



VETERANS FOR PEACE

Annual Report

The President's Report

As Veterans For Peace moves into our second quarter century we face new challenges both within and without. We are living in a time when imperialism is rampant, consuming the very life blood of this country. In part because of that, we have become a much bigger organization, and that happily presents its own problems – how do we want to operate, what kind of structure do we want?

When VFP was small, democracy was more or less automatic. As we have grown, if you, the members want them, we will need to bring in tools to create more democracy, maybe using new techniques like lateral communication, collective intelligence, organic decision-making. The trends of the US culture are centralization and concentration of knowledge and decision-making. The Board is working to increase fund raising at the national level to support the work of its members, but the natural consequence of that will be more of the centralization mentioned above. It becomes a choice for you, the members, do you want a national organization that sends you a letter offering you say three choices of what you can do, or do

you want a national organization that gives you the infrastructure to join with like minded members and supports you in organizing campaigns that you are passionate about. Both models are workable and both have logical repercussions on what kind of an organization we are and what work we accomplish.



For us, as veterans, it is harder and clearer; we have seen the hierarchical class ruling structure in its extreme. We know that you cannot have imperialism without it. But can you have democracy with it? Because it was infused into our bones, it is the easy way for us. On the other hand we know that democracy, lateral decision-making, and grassroots organizing are hard work.

Egypt gave us the gift of an on the news freeze-frame nonviolent revolution – a display of people power. (The media did not talk about the 3 years of grassroots organizing and training that made it happen.) It has been a source of inspiration

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Ex-President's Report: Looking Ahead



Initially, my assignment was to write about VFP's first 25 years. Given our extensive history of activism, I was relieved when your newsletter editor, Chuck Rossi, let me off with a lighter sentence. Volumes, such as Jerry Genesio's "Veterans For Peace: The First Decade," will continue to be written about our

organization.

Instead, with much satisfaction for my small part, I'll simply and humbly acknowledge the 25 years of love, dedication, energy and personal fortune that created and sustains our beloved Veterans For Peace.

However, as Oscar Wilde wrote, "I can resist anything but temptation," the temptation to prognosticate about our future is irresistible.

Luckily, current events in North Africa and US state capitals provide a "shorthand" with which to discuss timeless issues. We

can skip long analyses about how all our struggles for justice, peace, democracy, and a sustainable world are intertwined, down to the roots. It's all there, laid out before us, even in the corporate press.

The question becomes "what does this mean for VFP as a leading force in that struggle?" Among the answers, I believe, is

Ex-President's Report continued on page 19

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Spring 2011

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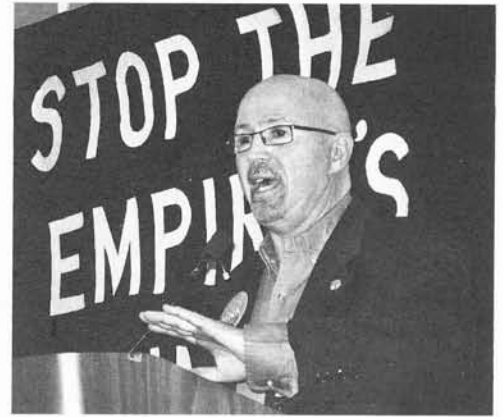
Jeanette McDermott

Shelly Rockett

Nate Wildermuth

Executive Director's Report

This is an exciting time for Veterans For Peace. The 25th Anniversary is a major benchmark for an organization. Our organization focuses on Exposing The Cost of War in military and civilian deaths; in the cost of adequate lifetime care owed to those returning with disabilities, including post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, and military sexual trauma; in family and community violence; in the human and environmental impact of depleted uranium weapons and a wide variety of chemical exposures; and in a weakened domestic economy and de-funded health, education, and other social programs. All of these are reasons we work to abolish war.



As Executive Director, it important to me that VFP expands its fundraising efforts to support both National projects and local Chapters' programs and outreach. We are doing this in the following ways:

- Enhancing the Direct Mail program by utilizing a personalized approach to our donors four times a year.
- Sending fundraising e-mail blasts for special issues / projects in the eight months that there is no direct mail sent.
- Establishing an endowment fund, The Howard Zinn Fund for Peace and Justice, in collaboration with our Chapters. It was determined that the annual income would be dispersed 80% for Chapter programs and 20% for VFP National. We are still in the process of establishing how the Chapters will apply for money through the fund.
- Initiating a Planned Giving program. Two VFP members signed the first letter sent to more than 800 members that are 70 or over. Since many of our older members do not have access to Internet we are using direct mail to contact them. A couple of weeks after this letter is mailed, we will follow up with an e-mail blast.
- Expanding the Grants Program. I anticipate that we will present 10 grants this year, primarily to foundations but also corporations and potential major donors
- Sponsoring a Hollywood Fundraiser. Because of Howard's relationship with Matt Damon and the Hollywood community, supporters there are sponsoring a celebrity gathering to celebrate VFP's 25th Anniversary and the West Coast kick-off of The Howard Zinn Fund for Peace and Justice. This is an area that we hope will develop major donors to support our projects and programs.

As we move ahead to expand our fundraising outreach, it is important to us that we comply with both GuideStar and Better Business Bureau standards to assure our potential donors that they are investing in a worthwhile organization.

As we move into the next 25 years, it is our goal to elevate the veteran's voice to continue to Expose The True Cost Of War.

Dennis Lane



Members: the Lifeblood of VFP

VFP chapters and individual members are turning their passions into truly exciting actions for peace. See for yourself.

Inspired by the goal in VFP's statement of purpose "to end the arms race," John Amidon (Chapter 010) has embarked upon a 63-mile Sacred Peace Walk through the Mohave Desert to raise awareness about nuclear testing at the Nevada Test Site. Ending the arms race is also an imperative for VFP's northern California chapters. At their regional conference in March, Fredy and Sherry Champagne presented a workshop on the efforts of Chapter 22 to restore the famed anti-nuclear peace boat "Golden Rule." So far seven VFP chapters have backed the project. Chapter 112 has fully embraced the Earth Charter as a sister peace organization, and the Smedley Butler Chapter (009) is singing for peace in a new music video that Pat Scanlon is organizing.

Some chapters are getting creative about memberships too. Sante Fe (Chapter 055) is transforming lapsed members into ac-

tively engaged renewed members through highly successful, good old fashioned telephone calling. Other members are finding a way to drive less distance to meetings by forming new chapters closer to home. Five VFP chapters are currently being formed. Our newest chapter is 162 East Bay, California, and it won't be long before a chapter sprouts in Knoxville, Tennessee.

Ceremonies and actions abound freely throughout VFP. Chapter 41 is celebrated its renaming as the Corporal Jeffrey M. Lucey Chapter on March 18 by bringing the community of Cape Cod together.

But beyond the events that stand out, VFP members are engaged routinely in small acts of waging peace through Working Groups, national committees, chapter management, and hundreds of local peace projects. Members are the lifeblood of VFP and they're charging head on into the next 25 years of our history.

Jeanette McDermott

Chapter Outreach Coordinator

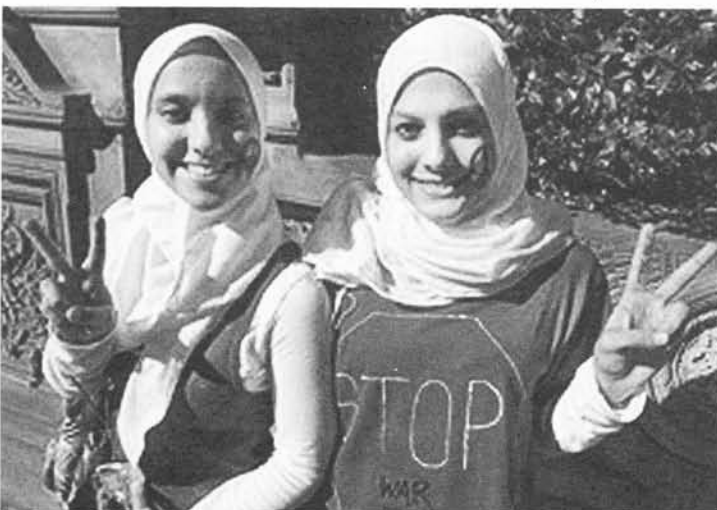
New Lifetime Members in 2010

Paul Appell
Medea Benjamin
Robert Bowes III
Severyn Bruyn
Craig Fabian
Lynn Gilbert
Richard Gilchrist
William Gilson
Leslie Harris
Susan Joseph
Margarita Asencio Lopez
Larry Maxwell
Robert McElwain
Ron Saeger
Steve Saelzler
Peter B. Shaw
Nancy Sindelar

Gifts Received in Honor Of

Lt. Frank Baker Jr.
Thompson Bradley
Walter Cereoli
Anthony Ciaramella
Michael Cohn
Rachel Corrie
Francis Egan
Harry Felsenthal
Thomas J. Fraser
Joe Gingrich
John Goss
Michael Gray
Bob Hennel
Robert Clark Johnson
Sanford Kelson
Lt. Henry G. Lee

1st Lt. Jack R. Lichte Jr.
John McCluskey
O'Kelly McCluskey
Michael McPhearson & Deborah Jacobs
Gordon Arthur Miller
Andrew Eric Norell
Ed Pita
Rhea Schauben
William Shea
Meryl Sundove
Miriam Thomas
Curt Verstegen
Gary Voelker
John Ward
David Williams Mack & Paul Mack



Afghan women who received the gift of clean water from VFP's Iraq Water Project in 2010.

