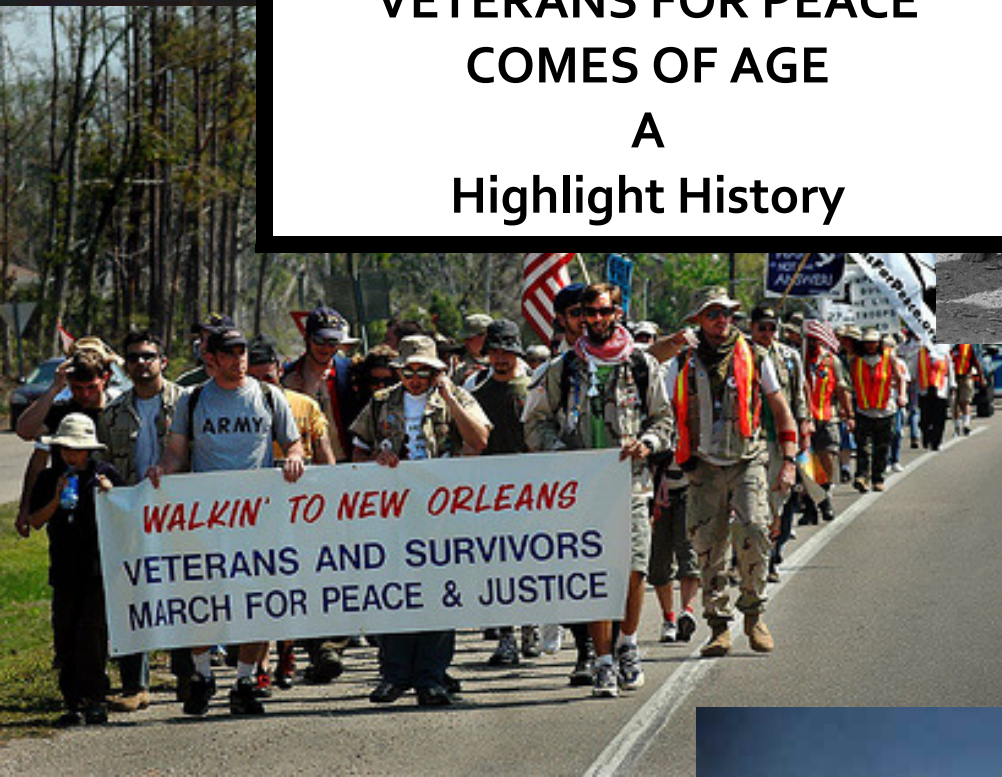


**VETERANS FOR PEACE
COMES OF AGE
A
Highlight History**



ARLINGTON WEST

PREFACE.....	11
The Legacy of Jim Burkholder – U.S. Army retired.....	12
CHAPTER 1- THE TRANSITION.....	14
Sandy Kelson, President 1996 - Vietnam era veteran, Pennsylvania lawyer.....	14
Sandy’s first awareness of VFP.....	14
Start of Pittsburgh Chapter	14
Children of War Rescue Project (1994).....	15
Founder, Jerry Genesisio, has second thoughts.....	16
Designing a Veteran’s Monument (1996).....	17
Phil Butler, President 1997 - Vietnam veteran, Navy pilot, prisoner of war for eight years.	18
Constitutional Conference	19
Laying out the VFP road map.....	20
Ed Hart, President 1995 - WWII Marine Airman.....	22
The accomplishments of Jerry Genesisio.....	22
Good ideas... But.....	23
Opposition grows.....	24
Stubbornness almost lethal.....	24
Tension between “educators” and “activists”.....	25
CHAPTER 2 - RECONCILIATION AT THE POINT OF SEPARATION.....	26
Jerry Genesisio Story.....	26
Salvadoran & Nicaraguan Veterans - In Washington.....	27
Comments on Jerry Genesisio’s Departure.....	28
Howard Zinn --.....	28
Rev. Ron Mosely ---.....	29
Ben Josephson, MD ---.....	30
Myer Pettyjohn —.....	31
Edilith Eckart —	31
CHAPTER 3 – THE MOVE TO D.C.....	31
Veterans for Peace Enthusiastically Welcomed to Washington, DC – April 1997.....	32
But the honeymoon did not last very long.....	33
Meanwhile, the membership marched on	34
VFP offers good offices in Peru (1997).....	34
Gulf War Syndrome—no cause, no cure	35

U.S. Army report questions use of depleted uranium.....	36
Close the School of the Americas.....	37
JROTC: The Antithesis of Education	39
Paul Walker, President 1998 - Army Intelligence – Vietnam era.....	42
Paul Shares His Vision for VFP.....	42
A NATIONAL GOAL?.....	43
Two stories about VFP efforts to ban land mines:.....	45
VFP IN PRISON.....	46
The Myer Pettijohn Story – by Ed Hart.....	47
UN REPRESENTATION.....	49
VFP CONVENTION – 1998 – Minneapolis, MN.....	51
Convention Workshops.....	51
Speakers Highlight ‘98 Convention.....	52
VFP’S FIRST NEWSLETTER.....	53
The next issue came out in early 1999 as a Winter issue	55
S.O.A. Victory at Ft. Benning.....	55
10 Gulf War Issues Overlooked by the President & Press.....	56
Fredy Champagne introduced the Iraq Water Project:.....	58
Summer of 1999 Newsletter.....	59
Coalition Calls for End to NATO Bombing, Proposes International Diplomatic Solution.....	59
Executive Director Vander Laan asks for your participation	61
VFP CONVENTION – 1999 - Washington D.C.....	62
Old Soldiers Don't Fade Away Any More- They Just Keep on Making War and Others Always Die - by Hari Scordo	62
Veterans Asked to Help Repair Health Clinic in My Lai.....	64
Veterans for Peace in Vieques: The Most Fearful Day of My Life -- by Emilio Garcia -- (Winter 2000).....	65
Return to South Korea - By Wilson (Woody) Powell --	66
KOKAN-RI - September 9, 2000.....	68
Jim Steinhagen, President, 1999 -- Marine veteran, Korea,	70
Jim's final letter to the membership:.....	71
Meeting of New Board of Directors	71
CHAPTER 4 – MOVING TO ST. LOUIS.....	74
Woody Powell proposes – the membership disposes.....	74
VFP CONVENTION 2001 – Albuquerque, New Mexico.....	75

The office arrives in St. Louis in time for 9/11.....	75
VFP RESPONSE TO 9/11.....	77
Barry Riesch – President, 2001, U.S. Army '68-'70.....	78
President Riesch's Statement on 9/11.....	78
New York Times runs letter to President by VFP ex-Marine.....	79
SANITY AND NATIONAL DEFENSE or What Didn't Get Said On National TV By Woody Powell.....	81
Strategy Meeting Report	83
Board Passes Motion to Send Alan Pogue on Fact-finding Mission to Afghanistan	85
 CHAPTER 5 – TRYING TO HEAD OFF WAR IN IRAQ.....	 85
Dave Cline, President – 2002 -2007 , Vietnam, US Army 1967-68.....	85
National Office Report - Woody Powell, National Administrator	87
A Peaceful Tomorrow on Tour	88
Place Peace on the Country's Agenda- Coleman P. Gorham, Maine VFP	89
War, Inc. 2002 - Mike Ferner, Ohio VFP	90
 VFP CONVENTION – 2002, Duluth, MN	 94
Patriotism Defined by Veterans - August 20, 2002.....	94
My Turn- Anti-war, not Anti-soldier, By, Diane Carlson Evans, RN	96
 ANTI WAR DEMONSTRATIONS BEGIN.....	 97
Dissent: Rally in Washington Is Said to Invigorate the Antiwar Movement - New York Times October 30, 2002	97
PRESIDENT'S REPORT – January 2003.....	100
Announcing OPERATION DIRE DISTRESS.....	101
 CHAPTER 6 - WAR WITH IRAQ.....	 102
Back from Baghdad. Where next for the peace movement?.....	102
United For Peace & Justice Holds Historic Conference – June, 2003.....	104
How VFP gets America to listen.....	106
Hold On To Your Humanity: An Open Letter to GI's in Iraq – Stan Goff.....	108
US FOREIGN POLICY IN IRAQ - Wilson (Woody) Powell.....	109
 VFP CONVENTION 2003 – San Francisco, CA.....	 113
Defeating Militarism and the Politics of Fear	113
Report From the Executive Director.....	117
 CHAPTER 7 - A NEW GENERATION OF VETS EMERGES.....	 119
 VFP CONVENTION 2004 – BOSTON.....	 119
Reporters' Notebook, 7/29/04.....	121
The VFP 2004 Convention Summary.....	122

