way to deal with the emotional pain.

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Showing up is key! See you in the streets!
"Why I endorse the F-35 in Vermont, sort of...”

by Namaya

“The only purpose of war is make the rich richer and the poor poorer.”
—Major General S. Butler USMC

There is a big NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) brouhaha about the F-35 being stationed in Burlington, Vermont. The plane has certainly lived up to the accusation as Fubar-35 (flipped up beyond all rationality) and the environmental pollution and deafening noise are certainly factors to consider. Lockheed Martin and the Pentagon know the plane is a disaster; nevertheless, it’s a bonanza for the military-industrial mafia: Pratt Whitney, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, and hundreds of military suppliers. Contrary to reason, I say bring this noisy mechanical economic failure here to our Green Mountain State! In every sacred valley, let the sound of the F-35 shake the foundations of our NIMBY bias; 24/7, 365 days of the year, like Paul Revere riding through the night to alarm his fellow patriots, let this plane roar like the dinosaur it is!

The words fiasco, disaster, boondoggle, military-industrial-corporate heist, and egregious personification of vulture mentality (and the environmental pollution and deafening noise) are certainly factors to consider. The words fiasco, disaster, boondoggle, and everyone in between: Let us bring the F-35 to our beautiful green mountains. Let all the F-35s scream across Vermont! Let us learn that war is not some abstract notion of “over there,” but consider the true costs and consequences of the F-35 and the war machine.

When we neither see nor feel the consequences of war, then we can walk with impunity. Though the USA has military bases in over 150 countries around the world, we rarely see the impact here at home. Until war is an equal opportunity offender that impacts every person, the people in those countries are killed, they are called terrorists. When children in those countries are killed, they are called terrorists in training. When we neither see nor feel the consequences of war, then we can walk with impunity. Though the USA has military bases in over 150 countries around the world, we rarely see the impact here at home. Until war is an equal opportunity offender that impacts every person, the people in those countries are killed, they are called terrorists. When children in those countries are killed, they are called terrorists in training.

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Namaya is a member of Veterans For Peace and a U.S. Navy, Viet Nam-era veteran who writes from Blue Heron Pond, Vermont.

Update from Ireland: Boots on the Ground walk concluded

U.S. military veterans Tarak Kauff and Ken Mayers have finished three weeks of Boots on the Ground for Freedom, in which they walked through Ireland to support Ireland’s neutrality, to protest its role in facilitating U.S. wars in the Middle East, and to demand that they be allowed to return home to the United States. Meanwhile, the Ennis Circuit Court postponed a key decision on moving their case to the Dublin Circuit Court, a key step in the process of getting their bail conditions changed to allow them to leave Ireland.

VFW Convention

Veterans For Peace is an international organization made up of military veterans, military family members, and allies. We accept veteran members from all branches of service. We are dedicated to building a culture of peace, exposing the true costs of war, and healing the wounds of war. Our networks are made up of over 140 chapters across the United States and abroad.

Statement of Purpose

We, as military veterans, do hereby affirm our greater responsibility to serve the cause of world peace. To this end we will work, with others both nationally and internationally...

- To increase public awareness of the causes and costs of war
- To restrain our governments from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations
- To end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons
- To seek justice for veterans and victims of war
- To abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

To achieve these goals, members of Veterans For Peace pledge to use non-violent means and to maintain an organization that is both democratic and open with the understanding that all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace.

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF VFP!

Save the Date! The next annual VFP Convention will be held August 5–9, 2020, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.
1. Bob Keilbach, Zool Zułkowicz, and Gary Davidson (Ch. 34) at the People's Mobilization to Stop the U.S. War Machine and Save the Planet Rally & March in NYC on Sunday, Sept. 22. [Photo and banner: Ellen Davidson]

2. Eduardo Krasilovsky, John Deschenes, and Daniel Craig (Ch. 55) at Climate Strike events organized by Youth United for Climate Change Action (YUCCA) on Sept. 20 in Santa Fe, NM.

3. At the Global Climate Strike in Dallas, TX, Marine veteran Zen Biasco (Ch. 106) found a perch from which to point out the U.S. military's immense contribution to the climate crisis. [Photo: Dave Jensen]

4. Cara Bissell and Alice Ritter (Ch. 13) tabled at the 2019 Youth and Peace Conference at Pima West Campus on Sept. 21 in Tucson, AZ.

5. VFP Assoc. Dia Winograd (right) at the Climate March in Santa Fe, NM.