Newsletter

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Treasurer's Report

2010 was pretty dismal financially for Veterans For Peace. We had a deficit of \$51,247 for the year, which seriously depleted our reserve funds. This situation is not sustainable. The Executive Director has kept expenses below budget, but our donations were about \$75,000 below budget. We continue to have a major problem getting donations from beyond our membership and major donors.

We have thousands of lapsed members — former members who are not current with their dues. A telemarketing effort has begun to get these folks to renew their VFP memberships, and this is having some success. An even better idea is to have chapters organize calling the lapsed members on their roster to try to get people to renew. The few chapters who have tried this have had great success with this idea.

There is also a telemarketing effort aimed at the thousands who signed our Impeach Bush petition a few years ago. The goal here is to break even (it costs a lot of money to do telemarketing) and get new donors outside VFP for the future. This effort is achieving this so far.

Despite fears by some that raising dues to \$40 would lead to a membership decrease, membership has actually slightly increased in the past 6 months.

The Executive Director has applied for various grants, and by the time you read this there will have been a fundraising party in Hollywood, which has potential to raise significant money for VFP. If you have not yet made a 3 year 25th anniversary pledge to VFP, I urge you to do so. If you would like a copy of the 2010 Treasurer's Report, email me at nateg@pobox.com.

Nate Goldshlag



Greetings from the Newest Staff Member

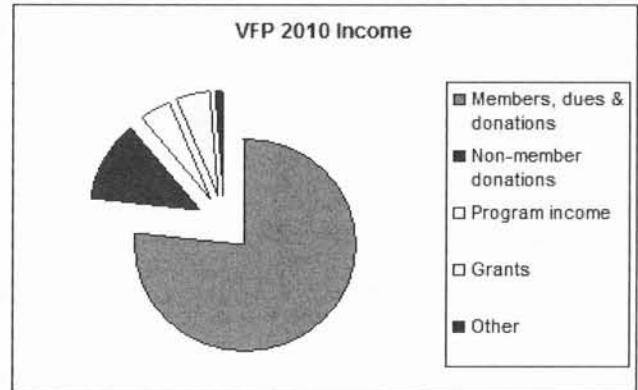
I am the newest member of the Veterans for Peace staff and am thrilled to be part of a professional team dedicated to serving our 120 chapters. Since joining VFP, I've come to understand how special, unique, and essential our mission is: "to abolish war as an instrument of national policy." More important I've discovered the true treasure of VFP -- its members. Where else can one find veterans from all ages and places all fighting together against not only some wars, but all wars? There are few places where I feel as truly at home.

I enlisted into the US Army in February of 2000 and was honorably discharged as a Conscientious Objector in December of 2003. Trained as an Army Ranger and then as a West Point cadet, I came to the slow realization that I could not take another human being's life. Moreover, I refused to be a mercenary of the United States Military-Industrial Complex, making the world safe for Exxon-Mobile and J.P. Morgan. The process of leaving the Army was long and complex, but I took courage by walking in the footsteps of conscientious objectors from Vietnam, Korea, and WW II. I'm currently writing a memoir about my experience, in the hopes that more men and women can be inspired to resist war with us.

In the meantime, many of you will be hearing from me personally. I will be contacting you to encourage you to remain actively

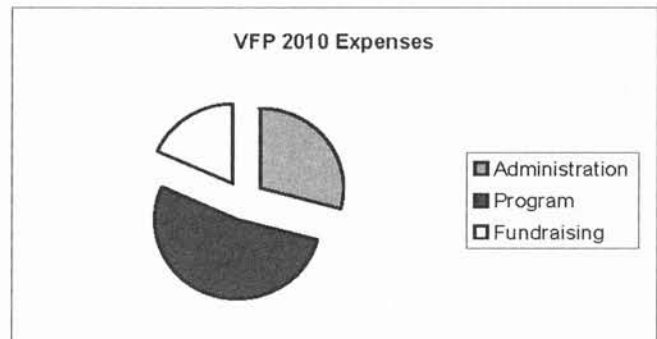
VFP 2010 Income

	Amount	%
Members, dues & donations	215,179.00	77%
Non-members donations	34,915.00	12%
Program income	13,752.00	5%
Grants	13,750.00	5%
Other	3,285.00	1%
	280,881.00	100%



VFP 2010 Expenses

Administration	130,140.00	26%
Program	233,630.00	57%
Fundraising	81,974.00	17%
	445,744.00	



involved with VFP, and I strongly encourage you to become even more involved. I also feel a special responsibility to reach out to the younger veterans, who only need our support to speak out against warmaking.

Nate Wildermuth



March 19/20 and Solidarity Actions

Iraq is still in ruins, and the US continues its occupation, will continue to have military bases and therefore powerful political influence over the Iraqi people as long as the US is an imperial empire, enforcing dominance and exploitation of other people with brutal military and corporate power.

In Afghanistan, another area of US aggression, Kathy Kelly informs us, on March 1st of "The apparent unconcern of the crews of two US helicopter gunships, which attacked and killed nine children on a mountainside in Afghanistan's Kumar province, shooting them "one after another." Four of the boys were seven years old; three were eight, one was nine and the oldest was twelve."

And here, torture has come home to roost, vividly and without apologies. On the evenings of March 2 and March 3, Bradley Manning was forced to strip naked, remaining under observation in this condition within his cell for seven hours each night.

So how bad does it have to get before we can get masses of vets in Washington DC to say with our bodies that we won't stand for it any more?

Chris Hedges writes in *No Other Way Out*, "We will not stop the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, we will not end this slaughter of innocents, unless we are willing to rise up as have state workers in Wisconsin and citizens on the streets of Arab capitals. Repeated and sustained acts of civil disobedience are the only weapons that remain to us."

On the Stop These Wars web site, www.stopthesewars.org, we have not been actively promoting and/or encouraging solidarity actions. Why not, some people ask. Of course, it's a difficult call. On the one hand, we want to encourage all forms of nonviolent resistance but considering the dire circumstances and the call to gather specifically at the White House in Washington DC and the next day at Quantico, where Bradley Manning is being held, we don't think promoting "solidarity" actions, especially on the East Coast on that same weekend, is appropriate. We feel it's essential to encourage as many people as possible to mass at the White House and Quantico. The man is literally being tortured. Torture, as we knew it would, has come home to America in stark relief. If this doesn't demand mass action at the White House and directly outside the gates of Quantico then what does? We question whether promoting local "in solidarity" actions as a option tends to draw people away from the epicenter. Of course, if one cannot travel outside of his or her local area, what can you do? But many can, and many make the choice to stay local, if given an option. Yes, it's a sacrifice of time, money and effort to travel but this is a time for sacrifice, a time for all of us to leave our comfort zones, as others did in Cairo and Wisconsin. Here's what I wrote recently to the veterans lists about local or national actions.

"Local or National? Always a big question. On an important days like March 19/20 do we stay local or travel to the major centers of resistance? Sometimes you have no option but to stay local. However the ripple effects of large mass resistance in Washington DC are far greater than numerous smaller ones locally."

It's not a question of competition between actions, we have to think in terms of strategy, where our bodies will do the most good. Is massing in one specific and central place more politically power-

ful than many smaller groups spread over a larger area? Tahrir Square in Cairo and the Capitol in Madison, Wisconsin, gave us good insight into that question.

When an issue is national and global, such as the wars and occupations overseas, where our own soldiers, Afghani, Iraqi, and Pakistani women, children and men are dying every day because of US policy, where Bradley Manning is being tortured, humiliated, driven perhaps out of his mind, by inhuman sadistic treatment, then we need to be where the action is. In my opinion, that's Washington DC and Quantico.