Baghdad: Energy Amid the Wreckage- by John Grant.....	125
Letter From a Soldier's Dad	128
VFP CONVENTION 2005 – Dallas, Texas.....	129
TOUR OF DUTY - Woody Powell.....	129
The Launching of Cindy Sheehan.....	133
Camp Casey - by Cindy Sheehan	135
Witnessing History - By Scott Galindez	136
HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORT – by Pat Tate.....	139
Protesters Draw Link Between Katrina and Iraq War - Reuters	140
VFP CONVENTION 2006 – Seattle, Washington.....	141
Leading up to the convention was a well-publicized bicycle ride:.....	142
OVER-VIEW.....	142
A few key events:.....	144
Camilo Mejia and Dahr Jamal Speak at VFP Conference	144
Ehren Watada - By Dahr Jamail t r u t h o u t Perspective	146
Former Asst. Secretary General of the United Nations to take stand tomorrow for Lt. Watada at military hearing.....	150
Report from Sergeant Ricky Clousing Press Conference - Elliot Stoller	151
Veterans and War Resisters Enjoy Solidarity Picnic on US-Canada Border.....	152
Susanne Swift Story - "We demand Swift justice!" by Jeff Paterson,	153
CHAPTER 8 – IRAQ WAR GRINDS ON – ACTIONS PROLIFERATE.....	155
Military judge rules “illegal war” debate forbidden during Lt. Watada trial.....	155
New trial for Lt. Watada Oct. 9, 2007!	158
The Birth of an Activist	160
Miami Chapter 032 Brings War Reminders to the Super Bowl.....	166
Just Another Day at the Beach.....	167
Sitting in to Stop the War	168
Stop the Madness of George Bush,' Say Anti-War Veterans.....	170
APPEAL FOR REDRESS.....	172
Soldiers bring petition campaign against war in Iraq to Capitol Hill.....	172
VFP CONVENTION - 2007, St. Louis, MO.....	173
OASIS.....	174
Anti-war veterans protest at Black Expo.....	178
The Boots.....	179
Over 400 veterans gather in St. Louis to plot end of war	181
DEATH OF DAVID CLINE.....	182
DAVID CLINE WE SALUTE YOU september 15, 2007.....	183
THE JERSEY JOURNAL OBITUARY.....	184
REFLECTION BY DAVID ZIEGLER, Director of “SIR! NO SIR!”.....	185
DAVID CLINE FRIEND OF PEACE, RIP -- Cindy Sheehan	187

REMEMBERING DAVID CLINE Woody Powell.....	189
NO ONE IS LISTENING.....	191
October 27, 2007.....	191
Protesters in U.S. cities call for end to Iraq war.....	194
A group with varied interests stands united against a war.....	195
CRACKDOWN ON DISSENT.....	197
Banned From Canada for a Year for War Protest	197
WRAPPING UP 2007.....	201
Membership.....	201
Membership Comparison.....	201
2006/2007.....	201
Regional State Breakdown.....	201
Activities:.....	202
Associations: (other groups with which our chapters collaborate).....	202
VFP goals and what chapters do to help promote these goals:.....	203
VFP Newsletter.....	204
Projects Completed.....	204
VFP Actions 2006/2007.....	204
SOA Watch, Fort Benning, GA.....	205
Appeal For Redress.....	205
Agent Orange Victims Lawsuit Against Manufacturers.....	206
ENTERING THE FIFTH YEAR OF WAR IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN.....	207
After Winter Soldier (There is much more work to do.).....	207
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED ANNIVERSARY.....	208
IVAW WINTER SOLDIERS TESTIFY TO IN CONGRESS.....	208
VFP AND IMPEACHMENT.....	212
VFP CONVENTION - 2008, St. Paul, MN.....	215
VFP LIGHTS THE WAY.....	219
VFP – IVAW AND THE ELECTIONS of 2008.....	221
At Least Nine Demonstrators Arrested as Iraq Vets Try to Enter Final Presidential Debate.....	221
CHAPTER 9.....	223
PICKING UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF - 2009.....	223
FACING OFF MILITARISM AND HEALING.....	223
Confronting Army’s Philadelphia experiment.....	224
WOMEN IN ACTION - 2009.....	225
Ellen Barfield Found Guilty and Sentenced to 25 DAYS in JAIL	225
24th National Convention held in College Park, Maryland.....	226

VFP WOMEN TALK at 2009 Convention.....	226
WAR CRIMES TIMES INNAUGURATED.....	228
Vets Demonstrate at Archives	228
At the Whitehouse.....	228
At Times Square.....	229
Vets Demonstrate at Archives	229
FIRST INTERNATIONAL CHAPTER CHARTERED;; VFP 160 in VIETNAM.....	229
ANOTHER LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT.....	231
President Obama had been in office a scant year and already severe disappointment was setting in.	231
CONVENTION 2010 : - Portland Maine.....	233
Back to the Origins.....	233
PRESIDENT ELLIOTT ADAMS ADDRESSES THE ISSUE.....	235
2011 – Washington D. C. Sees a Lot of VFP.....	235
As Does Boston and Oakland, CA.....	236
Mike Ferner takes over as interim Executive Director	236
2012 - Mike Reid Selected to Serve as Executive Director.....	236
2013 - Welcome Back Michael McPhearson.....	237
MILITARIZATION OF POLICE IS A VFP ISSUE	237
PEACE AT HOME – PEACE ABROAD - The events in Ferguson and the subsequent awakening of much of the country to endemic injustices show a new path for Veterans For Peace.....	239
MORAL DILEMMAS.....	240
Diverse Voices: VFP, Project Renew & US AID	240
MAJOR PROJECTS & ACTIONS.....	245
VETERANS - VIET NAM RESTORATION PROJECT - 1989 --.....	245
New VVRP Team Being Organized	245
THE MID-ATLANTIC VETERANS FOR PEACE DOLL PROJECT - June 6, 1997.....	247
Madeleine Albright Neighborhood “Alert” And “Reminder” Dolls	248
EL SALVADOR ELECTIONS - 1999.....	249

TEN YEARS LATER – 2009.....	251
El Salvador – The Struggle Begins.....	251
STONEWALK – 1999.....	253
The Washington Post- Casting Their Stone for Peace	255
STONEWALK 2001.....	257
A Returning Veteran to Viet Nam Says	
“‘It Is Great To Be Alive.’”.....	257
KOREA TRUTH COMMISSION – Spring 2001	262
If It Takes Lies To Start A War -- Only Truth Can End It.....	265
REBUILDING EL SALVADOR – April 2002 - John Amidon	270
REMOVING THE NAVY FROM VIEQUES – 2001 To May 2003.....	271
National Vieques Summit For Peace With Justice	271
Vieques Celebrates the Navy's Departure - by David Cline	272
IRAQ WATER PROJECT:.....	275
PORTABLE STERILIZERS.....	276
THE NATION DEMONSTRATES AGAINST WAR – January 18, 2003.....	277
The Planning.....	278
A Stirring in the Nation- New York Times editorial Jan. 20, 2003.....	279
Cadence and solidarity Jozef Hand-Boniakowski.....	280
OPERATION DIRE DISTRESS – March 22, 2003.....	282
Operation Dire Distress - A Success And A Beginning - -- Woody Powell	283
VFP President David Cline Addresses Teach-In At American University	285
Will Middle America Board the Peace Train?.....	289
BRING THEM HOME NOW CAMPAIGN.....	293
Good For The Troops, Their Families & Possibly Peace In The Middle East.....	293
Military Families Tell Congress: Bring Them Home Now!; Congressional Briefing for September 9, 2003.....	295
Bring Them Home Now — Or Not?-- By Ellen Barfield.....	297
THE STORY OF ASRAA.....	301
Asraa Comes to America	301
ARLINGTON WEST.....	304
Why Arlington West Santa Barbara Might be Successful – Ron Dexter.....	307
Media Response Example.....	308
WALKIN' TO NEW ORLEANS – March 2006.....	310
In the Path of a Storm, Vets Protest a War – March 2006.....	310
...in Summation – Stan Goff.....	312

DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE WAR – 2006.....	316
Memorial Day 2006.....	316
THE BANGOR MAINE WATERFRONT.....	316
CAMP DEMOCRACY – Washington, DC – September 2006.....	318
DEMONSTRATIONS, LOCAL & NATIONAL INTENSIFY IN 2007.....	320
39 peace activists arrested at the Nevada Test Site with "West Wing President" Sheen	320
VETERANS’ CONVOY – FAYETTEVILLE TO NEW ORLEANS 2007.....	321
APPEAL FOR REDRESS.....	326
Fed Up Soldiers Finding New Ways to Protest the War	326
The Successful Rally/March in Syracuse Sept. 29, 2007.....	329
REPORTS ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2007 ACTION IN D.C.....	329
VFP BOARD MEMBER PATRICK MCCANN.....	330
VFP BOARD MEMBER KEN MAYERS.....	331
VFP BOARD MEMBER MIKE FERNER	338
An Iraq war veteran reflects on the Sept. 15 march.....	345
*Canada Refuses Entry to CODEPINK Cofounder Medea Benjamin and Retired Colonel Ann Wright *	346
VETERANS’ DAY ACTIONS 2007.....	347
Chapter 16 – Washington D.C.....	347
Chapter 32 - Miami, FL.....	347
Mock tombstones draw anguished, curious	347
Philadelphia, PA.....	349
Santa Fe, NM.....	350
Long Beach, CA.....	350
Chapter 134 - Tacoma, WA.....	351
Smedley Butler Chapter 9 - Boston, MA.....	352
Atlanta, GA.....	353
Eugene OR.....	354
St. Louis, MO.....	354
Corvallis, OR.....	355
Chapter 79, Denver, CO.....	356
Veterans Day: A Day for Peace or for War? By Ann Wright t r u t h o u t Perspective.....	356
“TROOP ENGAGEMENT PROJECT” -FEBRUARY 16- FEBRUARY 28, 2008	358
WINTER SOLDIER - 2008.....	360
War Stories Echo an Earlier Winter.....	360
Veterans groups offer different views of conflict	
By Leo Shane III, Stars and Stripes	
Mideast edition, Saturday, March 15, 2008	363
Winter Soldier: America Must Hear These Vets' Stories.....	364

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.....	367
VFP Members Outreach At Fort Dix.....	367
Fort Wainwright, Alaska.....	368
Scott AFB, Illinois.....	369
MAY DAY IN AUSTIN, TEXAS.....	371
IMPEACHMENT FAST AT NATIONAL ARCHIVES	372
CARRY ON.....	374
POSTSCRIPT	374
EARLY VERSIONS OF VETERANS FOR PEACE.....	374

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF VETERANS FOR PEACE

1995 to 2007

Compiled and edited by Wilson (Woody) Powell

PREFACE

I chose the title THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF VETERANS FOR PEACE not only because it describes an important transition, but because it affirms a principle that will, in my opinion, assure the future of VFP.

I first encountered the phrase in writings by Phil Butler, who served on the VFP Board of Directors in 1994, was re-elected in 1996 and became Chairman that year.

Phil presided over a historical Constitutional Conference in 1995 in Kansas City which significantly modified the VFP Constitution. According to him, “the intent of our Constitutional Conference ... was to democratize VFP”.

The Constitution became the Veterans For Peace By-Laws and was ratified at the 1995 Convention in San Francisco. In essence, the new document placed true oversight and control into the hands of a membership-elected Board of Directors.

Veterans For Peace originated in the mind of a Marine Corps veteran named Jerry Genesisio. The story of its beginnings in Portland, Maine, the attraction of the concept of veterans of war working actively for peace, the vitality and power of the concept carried forward into actions in Central America and the shattered principalities of the old Yugoslavia are covered in his book, “Veterans for Peace, The First Decade”, and alluded to in the early chapters of this work.

During the first half of that decade, when VFP was headquartered in Maine, Jerry Genesisio ran VFP from his home, later from an office at the Government Center in Portland.. His was a deeply personal mission that attracted many veterans, but eventually began to alienate members as the pyramidal command structure began to chafe and disrupt.

I believe what happened is reflective of the nature of the kind of people who are inclined to join and support VFP. We are not sheep. We may have been at one time in our lives, but when we arrived at the point of deciding to join VFP our experiences had transformed us into independent thinkers and actors.

We had developed an appreciation for critical thinking and no longer accepted glib explanations from our leadership. We demanded honesty and transparency. We had passions rooted in the angst of our wartime and military experiences that drove us. Many of us were just like Jerry Genesisio in that respect; which explains the attraction of VFP while also explaining, in part, how internal strains were bound to develop.

Jerry Genesisio departed VFP, in 1997, after a bitter factional fight between those of the membership who believed education was our only proper mission and those who advocated humanitarian relief and other activist causes which actually came to a head at the Columbia, Missouri convention in 1996..Veterans For Peace was deeply wounded.

What follows is a story of that transition and recovery in the words of those who participated.

It is hoped that the full flavor of Veterans For Peace will be revealed as people tell their stories, share their different visions. It will become evident that one of the greatest challenges for the members of VFP is making room for diversity while maintaining sufficient focus to effectively turn a culture away from militarism and toward peace.

Wilson (Woody) Powell
Executive Director 2001-2005

The Legacy of Jim Burkholder – U.S. Army retired.

While preparing this historical compilation, Jim Burkholder, President of VFP in 1993-94, died in Tucson, May 9, 2006. Jim was influential in the development of VFP in many ways. His most enduring legacy, however, is the story of his conversion from warrior to peacemaker. It is, in my opinion, iconic of our membership and demonstrates the essential character of VFP as well as anything I've ever read. -- ED

Jim was being interviewed by a reporter unknown to us now. These are his responses:

"In 1945 I was in Hawaii, a young Infantry Major, awaiting the invasion of Japan. When the atomic bomb was dropped and the war ended I was overjoyed. Then I learned that my wife was holding our second child, a son just born, when the radio announced the obliteration of Hiroshima. She cried and exclaimed, 'My God, what kind of world have I brought my baby into?'

"The ensuing years brought on development of our Cold War mentality and an overriding national obsession to defeat Communism and all that it stood for. This became a whole way of life encompassing all of our governments actions. Our entire economy, our industries, our individual mentalities, our military forces, and yes, our very way of life fell victim to our obsession to defeat Communism. And I? As an officer of the army I participated to the utmost of my abilities through positions of greater responsibility.

"With Vietnam the focus of your efforts, I'll explain my role there. During my second tour in the Pentagon, 1957-60, I was involved in planning support for a military force still in the planning stage. Gen. William Westmoreland asked me to come to MACV as Comptroller. Among my staff were a number of Vietnamese civilians and during my year with them they impressed upon me that this was our war, not theirs, and they would have solved their problems by means other than armed struggle. In retrospect, years later, I am convinced of the validity of their wisdom.

"In light of what I had observed over the years and the effect that warfare had on those who fought it or lived through it, my last assignment (Walter Reed Hospital) played a key role in shaping my conversion to peace seeker. It was there that the individual cost of post-traumatic stress and the suffering from serious physical wounds was firmly planted in my mind.