They say every letter that a congressman gets represents many more. The same is true for civil resistance in the Empire's capitol. One pretty broke veteran from over a thousand miles away told me last year, he was coming to do civil resistance with us, damn it, if he had to walk all the way. I don't know how he made it, but he was there standing shoulder to shoulder as the snow was falling at the White House fence on December 16th.

In Solidarity for peace and justice,

Tarak Kauff
Veterans For Peace
Maury Colow Woodstock Chapter



Costs of War: Ides of March 2011

Total Cost of Wars Since 2001

\$1,166,505,075,936

Source: <http://costofwar.com/en/>

Department of Defense Press Release

No. 208-11

March 15, 2011

DOD Identifies Army Casualty

The Department of Defense announced today the death of a soldier who was supporting Operation Enduring Freedom.

Pfc. Arturo E. Rodriguez, 19, of Bellflower, Calif., died March, 12 in Paktika province, Afghanistan, of wounds suffered when insurgents attacked his unit using small arms fire. He was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), Fort Campbell, Ky.

For more information, please contact Fort Campbell public affairs office at 931-561-0131 or 270-798-9966.

Hope: An Affirming Flame

The text of the address by Chris Hedges at the demonstration in Washington, DC, December 16, 2010, published with permission from Chris Hedges.

Hope from now on will look like this. Hope will not come in trusting the ultimate goodness of Barack Obama, who, like Herod of old, sold out his people. It will not be realized by chanting packaged campaign slogans or attempting to influence the Democratic Party. It will not come from our bankrupt liberal institutions, the press, or the withered stump that is the labor movement. Hope now will come only when we physically defy the violence of the State. All who physically resist, all who are here today, keep hope alive.

All who succumb to fear, passivity, and apathy become enemies of hope. They become in their passivity the agents of injustice. If the enemies of hope are finally victorious in this nation, the poison of violence will become not only the language of power but also the language of opposition. Those who resist here today with nonviolence are the last thin lines of defense between a civilized society and its disintegration.

Hope has a cost, hope is not comfortable or easy; hope requires personal risk. It is not about the right attitude or peace of mind. Hope is action; it is doing something. The more futile, the more useless, the more irrelevant and incomprehensible an act of rebellion is, the more potent hope becomes.

Hope never makes sense. Hope is weak, unorganized, and absurd. Hope, which is always nonviolent, exposes in its powerlessness the lies, fraud, and coercion employed by the state. Hope knows that an injustice visited on our neighbor is an injustice visited on all of us. Hope posits that people are drawn to the good by the good. This is the secret of hope's power. Hope demands for others what we demand for ourselves. Hope does not separate us from them. Hope sees in our enemies our own face. Hope is not for the practical and the sophisticated, the cynic and the complaisant, the defeated and the fearful. Hope is what the corporate state, which saturates our airwaves with lies, seeks to obliterate. Hope is what the corporate state seeks to crush. Be afraid, they tell us. Surrender your liberty to us so that we can make you free from terror. Don't resist; embrace the alienation of our cheerful conformity. Buy our products; without them you are worthless. Become our brands. Do not look up from our electronic hallucinations. No; above all, do not think. Obey.

The powerful do not understand hope; it is not part of their vocabulary. They speak in the cold, dead words of national security, global markets, electoral strategy, staying on message, image, and

money. The powerful protect their own. They divide the world into the damned and the blessed, the patriots and the enemy, the privileged and the weak. They insist that extinguishing lives in foreign wars or in our prison complexes is a form of human progress. They cannot see that the suffering of a child in Kandahar or in the blighted urban pocket of our nation's capital diminishes and impoverishes us all. They are deaf, dumb, and blind to hope. They are addicted to power, enthralled by self-exaltation, and cannot decipher the words of hope any more than most of us can decipher hieroglyphics.



Chris Hedges praising hope in the bleak mid-Winter.

Hope to Wall Street bankers and politicians, to the masters of war and commerce is not practical, it is gibberish, it means nothing, and this is because they kneel before the idols of greed and money.

If we resist and carry out acts of defiance, no matter how small, hope will not be extinguished. If all we accomplish today is to assure a grieving mother in Baghdad or Kabul, a young man or woman crippled physically or emotionally by the hammerblows of

war that he or she is not alone, our act will be successful. But hope cannot be sustained if it cannot be seen. Any act of rebellion, any physical defiance of those who make war, of those who perpetuate corporate greed and who are responsible for state crimes, anything that seeks to draw the good to the good nourishes our souls and holds out the possibility that we can touch and transform the souls of others. Hope affirms that which we must affirm, and every act that imparts hope is a victory in itself.

Defenseless under the night
Our world in stupor lies;
Yet, dotted everywhere,
Ironic points of light
Flash out wherever the Just
Exchange their messages:
May I, composed like them
Of Eros and of dust,
Beleaguered by the same
Negation and despair,
Show an affirming flame.*
Thank you.

**From: September 1, 1939 by W.H. Auden*



Chapter Reports

Retrospective on Chapter 1, Portland, ME Activities—2010

Hosting the 25th National VFP Convention dominated the year's activities for the founding chapter. As much as it was a cherished honor for which we had lobbied, it challenged our resources in every respect. Many hands made for efficient work and a fulfilling sense of accomplishment. Highlights for the host chapter included an appearance by founders Judy and Jerry Genesio, recognition of chapter member Peggy Akers for long-time commitment to peace in general and to service of the people of Portland in particular and seeing chapter leaders and masterful emcees Doug Rawlings (Opening Ceremony) and Michael Uhl (Banquet) demonstrate so clearly why the founding chapter remains a vital chapter.

In November, under the leadership of Bruce Gagnon, Mary Beth Sullivan, and Doug Rawlings, the chapter sponsored the Maine Walk for Peace, Human Needs, and Veteran Care. The event began at the University of Maine in Farmington, covered over 150 miles and passed through 43 towns. Walkers averaged 15 miles per day and, along the way, distributed literature, engaged citizens, and received substantial local media attention. The walk provided an important opportunity to continue the promotion of the Bring Our War Dollars Home campaign, an initiative led by Gagnon, which is gaining attention nationally and being replicated in other states.

In December, several members participated in the VFP-led mass demonstration at the White House. Looking ahead, the chapter is now at work organizing our 4th

Annual PTSD Symposium to be held on April 23rd.

Dud Hendrick

Chapter 15, Tallahassee, FL

The Chapter took part in the formation of the Bradley Manning Support Network, in 2010 and still heavily involved, including preparing a Bradley Manning FAQ <http://tinyurl.com/BManningFAQs>

We tabled at the School of the Americas Watch in November 2010 and at Florida State University's Radical Rush in September 2010 and February 2011. We stood with and provided logistical support to the local Free Egypt demonstrations.

We helped the "A Ride Till The End" on their way to the "Rebel With A Cause Bicycle Tour" when they can through town in February 2011.

Tom Baxter

Chapter 31, Philadelphia, PA

Philadelphia VFP Chapter 31 had a good year. As always, members spoke in high schools, colleges, and retirement facilities; also at Veterans Day and Armed Forces Day ceremonies held by veteran inmates in Graterford State Prison near Philadelphia.

In January, 2010, Chapter 31 initiated a political discussion with activists from area progressive organizations to discuss the peace movement today. Out of this discussion, we helped organize a major conference in October. The six-hour event featured two panels and an audience of over 100 people. Parts of the conference were later shown on a local TV channel.

In April, Chapter 31 participated in a weekend fair organized by Physicians For Social Responsibility called Legs Against Arms. We held our annual dinner in October. Chapter 31 is a regular entry in both the Labor Day Parade and the Gay Pride Parade.

One of our members is an area leader in keeping the landmine issue before the public; he also tirelessly lobbies the Pennsylvania state legislature, the media and other institutions advocating for beefed up gun-control laws.

Chapter members have been involved in countless demonstrations and vigils in the Philadelphia area. Members attended the School Of The Americas demonstration at Fort Benning, Georgia, this year, as they have done for many years. The VFP chapter took some credit for the closing of the Army Experience Center in a Philadelphia suburban mall.

Finally, Chapter 31 is proud of its linkage with a group called Healing Ajax, which organizes apolitical counseling programs for returning veterans with PTSD. In the fall, the chapter raised over \$10,000 for the project. Some members are now in training to be PTSD counseling volunteers in the future.

John Grant

Chapter 34, New York City

Chapter 34 has grown to 117 members, who have participated in numerous actions over the past 6 months, including support rallies for the Free Gaza flotilla, Bradley Manning, Islamic Cultural Center in downtown Manhattan, and the Egyptian People. We also attended the AFSC "Windows & Mirrors" exhibit at Queens College, National Conference to Bring the Troops Home! in Albany, and the 10/2 One Nation March and Rally in DC.

VFP Chapters 34 and 21, VVAW, IVAW, and friends were accompanied by 6 elected NY State and City representatives in the 2010 Armistice/Veterans Day Parade up Fifth Avenue. Our signs reading "Healthcare, Not Warfare" and "Fund Jobs, Not War" were deemed "too political" and ripped up by police and parade committee representatives. Our elected representatives have sent a letter to the parade committee protesting repression of our free speech rights; we expect to have greater freedom at future parades.

On December 16, we had a NYC VFP support action for those not able to go to DC; with Civil Disobedience in Times Square. 11 participants were arrested; 9 of them have chosen to go to trial in lieu of dismissal, to present their antiwar argument in court.

The Chapter has joined the Committee to Stop FBI Repression, attending a demonstration and Regional Conference. We have also been working with the New Priorities Network, which consists of 26 peace and





Chapter 34 Memorial Day Observance at Battery Park.

social justice organizations working to increase awareness of the human costs of excessive military spending.

Some upcoming events include counter-recruitment at local high schools and a Community Educational Program called "The Things We Left Behind - Long-Term Effects of War on Populations" highlighting agent orange, depleted uranium, PTSD, and land mines.

Bob Keilbach



Chapter 34 contingent at the St. Patrick's Day Parade.

Chapter 35, Spokane, WA

Chapter 35 spent many years being a telephone number and an endorser of rallies, programs, and marches sponsored by the Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane. That, of course, was not enough to make us a reliable partner of the growing and dynamic national organization. In 2010, it was finally time to step up and get back into the movement. Having had only a handful of dues-paying members for over

a decade, we started from scratch and were rechartered last August with only three of our original members from 1988. Even with e-mail, it was challenging, but we've brought together a great bunch, even if we are mostly old white men. There's a reasonable expectation for some diversity, this year. Our signature moment in 2010 was an observation of Veterans Day in Spokane's Riverfront Park. We had an open mic program, and every member present spoke eloquently and profoundly of the experiences and the vision that make VFP stand out in our community and our country.

This March, we have panel discussions that will bring us a wider audience, and we expect to be back on the streets very soon. Our officers are: President Rusty Nelson; Vice President Jerry Mueller; Secretary Tom Charles; Treasurer Gary Proctor.

Rusty Nelson

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

On Veterans Day 2010 our chapter again participated in the planning and the ceremonies at Cape Cod's largest event but this year followed with our own event. We walked from the parade site to the harbor in Hyannis and held a memorial for the nine Cape Cod soldiers killed in Iraq and Afghanistan and for the thousands of other casualties both military and civil-

ian. A name was read, a ship's bell rung and a rose dropped into the outgoing tide for each of the local fallen. There was good attendance and press coverage and we plan to make it an ongoing event as the wars and occupations continue.

Our 16th! annual Poetry for Peace Contest is in full swing with new energy and a larger leadership team. Scores of new teachers have expressed interest and we expect a record number of entrees - and a super-charged finish at our Awards Ceremony and Reading in April.

On March 3, several chapter members appeared on the local access TV show "Talking Together" speaking about VFP history as well as local and national programs. We also did some education about the PTSD epidemic among veterans and our chapter Rededication in March.

Perhaps our biggest news is our renaming and rededication of our chapter on March 18 in honor of Corporal Jeffrey M. Lucey, a 23-year-old Iraq War veteran who suffered from PTSD and in his anguish took his own life in 2004. It featured his parents, Joyce and Kevin (and also his sister), Will Hopkins of IVAW's "Operation Recovery" and the VFP National Board, other members of Military Families Speak Out, music by the Smedley Butler Brigade's Pat Scanlon and poetry by Chapter 41 poets.

Duke Ellis

Chapter 62, New Hampshire

The A. J. Muste Chapter continues to do its weekly half-hour public access show entitled "NH Veterans for Peace Speak Out" which is now in its 10th year. Besides having guests on our program, we also show longer films on the week-end such as "Anna (Baltzer) in the Middle East," and documentaries ranging from the vigils at the School of the Americas to Rick Steves' travelogue on Iran.

The Chapter is still doing "Truth-in-Recruiting" work in Manchester, NH's three public high schools as we present another perspective on military life and the costs of war. We believe we have made progress with both students and teachers in making available our brochures, buttons, bumper stickers, even books such as "Johnny Got His Gun" by Dalton Trumbo, the classic anti-war novel (upon which Metallica's song, "One," is based).

Our small group still participates in major "parades" in NH's largest city as we believe that NH VFP's presence in the Ar-

mistice Day (Veterans Day) and Memorial Day marches offers a counter-balance to the often, militaristic bent of these parades. Our reception for the past two years has been very positive which seems to indicate that citizens are reaching a point where the “addiction to war” is being weakened.

Will Thomas

Chapter 69, San Francisco, CA

The weekend of March 4, 5, and 6 saw the first-ever comprehensive Northern California regional meeting of VFP. With 10 chapters and 45 vets and associate members attending, all expectations of networking, information sharing, collaboration and inspiration were vastly exceeded! Chapter 69 encourages all other chapters to organize regional and/or statewide conferences. They really make a positive difference! Since the summer, our group has forged strong ties with the Native American community of veterans in California, who marched for the first time ever in the San Francisco Veterans’ Day Parade. Our chapter marched right behind them. We hosted a high level delegation in November from VAVA – the Viet Nam Association of Victims of Agent Orange – who traveled on to Washington, DC to advocate for legislation addressing agent orange. We are actively promoting the national print and on-line VFP newspaper “War Crimes Times” and are seeking a West Coast printer. Chapter 69 works closely with Courage to Resist (Free Bradley Manning Campaign), IVAW (Iraq Veterans Against the War), VA (Veteran Artists), Operation First Casualty (anti-war street theater by young vets), OR (Operation Recovery), and many others. Twenty-six vets and other peace activists were arrested at the San Francisco Federal Building on Dec. 16th in solidarity with the VFP-led civil disobedience at the White House on the same day. Our chapter co-sponsored the annual Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives lecture, in February, which featured Marjorie Cohen, past president of the National Lawyers’ Guild, speaking about torture and the crimes of the US government and military. Many events and actions are planned for this Spring.

Nadya Williams

Chapter 87, Sacramento, CA

The Sacramento chapter sponsors a weekly anti-war vigil every Wednesday afternoon during commute time and a monthly anti-war vigil every second Saturday evening during our city’s Second Saturday Art Walk.

In addition to our regular monthly activities, Sacramento VFP members conducted protests against the Sacramento Public Library’s use of violent war games in its video gaming program. Members of the local Grandmothers For Peace (and other local peace activists) joined us. The library uses these games to get young people into the library. We believe that a public library should not be sponsoring violent video war games.

Two of our members ran for state offices on the Peace and Freedom Party. Daniel Costa, our VP, was a candidate for the California State Assembly, and Debra Reiger (associate member) ran for California State Treasurer. They discussed the human and dollar costs of war during their campaign appearances.

We make our presence and views known by passing out flyers and/or tabling at events, marching with a VFP banner in Veterans Day and anti-war marches, letters to newsletters and politicians, and supporting local homeless advocates. And we continued our efforts to get our local Congresswoman, Doris Matsui, to vote against further funding of the wars.

John Reiger

Chapter 99, Asheville, NC

Chapter 99 continues to be the most consistent and active peace organization in the region. Over the last year we’ve maintained a high public profile, not just with our weekly vigil at Pack Square in Asheville (which has continued for seven years through all kinds of weather), but through events and media.

We’ve sponsored speaking events such as the Josh Stieber-Conor Curran-Salam Hassan People’s Journey tour; we’ve staffed a booth at the Goombay festival—which proved to be great exposure for us; we’ve engaged non-veteran peace activists by launching Peacetown Asheville; we’ve assisted formerly homeless vets as they moved into permanent housing; we’ve rented office space in Asheville; and we’ve continued in the radio, TV, and newspaper business.

Our weekly “Veterans’ Voices” radio show has morphed and become “VFP-TV and Radio,” an hour of live conversation, interviews, and presentations each Wednesday evening. The nationally-distributed War Crimes Times (see WarCrimesTimes.org), an official VFP publication, is edited and published by Chapter 99 with help

from members of other chapters across the country.