"After eleven years of retirement in Tucson, Arizona, the rumblings of our national 'anti-communism' actions in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua began to come to the forefront in the news. Indigenous Guatemalans and Salvadorans were coming across our southern border as refugees seeking asylum. Our government was resisting and deporting as many of them as possible and mounted a trial of the Sanctuary Movement, a church group giving shelter to the refugees. Lucille and I became daily court watchers and we studied the history of our foreign policy in Latin America. At this point the second element of my conversion enters, an open mind! I began to realize that many of our policies and actions belied the image we try to portray of '...one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all...'

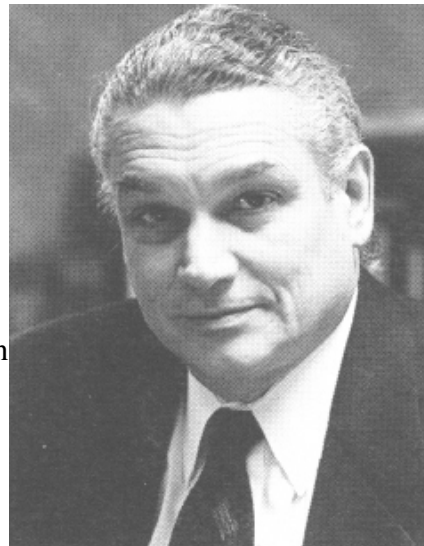
"The short answer to your question, 'How does an officer become a peacemaker?' is, my wife, who never thought a war was fought for the benefit of the common man or woman but rather that it benefited only the political and economic whims of those heads of governments and businesses involved. It must have been that she recognized the seed of peace already within me which only needed her nurturing."

###

CHAPTER 1- THE TRANSITION

Here we record the stories of people personally involved with the changes taking place in Veterans For Peace during the time we moved decisively toward the democracy we became. There is necessary overlap back to the period written about by founder Jerry Genesio, which actually affords us a multiplicity of perspectives on those early days, and a broader foundation for evaluating our future.

Sandy Kelson, President 1996 - Vietnam era veteran, Pennsylvania lawyer.



Sandy's first awareness of VFP

A fellow member of the Allegheny Unitarian Universalist Church, Ty Lukolla, a WWII vet and a fervent anti-war warrior, told me about VFP sometime in the late 1980's. I ended up joining and, maybe a year or so later, went to Nicaragua as a member of the VFP election monitoring team. I understand that our team, of nearly 50 veterans, was the only one that volunteered to serve and did serve in the conflicted zones.

Start of Pittsburgh Chapter

At the time of the Gulf War, we started the Pittsburgh Chapter of VFP. At the first organizational meeting, it was agreed that we would seek permission to hold our monthly meetings at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall, a building dedicated originally to the US Civil War and thereafter to the glorification of all of our subsequent wars. The Hall is operated by the mainline vets' groups, e.g. American Legion, VFW, under an Allegheny County government appointee.

As the newly elected president of the chapter, I wrote for permission to meet at the Hall believing the facility needed a new dedication to peace glorification as opposed to war glorification. Shortly after we applied, we were contacted by the head administrator, a vet and a lawyer, last name Mullen, now deceased. He said we couldn't meet there. I responded by saying that a Pennsylvania statute provides that all vet groups were

authorized to meet there free of charge. He again said we couldn't meet there, explaining that the board did not like our anti-war position. I explained how our constitutional rights were being violated by this decision but it failed to move the man. The media got a hold of the denial and the dispute got lots of press on the radio, TV and in the print media.

The Hall administrators besmirched us publicly. For example, we were accused of being traitors since our anti-war message allegedly gave comfort and aid to Saddam Hussein. (Though I doubt if he ever heard about us). Also, I was called a Communist. (I have since come to realize that if you have never been called a Communist it is likely you have never done anything meaningful in the peace and justice effort).

We responded with firmness and politeness, sticking to the substantive issues and the message of VFP. The ACLU agreed to represent us and filed a civil rights suit in federal court. We temporarily began to hold meetings in the Unitarian Universalist Church basement. We publicized our meetings as being open to all: members, non-members, supporters, non-supporters, the curious. A reporter attended one of our meetings and he reported that we were indeed a subversive and dangerous group since we were conspiring to organize a blood drive and a visitation schedule in the event soldiers who were wounded in the war were brought to the Pittsburgh VA hospital for treatment. VFP won the media war, so to speak, mostly due to the ineptitude of our opponents.

At the first court hearing, the Hall administrators capitulated and a court order was entered that provided the use of the Hall for VFP meetings. When we first formed the chapter, we had only 10 members but, by the time of the court hearing, we had about 80 members. We attributed the large gain in membership to the publicity generated by Mullen's opposition to VFP. Accordingly, we established the Mullen Award to be given to the member who signed up the most new members each year.

During this effort, our chapter had regular contact with National and Jerry Genesisio, the Executive Director and holder of several other VFP positions. These contacts were excellent. I traveled two or three times to Portland and got to know many of the people who had the foresight to found VFP. They were an impressive group of activists. I had found a home; VFP.

Children of War Rescue Project (1994)

In 1993, Jerry and I were agonizing over events in the Balkans. Jerry said VFP members were calling and asking that VFP do something. I don't know who had the idea to start the Children of War Rescue Project but Jerry and I grabbed it and moved forward. The thought was that not only would the project help war-injured children; but we were appalled by fellow citizen's call for the US to bomb. We thought war might be too abstract to many Americans and that they did not fully realize what bombing really meant in terms of human suffering. We wanted to bring the war home to them. We wanted to provoke critical thinking about alternatives to bombing.

So, we wrote to hospitals asking them to provide *pro bono* medical services. The response was generally favorable, although some medical professionals objected to the stressfully long trip to the US, whereas European facilities were closer and just as capable as ours for helping. The US State Department agreed to provide free transportation via US military medevac jets. It all came together and we got kids in.

The first rescued, a teenager, who took a sniper's bullet in the spine on the first day he arrived to help defend Sarajevo, was transported to Pittsburgh. He was diagnosed in Europe as being a permanent quadriplegic. He was older than what we originally expected but we accepted him in the hope that something might be done to change his permanent imprisonment to a bed and wheel chair.

I met the huge medevac jet on the tarmac at night. I watched in the darkness, from a few feet away, as the huge rear section of the jet belly was slowly lowered. At first, all one could see was bright light escaping from the crack of the slowly emerging opening. When the belly lowered enough to see inside I saw, in this huge, brightly lighted cavern, this young person strapped flat on a gurney surrounded by medics and medical equipment and his mother. Tears welled up in my eyes.

Although this young person received considerable help, including physical therapy and a state-of-the-art wheel chair, he was eventually sent home to remain forever a quadriplegic.

More war victims were brought to the States. Several very young children with multiple amputations. One was brought from an Italian hospital suffering from a life threatening infection. Experimental antibiotics saved her young life.

The project ended when the State Department refused to medevac any more children. No explanation was forthcoming. Maybe our anti-war message was being too successful?

Although the project was a success in many ways there were a considerable number of VFP members of good faith who were opposed to the project and who forcibly voiced their objections. The main objection was that VFP was an educational, as opposed to a humanitarian, organization.

Founder, Jerry Genesio, has second thoughts

Jerry took this criticism personally, and very hard. I believe it badly depressed him. By now, 1996, I was the national president of VFP. In this position, I worked closely and regularly with Jerry by mail and telephone. His depression failed to dissipate and he pondered whether it would have been better to have originated VFP as a non-member organization as Bobby Muller had with his Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. Jerry stated that he would not participate in any other project in his capacity as executive director of VFP. He did not want to again be a target of member wrath.

Jerry's depression did not abate. I spoke with him often as a friend and in my capacity as president. My message was that he had to move forward as he was the only full time paid employee of the organization and that meant he had to perform even at the risk of criticism. He would not relent. I finally asked him to visit me in Pittsburgh and he did. I again suggested, this time in person, that he had to perform or resign. He refused to do either.

I began to discuss this matter with trusted members of VFP, one of the most sympathetic and helpful, was Phil Butler. A VFP annual convention was approaching. Phil and I agreed that we should suggest to Jerry that if he wanted to move on that we would try to raise an amount of money equal to one or two years' salary and medical insurance for a certain period as a severance package, and that we would organize a tribute for him at the convention. He certainly had earned it.

Jerry was conflicted over what was happening to him. Somebody suggested that what he was experiencing was common among founders of organizations who identified themselves as the organization. Jerry had many loyal supporters in the New England chapters of VFP. Negotiations, sometimes very emotional, ensued and acceptable terms were finally agreed upon. Jerry resigned and, at the convention, received the honors and severance he had earned and deserved. VFP never would have grown from the original ten founders without the dedication and hard work of Jerry.

Designing a Veteran's Monument (1996)

After the Soldiers and Sailors Hall effort, veterans who managed the Hall became involved in an effort to design, raise funds for and to erect a veteran's monument in the municipality of Penn Hills, the largest municipality in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. Because of the favorable press VFP received from the Children of War Rescue Project, the veterans on the monument committee concluded that we could not be all that bad. I was the only person who did not reside in Penn Hills invited me to be a member of the monument committee. I was honored to serve.

On the day members submitted their monument designs for consideration, I submitted a drawing depicting three children at care free play. It was the last of scores of entries considered. All of the other entrees glorified war and warriors. Laughter filled the room as my drawing was held up. I was asked what three kids at play had to do with veterans. I explained that it was my understanding that the most legitimate reason to go to war was to protect our children and future generations so they could live in peace and freedom and without fear from foreign invaders and, to the extent our military service aided such an end, that the monument depicted it. I suggested that it would be more appropriate for non-veterans to design a monument honoring us as veterans and that we should not glorify ourselves; that it would, however, be appropriate to honor what we proudly believed we helped accomplish. Only one voter opposed the children design.

The committee raised over \$65,000 and hired Peter Calaboyias, a world renowned sculptor, who created the bronze monument. He explained that he was honored to have

been selected to be the artist because he had lived in Greece during the Nazi occupation and understood first hand the significance of the monument's message.

I was honored to address the citizens of Penn Hills on the day of the unveiling of the monument. I explained the idea behind the design and then said that all works of art had to be interpreted by individuals based upon their personal experiences and beliefs. My personal interpretation of the monument was that it was a measuring device. By that, I meant, that the next time the drums of war started to beat that I would visit the monument and ponder whether the drums were beating for a war necessary to protect our children and future generations or if they were beating for some other purpose, like so some guy in a three piece suit sitting behind a huge mahogany desk on the 50th floor of some skyscraper could realize sufficient profits on his foreign investments, like maybe in oil. If the war was for the latter, I'd support it but, if for profits, I'd oppose it. I was worried about the crowd's response to what I said, but I should not have been. They clapped, cheered and whistled.

An extreme right wing US senator spoke after I did. There was a loud booing and jeering response.

The Children of War Project was the catalyst that gave us the opportunity to work in cooperation with veterans who had opposed us and to address an entire community in a major celebration and on a 24/7 basis well into the future through the presence of the monument that is located in front of the Penn Hills Municipal Building.

Conclusion

In addition to the above history, I represented VFP in Dubrovnik and Split for the Children of War Rescue Project, in Hiroshima for the 50th anniversary of the A-Bombing, in France at a French veteran's group's convention, in Canada at a Canadian veteran's group's convention, during a fact-finding mission in Cuba, at speaking engagements all over the US but especially in Pennsylvania at colleges, high schools, churches and other venues, in organizing protests and the marching of VFP contingents in veteran day parades and, most recently, in serving in the Gulf in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

I made serious errors of judgment on occasion and I regret having done so. Most important to me though is that VFP gave me a purpose that filled a need to do something positive in the effort to abolish war and, in doing so, I met, worked with and came to love some of the finest people in the world, veterans and anti-war warriors.

Phil Butler, President 1997 - Vietnam veteran, Navy pilot, prisoner of war for eight years.



I served on the board 5 years total, including 3 years as Chair of the board. According to my calendars it goes like this:

1994/95 - elected to board and served first year of a two year term (I received the third highest number of votes from our membership that year and therefore got the remainder of someone else's term. Can't remember who that was.

1995/96 - second year of two year term, elected Chairman of the board

1996/97 - elected to first year of a 3 year term and served as Chair and board member

1997/98 - served as Chair and board member for second year of term

1998/99 - served as board member for third year of term

With the original bylaws, Genesisio was named Chairman, CEO and Executive Director of VFP. In other words he was the king. Of course this isn't even legal for non-profits registered in Maine, or anywhere else for that matter. So sometime in 1995 I believe Sandy and I were able to begin engineering his ouster, after which we were able to make some changes to those bylaws. Then came the move to Washington D.C. During that time Sandy was elected to be our President in order to conform to the old bylaws. Sandy and I were a good team in that he watched over the day to day operation while I maintained communications with board members and chaired all our meetings, including the Conventions. Sometime during 95 or 96 (I'm not exact on this) we were able to move VFP to Washington D.C.

Finally, in 1998-99, I was tasked to revise and rewrite our then "Constitution" and I was able to convince the board to also rename it "Bylaws." These bylaws finally gave power to the board to elect their own officers and we thereby democratized VFP in accordance with standard non-profit organization law. I believe these bylaws are still in effect today. I am aware of only one amendment since, which concerned what consisted of a quorum at our national conventions. (Another, ratified in 2003 at the convention in San Francisco, extended our Statement of Purpose to include: "To seek justice for veterans and victims of war".)

Phil provided a more detailed account of his tenure and contributions in an e-mail dated January 27, 1997 to David Hart upon his appointment as Executive Director to succeed Jerry Genesisio:

....Briefly, some history on me: I came on the board for a 2 year term in 1994. Was reelected in 1996 and elected Chair of the Board at that time. My reason for coming on the board in the first place was to try to help save us from internal self destruction. Members throughout the country were dissatisfied and downright angry and hostile about the lack of democratic processes in VFP. Jerry was trying to control it and was acting autocratically. Our conventions were full of venomous conflict from the floor and Jerry ran all the convention meetings.

Constitutional Conference

I and others on the board and off were instrumental in instigating a 'Constitutional Conference' which was held in January, 1995 in Kansas City. There were around 35 or

40 attendees to this conference, the purpose of which was to revise our Constitution (in itself a poor choice of name, really our bylaws). Two of our board members were shouted down before I attempted, successfully, to chair the meeting. No particular credit to me other than I was seen as new and thus more neutral, plus my occupation and training is in Social Psychology and Organizational Development so I am a trained and experienced facilitator/Chair.

We did revise the Constitution that day, and Jerry was not happy about it. From that time on I was marked as being in the opposition. At our succeeding convention in San Francisco, the changes were ratified by the membership. Jerry was not there because he was ill, recovering from a heart attack. Sandy was in Hiroshima, representing us at the 50 year anniversary of the first A Bomb drop. One thing we battled about at our board meeting there was the question of “honoring” Jerry properly as one of our founders and as our only E.D. these past 10 years. Some felt he should be a member of our board for life, with voting rights. I was personally ambivalent at the time but grew to be very opposed to the idea as I began to realize how counter that concept was to the intent of our Constitutional Conference, which was to *democratize* VFP. The last thing we needed was a king for life. And as Jerry’s behavior began to be more apparent to me, I became opposed because of who he is and how controlling and self serving.

So, as Chair of the Board, as of August of 1996, I led the board to take a short time out so everyone could think this over. Jerry and four other board members were opposed to any delay and they pressed for immediate action. At first they wanted it done by majority vote. Since this was unconstitutional, I called a point of order and was successful in stopping this move. Then I asked the board for a moratorium on this issue, which was dominating our thinking, energy and efforts, until our January meeting.

Laying out the VFP road map

I wanted the board to focus on our goals, which I had authored and presented to the board upon being elected, and which the board voted unanimously to accept.. These were:

Short-Term Goals (Within 1 year)

- A. Hire an effective Executive Director
- B. Establish our HQ location
- C. Maintain a positive cash flow
- D. Increase VFP active membership from 1500 to 2000
- E. Establish an official VFP National Project

Long-Term Goals (3-5 years)

- A. Annual budget over \$200,000
- B. Active membership over 5,000
- C. Nation-wide recognition of our VFP National Projects

Jerry had also attempted to name himself a board member, which I called to point of order as he had not been elected. He then worked with the four others to attempt to call a special meeting, against my request for moratorium. This did not work because eight of

us (out of 12) were opposed. (Seven signed on to disallow a special meeting in December, just before our normal January meeting. Myer Pettyjohn, who is in the Wartburg prison was not available to actually sign but supported it.)