Chapter news is made available at vfp-chapter099wnc.blogspot.com, which also contains links to past VFP-TV shows on YouTube.

James Latimore

Chapter 115, Red Wing, MN

As we wait for spring to arrive in Minnesota after a very long winter, the chapter from the Red Wing area is again planning its ninth annual peace retreat. We have renamed our event Peacestock, but it was formerly known as Pigstock.

This year Peacestock will be held Saturday, July 9th again at the Windbeam Farm just outside Hager City, Wisconsin. We have once again lined up a great program. Former U.S. representative, peace activist, Cynthia McKinney, will be speaking. Last year she had to cancel due to the unfortunate death of her father. Also, Ray McGovern, a fellow VFP member and former CIA official will again speak but this time in person. As you may know, Mr. McGovern has been very busy this past year as an activist.

We are excited to announce that Daniel Ellsberg has agreed to speak to us via Skype or he may actually attend in person if possible. Ellsberg has been very busy as well and we appreciate him taking time out for this event.

These are the tentative plans for Peacestock but you can go to www.peacestockvfp.org for the latest details. Come join us in the beautiful Minnesota/Wisconsin Mississippi River area for a weekend of camaraderie and fun. Peace,

Bill Habedank

Chapter 132, Corvallis, Oregon

Chapter 132 hosted talks and community discussions by David Swanson, David Barsamian, the “No Soy El Army” Tour, and David Cobb. At our “Second Saturdays” benefit concert series, we collected donations of nearly \$4,400 for such causes as Haiti earthquake relief; a local “Housing First” project for area homeless persons; “Move to Amend”; and PFC Bradley Manning’s defense fund. We tabled at the Corvallis Sustainability Coalition’s “Sustainability Fair” providing information on the environmental cost of war and every-day military operations.

On Memorial Day, we did a “freeway blog” on Interstate-5, hanging from an



overpass a banner which read, "One Trillion Dollars for War?"

Our "Truth in Recruiting" visits to three area high schools and a workshop at PeaceJam Northwest helped ensure students considering a military career had the facts necessary to make an informed decision. We also staffed the Corvallis men's winter homeless shelter for a week.

In December, VFP 132 issued a press release from all five Oregon chapters condemning an arson attack on the Islamic Center in Corvallis. We also joined in a city-wide program aimed at healing and understanding, as well as demonstrating our desire for peace and harmony among all members of the community regardless of religious or cultural background. As we closed the year, the chapter began planning a "Peace Tree" planting and commemoration ceremony at the Islamic Center, which you can read about in the next newsletter. [Spoiler alert: It was a huge success]

Bart Bolger

Chapter 136, Central Florida,

Along with marking 5 years of our weekly Antiwar and 9/11 Truth demonstration in Daytona Beach handing out flyers and DVDs, the Chapter tabled and demonstrated at the two biggest races of the year, the Daytona 500 and Firecracker 400, for the 5th consecutive year. We held demonstrations for both the 1000th US KIA in Afghanistan and the 7th anniversary of the March 19th invasion of Iraq. Veteran member Joe DiBenedetto has burned and handed out over 80,000 copies of 9/11 Truth DVDs. Our Memorial Day event honored troops killed in the Iraq and AfPak wars at the Historic Daytona Beach Bandshell, with TV and newspaper coverage.

Veteran member Harold Saive presented at the monthly Gainesville City Commission meetings evidence disputing the official story for the 9/11 attacks, the government's sole justification for the wars. He intervened on behalf of the Chapter in the Koran burning / Ground Zero Mosque controversy by meeting with city officials and the minister threatening to burn the Koran and explained that the only individual providing credible testimony claiming responsibility for demolishing one of the World Trade Center buildings was the leaseholder Larry Silverstein, a non-Muslim, thus making the dispute baseless.

New veteran member Chris Cerullo was active in the Kissimmee/Orlando area organizing many actions. He also took over




Chris Cerullo demonstrating in Orlando.

as the Orlando coordinator of the Florida chapter of WeAreChange. Chapter co-chair Phil Restino continued to do TV and radio interviews and periodic newspaper guest editorials as spokesperson for the Chapter. Our YouTube channel CentralFloridaVFP chronicles our various actions.

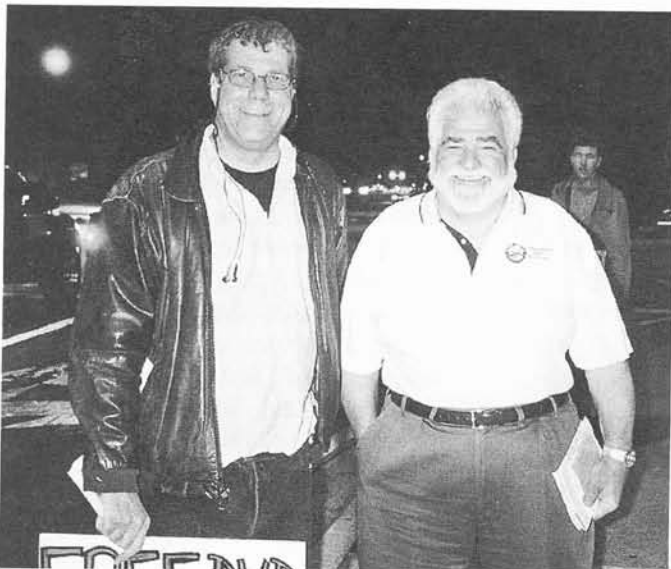
Phil Restino



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



Made in Vietnam by
Agent Orange survivors



US Liberty Survivor Ernie Gallo (right) with Chapter 136 member Joe DiBenedetto.



VFP Relationship to the United Nations

VFP remains affiliated as a nongovernmental organization (NGO) with the United Nations through the UN Department of Public Information, as we have been for 20 years. For 2011 NGOs have been allowed one more representative slot, the "Head" of each NGO automatically becomes one of the representatives, in our case our Executive Director, and there is also a youth slot for an 18-24 year old, which remains empty for now. The Main and Alternate Reps who have served for several years will continue to, and the chair of the VFP Lobbying Working Group will serve as the other Alternate. So the UN Representative list for VFP for 2011 is:

HEAD OF ORGANIZATION	Executive Director Dennis Lane
MAIN REPRESENTATIVE	Ellen Barfield
1st ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE	Al Jaccoma
2nd ALTERNATE REPRESENTATIVE	Matt Southworth

The big NGO Conference occurs every year in late summer or early autumn; last year in Melbourne, Australia, and previous years in Mexico City and Paris. We had taken good-sized delegations to several Conferences in New York, but the difficulty and expense of getting overseas has meant no VFP members have attended a Conference lately. The 2011 Conference, "Sustainable Societies,

Responsible Citizens", will be in Bonn, Germany, 3-5 September. VFP members who might want to attend this interesting event should contact Main UN Rep Ellen Barfield at ellene4pj@yahoo.com for information.

The UN presents the only real alternative for relations among nations to take a form other than warfare cold or hot. And the UN is good at putting forward international norms for national behavior, such as arms treaties that facilitate disarmament and the outlawing of weapons systems and behaviors in war. The UN also advocates for the rights of all people, such as in the iconic Universal Declaration of Human Rights from the founding days of the UN back in 1946, and later Conventions such as The Rights of the Child and Indigenous Peoples, and Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security, which recognizes that women being full participants at all peace negotiations is only fair and makes treaties more likely to last. As citizens of the United States and as military veterans we in VFP have an extra responsibility to support the UN, pushing our government to cooperate, not dominate, and to do such simple things as paying its UN dues, which the recently-elected Republicans are threatening to suspend again.

Ellen Barfield

The Gordian Knot

If the situation in Afghanistan and Iraq were not tragic enough, the US has now intervened in Libya. As we embark on another noble crusade into the Arab world, it is helpful to consider what our actions since October 2001 have brought.

It is conservatively estimated that since the U.S. invasions into Afghanistan and Iraq 919,967 have been killed and 1,739,547 wounded. These figures include warring parties and civilians.

It is time to look to the Arab community to provide stability as Libyans grapple for a freer society. Rather than deploy U.S. troops and aircraft to untie yet another Gordian Knot, it's long overdue that Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, U.A.E., etc.... step up. They are well armed Muslim neighbors that have a deep interest in regional peace.

Shakespeare did not envision a tragedy on this scale, but his characters echo even today. Let us imagine that playing Brutus is the U.S.; playing a slain Caesar is Iraq; playing Antony is the missing voice of reason. Follow with me:

Brutus.