Well, we finally just had our January teleconference meeting. 2 and 1/2 hours! But I am happy to say we accomplished an amazing amount of stuff. You were item one on that agenda and Washington D.C. was item two. Besides that, when you get the minutes from Neal Daniels, our Secretary, you will read all we did. Everyone was quite civil, with the exception of Ian Walker, who informed us he was tape recording the meeting so he could have documentation on exactly what everyone said.

The constitutional issue from hell, the one about Jerry's position as king for life, was voted down - getting only 4 votes in favor and requiring 8 for board endorsement of constitutional amendment. Besides that, Jerry wrote us all a letter on December 31st, saying he wanted no part of us. So we were voting on him to a position he says he doesn't want. Go figure! Plus I doubt that it will go away until we send it out to membership, without board endorsement, to be voted down there too.

Another thing we voted unanimously in favor of was my proposal for standing board meetings. The wording is:

“Establish the fourth Friday of every month, at 1:00 Eastern time, as our standing board-meeting date. Such standing meetings will be constituted by either a telephone conference (on the first month of each quarter) or as a due date for mail ballots (on the 2nd and 3rd months of the quarter) unless the board elects to proceed differently from the following meeting. Such standing meetings are separate from the constitutionally-provided annual-meetings of the board at our national convention.”

This teleconference meeting was the fourth such in our history. I asked for two of them when Sandy was President in 1995/1996. And I established, by request but not by vote, that we have them quarterly upon assumption of the Chair. This vote establishes it by vote as a standing procedure.

David, I have given you all this to fill in your knowledge on how I see the VFP world. It is my version and I take ownership for it totally. Also, you wanted goals and board meeting procedures, which I have given you here.

Beyond this, I am working very hard to focus this board on our future. I believe we have a solid majority doing it now but it has been a struggle.

So I am just thrilled to hear you talk about our future, our short and long-term goals, and above all, our budget and cash flow. Money is something I've been trying to push since I came on the board but most folks don't want to get involved in fund raising, or they may not even see the need for it. But you are right on the money. No pun intended. And we need to raise lots of it soon. As Sandy has said, we should do things other than tap out the good will of our directors and members.

I am so thankful you are on board. And I promise to never bore you with the past again, unless asked, but I wanted you to have my story. Please also know that we are truly blessed with Sandy Kelson. He is a our finest human asset and we do have many fine human assets in this club.

Take care and I do look forward to meeting with you personally, soon. Please feel free to call, e-mail or fax me about anything at any time.

Peace,

Phil

Ed Hart, President 1995 - WWII Marine Airman

We leave it to Ed to summarize and evaluate what happened – and to give us a set of important caveats for the future.

Jerry's history of the first 10 years was relatively easy. He was telling his own story, and nobody was given the opportunity to contradict him (or had any real strong inclination to do so).

But by the time we'd completed 10 years we'd almost destroyed our infant organization. We'd elevated simple internal opposition to actual hatred.

Hatred comes easily to people who've been trained and have become experienced in the violent resolution of conflict, and by the time our conflicts had come to the head that saw the replacement of Jerry Genesis they'd matured to raw hatred.

Jerry had done the impossible with VFP, and had done it at great cost to himself, financially, emotionally and in several other ways.

The accomplishments of Jerry Genesis

He had a good job as New England representative for a burgeoning pharmaceutical corporation, and he was well paid. But in 1985 Central America was the top topic for hot-headed opponents of injustice, and Nicaragua was the most prominent cause, and he learned that his company was doing blood business with the dictator who ran Nicaragua with the support of the United States-literally. Somoza was extracting blood from his citizens and selling it to Jerry's employer, who was getting rich from its sale in this country.

He'd been kicking the idea around with friends in Maine and New Hampshire and he decided to restart Veterans for Peace (it had two earlier lives), quit his job, and live on his disability pension and whatever VFP could pay him.

He did it. He set up VFP's office in his home, he traveled at his own expense, bought the organization's stamps out of his pocket and put its phone calls on his own tab. He enlisted his wife to handle the business end of running the outfit and did the rest himself, with the help of a handful of fellow enthusiasts.

He persuaded others from the Vietnam era and a few older birds to start chapters, and recruit members with almost no restrictions on eligibility. He traveled from city to city to fan the fires he'd kindled and organized conventions. He applied his sales experience to fund raising and publicity projects. All the things we've since had a hard time getting upwards of 2000 members to do, he did single-handedly, or nearly so. (He put out a quarterly Journal, wrote almost all the articles ...himself, pecked out the camera-ready copy on his own little Apple, and assumed responsibility for the cost of printing and mailing, for instance.)

He was imaginative and indefatigable. He made friends and enemies from coast to coast, and a few overseas. He got all the ideas and executed them. He established the format of the conventions and recruited national figures to address the 100-odd souls he could persuade to attend them. (Scott Camil, famed for his resistance to the Vietnam war, had recruited all his friends and relatives in the southeastern states and was a powerful force in the young organization; he and the Smedley Butler brigade, which had recruited Smedley D.'s son Tom, advocated a veterans' convention, housed in tents on public grounds and clothed to match. Jerry nixed the notion and alienated his national movement from its strongest local elements. Jerry's position was buttressed by the views of John Ketwig, author of "...AND A HARD RAIN FELL", who submitted a strong argument to the Journal supporting that school. Jerry wanted a good hotel, lots of coats and ties and at least once said he regretted making VFP a membership organization. He wanted to run it himself with the backing of a board of respected and acquiescent citizens.

Good ideas... But

Most of Jerry's ideas were good--better than those of his opposition. He appreciated the PR value of kids, especially wounded kids, kids operated on in a tent with crude instruments with plum brandy for an anesthetic. He formed the Children of War Rescue Project (and incorporated it in his own name and under his control), lined up treatment resources in the States, negotiated the serpentine course through the UN's human rights organization and the U.S. State Department, joined a caravan from Britain to Bosnia and brought the kids out under fire in dismal but dramatic conditions. He produced a videotape of the operation and got illustrated stories into hometown newspapers wherever the kids were treated. (The Alabama chapter broke the logjam in UNHRC, who insisted that wounded soldiers be given priority, by accepting two of the preferred type of patients. One died the first Thanksgiving morning and the other endured 22 operations during the next dozen years and survived to marry a hometown girl and have his own daughter last summer.)

Opposition grows

Jerry was shocked by the bitter opposition. The battle cry was that the project was grandstanding, good for fund raising and recruiting but ineffective for peacemaking. Neither side thought of a larger tent that might consider the mission from both the "educational" and "activist" sides, and neither side appeared to be making a totally honest argument. The truth, probably, was that Jerry had antagonized so many natural- and elected-leaders that he couldn't have sold any program at that point. What's more, he didn't want to.

Rebellion spread over the west coast, the Midwest and the industrial east, but was focused in a few chapters: Los Angeles, at that point the largest in VFP, San Francisco, where favorite son Gordon Smith and his Hearts and Minds project had been denied VFP recognition because of informal management, Tucson, whose underwriter, Col. Jim Burkholder, had been effectively impeached from VFP's presidency, Minneapolis, whose many "associate" members were refusing to pay national dues, Philadelphia, whose membership was loyal to Jim Burkholder, and Boston, naturally rebellious from the beginning but probably resentful of the treatment that had incensed Marine Col. John Barr, former president and inventor of the Abolish War! campaign. All had become estranged after clumsy and antagonistic, bull-headed treatment.

Jerry was a natural-born salesman, and almost everyone appreciated his sacrifices for the organization. A couple of us tried to persuade him to go on a missionary tour, and offered to finance it. But Jerry refused, agreeing to visit only Pittsburg and Huntsville, where the hicks still loved him. (We did prevail upon him to go to Kansas City for a constitutional convention, but he sulked while others struggled to save his big undertaking.)

Stubbornness almost lethal

It should be clear that stubborn unwillingness to compromise or to share leadership and titles nearly sank the ship. But the stubbornness had two sides. Chapter leaders in most of the critical chapters were as unwilling to seek an agreement as Jerry was. It was us, not him. The really effective us folks were concentrated in California and Arizona at the beginning, with chapters in the rest of the country mostly suffering from an infection by association. Later, people in Missouri joined in, and Sandy Kelson and I, who counted ourselves among Jerry's best friends and staunchest supporters, came aboard. Jerry and his loyalists focused their wrath on Sandy and me and on Phil Butler, as I believe they should have. I, for instance, was unreasonable and unreasoning in my little-dog yapping about Jerry's sleight-of-hand on the Children of War Rescue Project, and because of that lost the respect of Ralph Weymouth, Steve Fournier and Ian Walker; even if I'd been 100% right it wouldn't have been worth that much.

It's hard to think of an excuse for the management of our day--Jerry Genesio, Sandy Kelson, Phil Butler and me, especially. But folks like Jim Burkholder and Lou Sinclair and the folks in leadership positions in Boston, Philadelphia, Minneapolis and Phoenix. The political climate was a lot easier to work in, and peace was not yet such a dirty

word. But we couldn't get along, and VFP was rapidly disintegrating. By 1996 paid-up membership had fallen off to something like 500, and perhaps even lower. It was impossible to get from the executive director an accurate count: "Oh, about two or three thousand" was as close as you could get.

It had come to a head. Bitterness spread wherever there was interaction with the front office. No friendship with Jerry could survive election to the presidency. Convention sponsors came under harsh criticism. Even the St. Louis chapter was under fire. Jerry himself appeared to be near breakdown. He had some kind of a cardiac incident, perhaps a heart attack, and missed the 1995 convention. Jerry has since severed all connections to VFP and he and Judy broke up. (The marriage has since been repaired, but the last I heard of Jerry was that he was a volunteer at the Portland public library.) Peace organizations, especially those that are built around a base of veterans, we know are fragile organizations.

Tension between “educators” and “activists”

I don't know if the old problems persist, but I'd be prepared for conflicts to develop between the "educators" and the "activists." Ten years ago I was surprised to realize that the educators were more rigid and intolerant than the activists—perhaps it was because the activists found their frustrations to be more easily dissipated in travel and labor, while the educators felt their words were not often heard or published, and almost never acted upon. On this point, see Fr. Roy Bourgeois, or at least read his advice on page 7 of the VFP Journal for Spring 1997. ¹

It seems to me that there's room in any organization for both types. The educators should recognize that they need concrete accomplishments (such as water works, treatment facilities for wounded children, and rehab projects for disabled veterans) to remind the public of the inanities and futility of war, and to give citizens programs to work on and contribute to. And activists should realize that the objectives of the educators are the only ones that endure. Water works will fail again, more innocents will be found to be injured and repaired, and new wars will produce new veterans, who'll have new problems. Both groups are important, and they both need each other.

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For peace organizations to succeed, Father Roy advises, we must *first* have peace within our hearts and lives and organizations. Differences will arise, he recognizes, but the parties “gotta come to the table, they gotta speak, gotta dialogue, gotta overcome barriers.” And *second* they must select their issues and projects. *Third* they must reach out, get into schools, churches, forums. Knock on doors. Approach new people—teachers, ministers’ groups.

“Veterans are very credible,” he says. “people pay attention to us. Hut we can’t sit around, talk, and come up with position papers. We won’t live long that way. We must go outside our own group to stay healthy and grow.”

CHAPTER 2 - RECONCILIATION AT THE POINT OF SEPARATION

It was at the 1996 VFP convention in Columbia, Missouri, that Jerry Genesisio formally resigned as Executive Director of Veterans For Peace. In his last communique, Jerry cited an experience in Nicaragua as the triggering event leading to the formation of Veterans For Peace.

The irony was apparent to many, therefore, when former combatants from Nicaragua and El Salvador stood before us and spoke of reconciliation, carrying forward the theme of the convention to a future without Jerry Genesisio.

Jerry Genesisio Story

The fall, 1996 VFP Journal was the last edited by Jerry Genesisio. In it, he tells his story:

Looking Back

As you know I am leaving my post as Executive Director of Veterans for Peace on November 15 after serving for eleven years in that position, since the organization was founded in 1985. Looking back, which I have been doing quite a bit lately, and wondering what I want to say to you at this bend in the road, I find myself wanting to tell you, more than anything else, what VFP is to me. I can't do that without looking back more than half a century.

I grew up in a working-class, Catholic family of Italian heritage in Milford, Massachusetts, the second of three sons. Our father died in 1950, when I was 12, and my older brother, a red-headed, freckled-faced kid then 14, became my role model. Six years later, when the Soviet Union invaded Hungary, the year that I graduated from high school, my brother Red, who was in the National Guard, volunteered for active duty with the Army, and I enlisted in the Marine Corps.

Of course, we never were sent to help the Hungarians, it was an election year, and in 1962 I returned to civilian life. But my brother, Red, decided to stay in the Army. He went from a tank unit, to the airborne, and finally volunteered for Special Forces receiving a commission along the way. In 1969, he volunteered for combat duty in Vietnam and on July 24 of that year, then a Captain, he was killed in action.

I knew he died for a noble cause. I just couldn't identify it at the time. I was confused. And I was angry. And that anger burned within me for many years. In the early 1970s, when Vietnam war protesters stood on the steps of the Capitol Building in Washington and read the names of those Americans who had died in Vietnam, I was furious because I

believed they were dishonoring those who had sacrificed their lives for principles we were all raised to believe in.

*Over the course of more than a decade, in a search for the noble cause that so many Americans died for in Vietnam, I read everything about that damnable war that I could find including ~ Pentagon Papers and Frank Snepp's Decent Interval, and the confusion lifted like morning fog; my anger began to find a focus that felt right — one I was comfortable with. Then, in 1984, my wife, Judy, and I volunteered to serve as delegates on a Witness for Peace fact-finding mission to **Nicaragua**. It was there, in the eyes of children needlessly suffering because of a war sponsored and funded by my government, that I came to understand what the Vietnam war protesters had been trying to tell me. I remembered my brother's letters and of how painfully troubled he was by the suffering of the Vietnamese children, and I finally understood his noble cause and that of the millions of others who have been victimized by war throughout the course of human history. Each and every one of these tragedies has, like a rock tossed into the sea, created a wave of pain that has rippled through the hearts of entire families and tribes and clans and towns and villages and states and nations. Perhaps one day, if humanity can survive long enough in spite of itself, the pain of the masses may become so acutely intense that governments will be forced to declare an end to this insanity we call war.*

Veterans for Peace is many things to many people. For me, it is a living memorial to my brother. It has been a very personal and emotional experience. Beyond that, it has accomplished a lot. Far more than might have been expected from our numbers. And you have made it all possible. The values that we have embraced will survive because they are ideas, whether in the minds of millions of peaceful warriors, or just a few good men and women scattered across our planet who believe that the human race can, and one day will see all of its children laughing, and playing, and living in peaceful harmony. Carry on!

Jerry Genesisio

Also in that issue Jerry published the stories of former combatants, now disabled, Victor Zuniga, Salvadoran FMLN and Carlos Batres of the Salvadoran government forces --- and, Carlos Garcia, Nicaraguan Resistance fighter and Bernabe' Martinez, Sandinista soldier:

Salvadoran & Nicaraguan Veterans - In Washington

The reconciliation theme of this years convention was dramatically captured by our Central American guests who collectively represented four separate forces converging for the common good. Not long ago, Victor Zuniga was a soldier of the Farabundo Marti Liberation Front which was at war with the El Salvadoran government forces in which Carlos Bartres served. Today, Zuniga and Batres are working together and with Veterans for Peace in a project that provides prosthetic devices for soldiers and civilians alike who lost limbs during the Salvadoran civil war.