Because Caesar was my dear friend, I weep for him; ...because he was valiant, I honor him; but--because he was ambitious, I killed him... for the good of Rome. There are tears for his friendship; joy for his fortune; honor for his valor; and death for his ambition.

Roman Citizen.

I am afraid someone worse will come in his place.

Antony.

O, now you weep, and I can tell that you feel the beginnings of pity.

Now let it work. Mischief, you are loose, take whatever path you want.

It is notable how little has changed since 44 B.C.

Dave Lannen is a veteran of Afghanistan and Iraq and a member of Veterans For Peace in Traverse City, Michigan.



Faces from the great 2010 Convention in Portland, Maine.



P O E T R Y

GRANDMOTHER, CLEANING RABBITS

I shot this one by the upper pond of the farm
 after watching the rings trout made rising
 to flies, watching small birds pace the backs
 of cows, hoping all the time she would run.
 My grandmother told me they damaged her garden.
 I think it was a way to make the killing
 lighter. She never let me clean them, only asked
 I bring them headless to her. I bring this one
 to the fir block near the house, use the singlebitted
 axe with the nick in the lower crescent
 of the blade, smell the slow fire
 in the smoke-house, salmon changing
 to something sweet & dark. A fly turns
 in a bead of blood on my boot. I tuck
 the head in a hole beside the dusty globes
 of ripened currants, talk quiet to the barn cat.
 In her kitchen my grandmother whets the thin blade
 of her Barlow, makes a series of quick, clever cuts, then tugs
 off the skin like a child's sweater. This one was
 pregnant. She pulls out a row of unborn rabbits
 like the sleeve of a shirt with a series of knots.
 The offal is dropped in a bucket. Each joint gives way
 beneath her knife as though it wants
 to come undone, as though she knows some secret
 about how things fit together. I have killed
 a hundred rabbits since I was eight.
 This will be the last.
 I am twenty, & about to go back
 to the war that killed my cousin in Kien Hoa,
 which is one more name she can't pronounce.
 I haven't told her about the dead,
 and she won't ask. She rolls the meat
 in flour & pepper & salt, & lays it
 in a skillet of oil that spits like a cat.
 She cannot save a single boy who carries a gun.
 All she can do is feed this one.

Sam Green

first published in Alaska Quarterly Review

Alongside The Roads And In The Fields

The story goes that a year after
 the Civil War ended,
 soldiers
 both Union and
 Confederate,
 many from the same families
 were found
 not even close
 to the traditional 6 feet down.

Most of the graves
 were dug a shallow 3 feet
 into the rich earth, alongside
 the roads
 and in the cotton and
 tobacco fields

outside Louisville and
 Henderson, Kentucky.
 And where currently the US Army
 at Fort Knox, trains
 and teaches American boys
 the methods and madness of war, as
 they now invade other
 countries so they no longer have
 to kill and maim their own brothers.

And now it's only strangers
 that they can leave dead where
 they have
 fallen, alongside the roads and
 in the rice and poppy fields.

Doug Draime

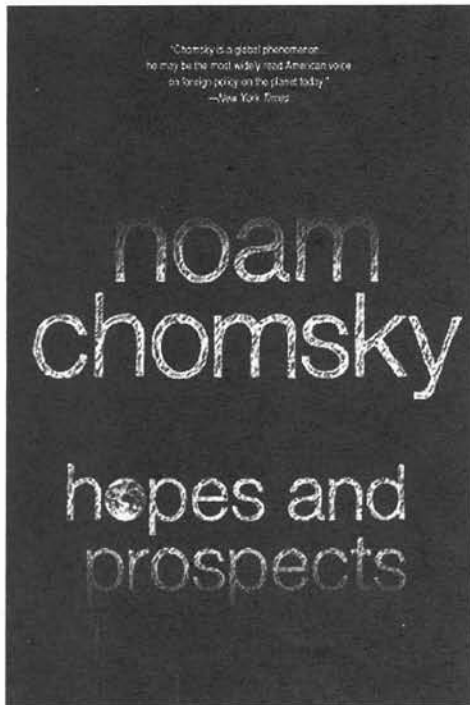
It Was His Own Heart And Soul

First time he saw it
 After looking at it
 For more years than
 He could remember
 He realized it was a
 Faded picture of war
 Blurred as it was from
 Age, nonetheless, clearly
 It was war, with all the
 Horror, evil, and ignorance
 Of its reality, in a yellowing
 Old photograph in a scrapbook

He'd had many years next
 To snapshots of his mother
 Father, his childhood dog, his
 Dead grandparents and various
 Cousins he never knew
 Yet, there was war closer
 Than any of them had ever been.
 And when he looked at the
 Picture long enough
 It looked back at him like
 His own heart and soul.

Doug Draime

BOOK REVIEWS



Hopes and Prospects

By Noam Chomsky

Haymarket Books

www.haymarketbooks.org

Protest Nation: Words That Inspired a Century of American Radicalism

Edited by Timothy Patrick McCarthy and John McMillan.

The New Press, www.thenewpress.com.

Noam Chomsky has been the foremost political analyst, writer, and truth-telling spokesperson for decades of peacemakers and advocates for social justice. His latest book is just as sharp, compelling, and inspiring as those that preceded it. Although the title looks to the future, I believe that the Chomsky canon really should be viewed as an in-progress living history of the United States—the kind of history that, like Howard Zinn’s *People’s History of the United States*—never will be found in school textbooks but damn well should be in every high school and college student’s desk, every school library, and every public library.

Setting straight the lies and distortions of the capitalist media and especially its monolithic publishing empire is a monumental task and although that is not Chomsky’s stated or chosen goal, it has fallen to him by his acuity, brilliance, and courage to lead the effort and he has accepted the challenge with quiet humility and unflinching sense of purpose.

Based on a series of lectures, the book is divided into two sections: Latin America and North America. Latin America’s includes “Year 514: Globalization for Whom?;” “Latin America and U.S. Foreign Policy” and “Latin America and Caribbean Unity,” among others. North America includes “‘Good News’: Iraq and Beyond;” “Obama on Israel-Palestine” and “The Torture Memos,” among others.

Each section, each chapter is full of revelations and insights that few others could provide.

Prof. Chomsky truly is a human resource almost beyond measure and is to be valued as such. We’re hoping to interview him for our print and online publications one of these days. In the meantime, this book will serve as a primer for those new to his work and a welcome addition to those who have become Chomsky collectors.

Chomsky is one of a number of writers and social activists included in *Protest Nation*. Others include Eugene V. Debs, Upton Sinclair, Cesar Chavez, Angela Davis, Kate Millett, Rachel Carson, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr., Paul Robeson, Emma Goldman, and one of my personal favorites, the timeless “beat” poet, Allen Ginsberg whom I consider a direct descendant of Walt Whitman, and whose shrieking “Howl” is just as vital and stirring today as it was when it appeared more than 55 years ago now.

Space precludes even synopses of their pieces and Chomsky’s chapters, but I consider *Protest Nation* (dedicated to Howard Zinn) and Chomsky’s *Hopes and Prospects* must reads for anyone interested in peace, social justice and the historical truth about the United States of America.

Will Schapira

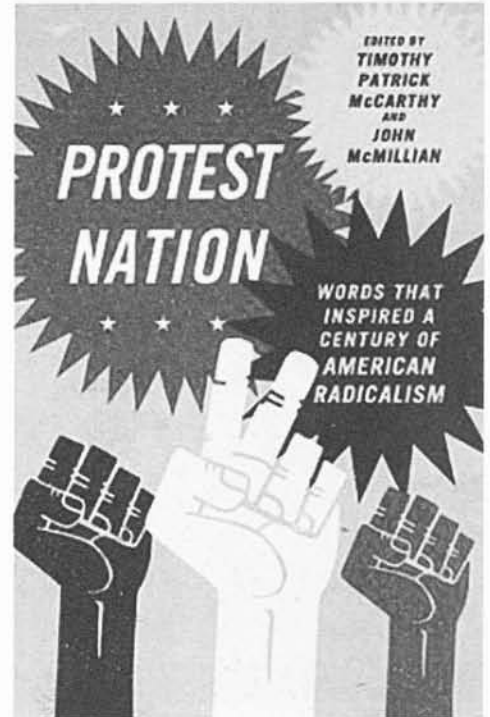


Three Lives of a Warrior by Phillip Butler

CreateSpace

“To be hopeful, in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness.” Howard Zinn

Captured by the Vietnamese on April 25, 1965, and released on February 25, 1973, Navy officer Phil Butler is the seventh longest serving POW in United



States history. I had heard retired Commander Butler’s brief description of his confinement as a POW about 18 years ago at a Veterans For Peace conference and was impressed with his forgiving nature toward his captors. It wasn’t until I read this book that I understood the extent of his protracted ordeal within the POW prisons as well as the personal anguish he suffered in civilian life. Only then did I understand the enormous gift of understanding that he shares in this book.

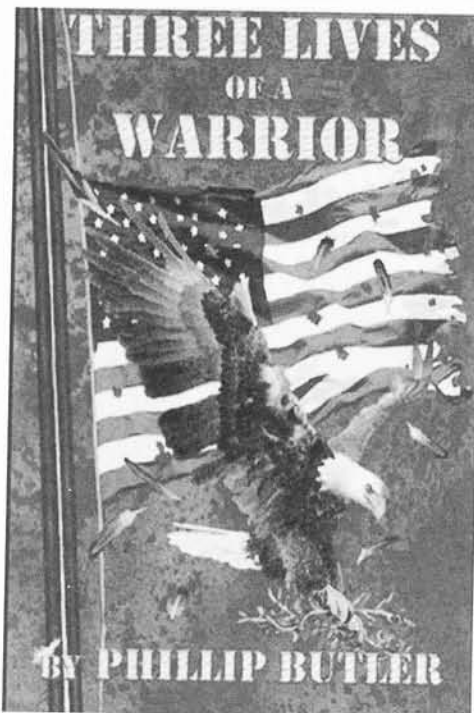
Butler, a past chairman of the board of Veterans for Peace, openly reveals the sad details of growing up in a home with a mentally ill mother and a father fatally impacted by the disease of alcoholism. Phil graduated from the Naval Academy. Later he survived a crash of his A-4 jet that resulted in his capture and eight years of extreme torture by the Vietnamese. After his release, he earned a PhD, fulfilling his goal to return to society and “live with honor.”

Butler’s account is not just a detailed summary of survival; it is an expression of total acceptance, forgiveness, and love. The book includes only two references to Senator John McCain who was a fellow USNA midshipman, and at one point “... was in the Hanoi Hilton with me.”

For over 300 pages we learn in awful detail the horrific and inhumane torture

Book Reviews continued on page 14

BOOK REVIEWS



he and his colleagues endured most of the time. I was moved by how Phil recalled, in precise detail, his many trials over such a long period without the assistance of recording instruments. Clearly many painful events were seared into his memory.

From the many lessons learned, he offers the following: "We killed over two million of their people. They still have 300,000 missing in action and their country, North and South, has been environmentally devastated for generations to come." Yet, "I slowly became able to put away my old hatred. I came to the understanding that it was senseless to ascribe the bad actions and attributes of a few select people to a group. It was just like racism, homophobia, or any prejudice. Grouping people for blame is too easy and always wrong."

Phil says, "Ironically, we Vietnam POW's received moral encouragement and strength from telling each other that we were different from the Vietnamese. We took the moral high road in assuring each other that Americans would never torture prisoners the way they were treating us. . . Now I wonder if those responsible (for U.S. torturers) will be investigated and brought openly to justice. - - I think we should investigate everyone who is involved from top to bottom. Those who wrote the memos, those who sanctioned them, those who gave the orders, and those who carried them out.

"If we are to get America back on moral

track, there should be an independent investigation of the Bush administration to show how involved they were in violating our constitution. And if they are proven guilty, they should be punished for their criminal behavior. . .

"I'm no longer a warrior for war, but a warrior for peace and justice."

I cannot speak glowingly enough of Commander Butler as a communicator and human being and about whom I have been privileged to get to know better by reading *Three Lives of a Warrior*.

Bob Heberle



All You Have Given: Meditations on War, Peace & Reconciliation By Don Blackburn

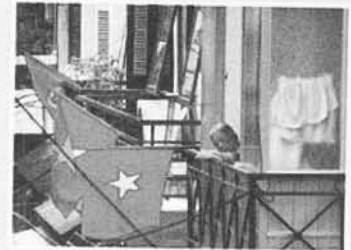
CreateSpace (January 13, 2011)

Having been fortunate to experience two healing return trips to Vietnam and to participate in a weekend retreat with the Zen Master Thich Nhat Hanh, I was most eager to read Don Blackburn's book of poems and short essays. I was not disappointed; I was delighted and thoroughly captivated by the powerful writing and the poignant photographs, accompanying the poetry and prose. This aspect of Don's book especially appealed to me, because I have long thought about publishing a book of photographs I have taken in Vietnam during my three visits there, one horrid time last century and two wonderfully healing times in the present century.

Divided into three sections that mirror Thich Nhat Hanh's method of seeking peace with each breath and step, Blackburn's writing reflects three periods of his life seeking peace: First Breath First Step, the period in 1967 and 1968, when he was a soldier in Vietnam; Second Breath Second Step, a long period from 1968 to 2003, when he struggled to survive his experience of war upon returning home from Vietnam; and Third Breath Third Step from 2004 to 2010, which deal with his several return trips to Vietnam, wherein he experiences considerable healing and self-forgiveness through the generosity of spirit from Vietnamese friends and the grace of the Vietnamese culture.

My major critique of Don's book is that I wished there were more of his poetry, both from his time in Vietnam during the

All You Have Given



Meditations on War, Peace & Reconciliation

Don Blackburn

war and in the middle period when he struggled to adjust to "normal" life within a mostly neglectful society. I think this would have heightened the effectiveness of the epiphanies of healing and forgiveness he vividly relates about his experiences upon returning regularly to Vietnam, making a second home there.

The language of *All You Have Given* is sparse, tightly constructed using simple metaphor and imagery. His poetry depicts not only what his eyes see and his mind perceives, but also what his heart feels. A haunting image of small, white butterflies occurs several times in the book, a foreshadowing of a brighter future, one perhaps even filled with hope and redemption.

Several poems are especially poignant. In "Cricket Song" he listens to the night song of crickets with an elder in a village near his base during the war:

Leaning close to me, he whispers:
Soon you go home. Long time, when
no more war, cricket song bring you
back here.

In the middle section, "Father and Son, Christmas, After Another War" describes a father and son reaching across the generational divide and failing to connect:

We almost talked.
Our eyes met just long enough
for you to see the pain in me.

Book Reviews continued on page 19

Spring Actions: Protest and Witness

March 19 seems to be a good day for starting wars. March 19 this year marked the 8th anniversary of the war and occupation in Iraq and the 1st day of the bombing and missile campaign against the army of Libya. The United States is now in armed conflict with five primarily Muslim countries in North Africa, the Middle East, and South Central Asia: the long, too-familiar wars with Afghanistan and Iraq; the not quite real, largely drone war in Pakistan; the ongoing, quiet, also largely drone war in Yemen in which we are aiding (really acting as proxy for) the now-embattled President of Yemen to defeat Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula; and now the new conflict against the so-called Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, in an oil-rich, mostly empty piece of desert controlled for the past 42 years by the wily and brutal Muammar al-Gadhafi.

This March is the fat season for weapons-makers and the giddy season for war-mongers. For those who keep track of the financial costs of these various entanglements and wonder about the youngest war of the five, Andrew Exum (founder of the excellent blog Abu Muqawama—Arabic for father of or expert in the resistance—and a proponent of counterinsurgency) did some homework: “A Tomahawk Missile cost \$569,000 in FY99, so if my calculations are correct, they cost a little over \$736,000 today assuming they are the same make and model. The United States fired 110 missiles yesterday [the first day of the war], which adds up to a cost of around \$81 million” (<http://www.cnas.org/blogs/abumuqawama/2011/03/fun-fact-day-your-tax-dollars-work.html>). That's just the hardware costs; not a bad first day.

March 19 was also a good day to go to the nation's capital and stand collectively against the militarization of American foreign policy, the death and dismemberment of young American men and women in the voracious war machine, and the dissipation of our

national treasure in the face of serious economic dislocation. In Lafayette Park across the street from the White House, about 1000 people, most of them veterans, assembled to curse the wars, call for their end, and organize for collective action. This action, organized mainly by Veterans for Peace, continues the call to raise voices against the war and to face arrest for acts of civil disobedience. By the end of the day, 131 demonstrators had been arrested by the DC Park Police, who were present



Watermelon Slim challenging President Obama.

in reasonable numbers and were as usual efficient and even polite. (The next day at Quantico Marine Corp Base about 400 people demonstrated for release of PFC Bradley Manning being held at the Quantico Brig for his role in the release of classified military documents to the Web site WikiLeaks. The number of police from Prince William County and the State of Virginia present at this demonstration and their response were neither reasonable nor polite. Some of these forces were in riot gear with body armor, shields, and gas masks; some carried automatic assault weapons.)

At the demonstration in Lafayette Park, two young veterans of the war and occupation in Iraq, one a Marine, the other a combat nurse (part of the less than 0.5% of the American population who are affected directly by our wars as members of the military and their families) spoke passionately about their thankless service. Ryan Endicott, a Marine combat veteran told of his refusal to redeploy to Iraq and to continue to participate in a war he believes to be immoral.

Bill (Watermelon Slim) Homans, Vietnam veteran, blues singer of songs of “ramshackle grandeur,” peace activist, and watermelon farmer, pointed poignantly from the stage to the White House and challenged President Obama to live up to the promise of his election and abandon the Bush-era war agenda.



Daniel Ellsberg marking the courage of Bradley Manning.

The three main speakers brought out in a powerful reinforcing narrative the moral and practical implications of the gathering, the lessons of these wars, the lessons of this day, and the work of the future. Daniel Ellsberg, a moral beacon and a consistent worker for peace in the 40 years since he released the Pentagon Papers detailing the American's government's deception in its portrayal of the inception and progress of the Vietnam War, spoke of the quiet courage of Bradley Manning, Ellsberg's moral protege imprisoned under hellish conditions at Quantico amounting to slow torture. Ellsberg compared the condition of Bradley Manning, who as charged with the offense of “aiding the enemy” is theoretically subject to execution if convicted, to that of Nathan Hale, the first “illegal combatant” held in this country, a man considered a traitor to King George III but a patriot to the newly forming

Spring Actions continued on page 16

Spring Actions Continued from page 15

country, the first person executed in the country for the crime of treason, and the stuff of American myth. PFC Manning could, Ellsberg said, be the second person executed for the crime. One person cannot end a war Ellsberg said, but comparing Manning to the Tunisian fruit seller Mohammad Bouazizi whose suicide was the galvanizing event that set off the Tunisian revolution and brought down the reign of a tyrant, he reinforced the notion that the power of one's person's commitment and courage to suffer for that commitment can be contagious and energize a nation and form a movement. Ellsberg also reflected on the experience of the movement of the Egyptian people in Tahrir Square: the grassroots Egyptian Movement for Change had as its motto *Kefaya* Arabic for "Enough." We have had enough. (A video of Daniel Ellsberg's address is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTvi_wC58pA&feature=related)



Ralph Nader calling for organized citizen action against the wars.

Ralph Nader in an interview before the demonstration stated that the Veterans for Peace was making a powerful statement for the rule of law and as an advocate for peace. At the demonstration, he mentioned the recent speech of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates at West Point in which he stated that any future Secretary of Defense who committed forces to a land war in Asia or the Middle East should "have his head examined." Why, Nader asked, are we still in Iraq and Afghanistan. As Ellsberg addressed primarily the effect of a single person, Nader addressed the importance of and the practical approach to organized citizen action. He stressed that every action that prolongs the war goes through the 535 members of Congress and that focusing on these members, making demands on their time and on their staffs is the key to citizen influence on legislation and funding. He used the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) as a model of successful organized action that has enabled any legislation supported by the group to attain upward of 95% congressional approval, even in a tight economy to protect and increase aid to Israel, the Middle East superpower and oppressor of the Palestinian people. Nader also reminded the demonstrators that the Vietnam War was ended not only because of the protests, the teach-ins, the stories of atrocities, as important as they were, but also because the Congress cut off the funding for that misadventure. Public sentiment is the key to ending our current misadventures, but citizen action and its effect on politicians will actually bring about the end. (A video of Ralf Nader's address is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wLXRj8c2_wc&feature=related)



Chris Hedges describing the effect of the experience of war.

Chris Hedges, a veteran of many wars as a correspondent, spoke forcefully of the existential crisis that faces returning veterans. In the warm sunlight and on the same stage from which three months previously in the cold, snowy Washington Winter he had spoken of hope, Hedges returned to the themes of his seminal work on war, *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. Hedges compared the testament of those who have experienced war and who "speak of wounds and lies that make them kill" with the rhetorical mythmaking of the jingoists who have never met a war they disapprove of or are willing to fight in and therefore do not know war's ugly face. The people who like to thank veterans for "their service" but who when confronted with the angry response to that service counsel the veteran to "calm down, be reasonable, get some help, and go away." Hedges described the many who return from war and who never find their way back to faith in their country or any God. If hope was the animating virtue of the December address, faith was primary in this one. Echoing the conflict between eros and thanatos in *War is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* Hedges ended with a call to battle in the struggle between light and dark, good and evil, and truth and lies: "This battle defines and sustains the moral life. It gives us meaning and hope." So not just war but the struggle against it can give us meaning. (A video of Chris Hedges's address is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jXI-dG3ql50>)

March 19 and 20 were good days to join that battle.

Chuck Rossi





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President's Report

Continued from page 1

and indeed we see what it inspired in Wisconsin. Egyptian people power or democracy is at the national level and Wisconsin is at the state level. The question you, as members, have to answer is how much democracy do you want in VFP. Right now the members really don't have any way of telling national what the next year's priorities should be. There are the resolutions, but they are not binding. The members do not have a way of telling national how money should be spent. We do have an elected Board of Directors, as we have an elected US Congress, to represent us. In VFP what we have now has worked pretty well - so far.

This is not a decision the national leaders can make, because democracy cannot be given (the people must have the determination to not let others control their lives or business), democracy can only be given away (the people can just allow others to decide what is best for them).

My message is really a question, or it is a challenge that is disguised as a question: how much democracy are you willing to work for?

Elliot Adams



Ex-President's Report

Continued from page 1

a recognition that we need to actively and purposefully make common cause with groups we might not have a decade ago.

Isn't hoisting the VFP flag in a gay pride parade a statement that we are for justice, just as we were behind Dr. King's efforts? Isn't walking a picket line against police brutality an expression of peace, just as standing with organized labor against the onslaught of organized capital is an expression of justice and economic democracy? If we believe our struggles are intertwined, what must we do?

Even beyond joining in protests, we need to search out members of these aligned groups, get to know them, build community, celebrate the creation of a culture of democracy, "create the psychological space to dare to aspire grandly," as Lawrence Goodwyn wrote in "The Populist Moment."

It's all out there, before us, now.

Be well. Raise more hell.



Book Reviews

Continued from page 14

You gazed uneasily at the snow-covered hills,
the deep, stone-stilled river.
Your work-gnarled hands got in the way.
You rubbed them together, blew into them,
then mumbled something about life not being fair,
the need to keep busy, forget, and carry on.

The most ebullient and soaring language is in the third section, which includes poems and some moving short essays by Vietnamese survivors of Agent Orange poisoning. In "Little Angels Sing To Me," the poet experiences a catharsis of self-forgiveness, listening to Vietnamese children singing. Reading it again I am moved to tears, because it reminds me so gratefully of what I experienced during my two healing trips back to Vietnam.

The poems in this section range from "Under the Loving Eyes of Quan Am", as

the poet wonders about the fate 45 years on of the young girls in long-flowing ao-dais with flowers who greeted the battle-garbed U.S. Marines, locked and loaded, when they launched ashore at China Beach in 1965, as well as the Marines themselves.

Don is most effective when he describes his feelings and observations, but less so when he becomes polemical. This happens in his otherwise powerful poem, "For Che", about the death of Che in Bolivia at the hand of the CIA for his equalitarian political beliefs.

All in all this is a powerful, important book of war poetry, dealing with the horrors of war but more important with the possibility of healing and resolution. I urge VFP members to buy this book, not only because Don's work is most worthy of being read and experienced, but because half of the proceeds go to George Mizo's Friendship Village Project, the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange, and the Duc Son Pagoda/Orphanage.

Thomas Brinson



Nominations Sought for VFP Awards



Each year at the convention VFP recognizes outstanding contributions to the cause of peace by members. Do you know someone who deserves to be recognized? Please do not keep it to yourself! The VFP Awards Committee is now accepting nominations for awardees.

Deadline for nominations is June 1st, 2011.

For more details and/or to obtain a nomination form, check out (<http://www.vfpnationalconvention.org/awards.htm>) or contact the National Office at 314.725.6005 or (shelly@veteransforpeace.org).

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