Likewise. Cabs Garcia was a Commandante in the Nicaraguan Resistance (Contra) Army which was at war with the Nicaraguan Government's Sandinista Army in which Bernabé Martinez served. Today they, too, are working together in self-help projects focusing on reconciliation and economic development in a courageous effort to heal their war-torn nation.

Dr. Bendaña (Director of Nicaragua's Center for International Studies and convention keynote speaker) proudly told us that his child, whose maternal grandfather is Nicaragua's former Sandinista President Daniel Ortega, often plays with the child of Cabs Garcia who is directly related to former President Anastasio Somoza.

There is a bittersweet irony in VFP's good fortune to having had these five Central American peacemakers join us in celebrating the 11th anniversary of our founding in 1985. It was, after all, our own government's role in sponsoring the violence in Central America that provoked us to organize VFP in the first place.

Immediately following the convention, VFP Director/Treasurer David Silk and former VFP Vice President Peter Shaw accompanied Victor Zuniga, Carlos Batres, Carlos Garcia and Bernabé Martinez to Washington, DC where, from September 3-5, they met with U.S. Government and Congressional officials and leaders of several Washington-based Latin America focus groups. They hoped to enlighten these individuals regarding the questions of reconciliation and reintegration of ex-combatants and the *campesino* class in general, and to counter insofar as possible, the notion that Nicaragua and El Salvador are great successes in the post-conflict construction of peace, democracy and stability. They also wished to network with the NGO, political and donor communities as to funding potential for future projects. In the case of El Salvador, to explore possibilities for a joint ASALDIG/ALFAES project with emphasis on reconciliation.

Following these meetings. David Silk, in a report to the Board of Directors, concluded that attempts made to influence the political process were "singularly unproductive", but viewed as an attempt to locate potential sources of funding for future projects. their efforts were successful.

Doors were opened and interest was shown on the part of funding agencies and by some NGOs. Silk recommended that with "specific programs/projects to present another visit should be undertaken."

Comments on Jerry Genesio's Departure

The next issue of the Journal, Spring, 1997, carried these commentaries on Jerry Genesio's departure:

Howard Zinn --

— I joined Veterans for Peace as soon as I learned of its existence, because I believe that veterans of our various wars are in the best position to speak out powerfully to our fellow citizens about the futility of war, even the good wars.

I wish you the best of luck and hope the organization grows, because even without a going war, the preparations for war, the quarter of a trillion dollars in the military budget, are starving the needs of the people, and poisoning our soul.

Howard Zinn is author of more than a dozen books, including A People's History of the United States, Declarations of Independence, and You Can't Be Neutral on a Moving Train. His is one of the most powerful voices for peace and justice the 20th century has produced.

Rev. Ron Mosely ---

-- Jerry recruited me when he came to Halifax to speak at the first VANA Canada national convention in 1988. His message was as timely and powerful and spoke to my needs and to my heart as did the printed story, "Blood of the Poor: Jerry Genesisio," by Melissa Everett in her book, *Breaking Ranks*. As a WWII US Army Chaplain, I wanted to spend at least part of what's left of my life working for justice and peace through VFP.

I'm trying to put myself in Jerry's shoes. Did the VFP board do all in its power to include Jerry in all discussions, especially in earlier ones? We all have big egos with goals and priorities, mostly legitimate. Often they are intertwined. We often insult people when we don't mean to.

I ask these questions because I was taught a great lesson earlier this month at a meeting of Nova Scotia VANA (of which I am president). We were discussing how to get the local governments, bar and medical associations, religious groups, etc. to endorse Abolition 2000: We call on the Government of Canada and all nations to immediately negotiate a convention before the year 2000 which sets out a binding timetable for the abolition of all nuclear weapons in the world.

The meeting got off into a discussion of asking the Greater Halifax Municipal Council to vote to declare the area a nuclear weapons-free zone. The NATO fleet often docks in Halifax for R and R, and the US Navy will neither confirm nor deny it has nuclear weapons on board.

I was impatient; time was going by, and our 75-mile drive home on wintry roads was in my mind. I called the meeting out of order and told them the question on the table was Abolition 2000, not a nuclear weapons-free zone. I don't think the meeting had ever been ruled out of order before. They reassured me that they did business by consensus. I was legally right, but I now know that any business meeting I conduct in the future will be by consensus. They are morally responsible Canadians who get things done with common approval and good feelings.

I'm concerned about VFP's future. I'll support it as long as I feel it is true to its goals. After all, you in VFP are the ones who are keeping faith with the great American documents and want to truly make the USA "the land of the free and the home of the brave" (not "the land of the naive and home of the deceived.")

Ron Mosley was one of VFP's earliest foreign members, and continues to be one of its most generous. He's been VANA's perennial delegate to VEP conventions longer than many of us old salts have been members, and his greetings to the assembly have been

among the most pithy statements received there. He was seriously wounded as senior chaplain with US infantry in the Ardennes, but now resides and works for peace and justice in Nova Scotia.

Stick with us, Ron. We think your faith will be restored. —Editors

Ben Josephson, MD ---

I have just completed the recent issue of the *journal* of VFP (Winter 1996). What a hatchet job you did to Jerry Genesisio! You may be opposed to the acts of physical warfare, but, according to that which I read, you are masters of psychological warfare. How petty and hurtful can you, supposedly adults, be! This man has given his all to your organization, only to be crushed by your actions.

I cannot, in good faith, remain a member of an organization which treats one of its members in such a manner, especially the one who created the organization. Please remove my name from your list of members. As an additional protest, I am returning the meaningful citation and Medal of Honor presented to me in recognition for my participation in the Mostar, Bosnia trip with VFP for Operation Angel.

Ben Josephson holds VFP's Medal of Honor for his participation in Operation Operation Angel wit/i the Children of War Rescue Project

Editor Ed Hart's response: *Dr. Josephson is apparently incensed by the article on the October 18 Board of directors meeting which appeared in the Fall issue of the VFP Journal, but gave an erroneous report of the proceedings. The article stated that the board voted down a motion to appoint Jerry to a one-year seat while the necessary amendment to the VFP Constitution could he made to allow his appointment to the position of Founding Director, which the membership at the San Francisco convention instructed the board to find a way to accomplish.*

Such a motion was drafted and forwarded to board members before the meeting. However, since it mistakenly stated that provisions of Maine law would allow such action, the movant accepted a friendly amendment to his motion to make the appointment before the Constitution could be amended, and then refer the action to the membership for after-the-fact ratification.

It was that action, perceived by some to be irregular, that split the board and caused Jerry to state that he would not accept the Founding Director title.

Dr. Josephson is right; the board did not handle the action well, and feelings were ruffled on both sides of the question. Probably no one on the board is happy with the result, and from the ring of his letter others feel the same way. Two new members on the board, Edilith Eckart and Myer Pettyjohn, were on different sides of the divisive questions, but both come down on the side of harmony.

Myer Pettyjohn —

It would seem to me that the most logical, reasonable and fair thing to do is just amend the constitution to let Jerry be recognized as Founding Director. If for some reason we can not get this done right away, I would like to suggest that I step down and that he be appointed to take my place.

Edilith Eckart —

I am still in the groan zone, but I felt it necessary for my integrity, to speak my views and be heard, not necessarily agreed with. When the amendment to the constitution is presented, I will thoughtfully listen and reflect on all views, vote my conscience and go with what is constitutionally decided. It is with great inner joy that I am part of this group and its potential for global significance.

CHAPTER 3 – THE MOVE TO D.C.

David Hart was mentioned in Phil Butler's material in the first chapter. David was a young, idealistic, non-veteran professional manager who impressed the board of directors very favorably with his youthful energy and enthusiasm The Spring 1997 issue of the Journal carried this up-beat assessment by Acting President Sandy Kelson:

January 24, 1997, David Hart enthusiastically accepted the Board's offer to be executive director of national VFP.

Throughout our selection process David stood out among impressive competition as exactly the kind of person we need to help build VFP into a stronger, more vibrant organization. David is a veteran activist who combines a firm academic background in peacemaking with years of grassroots organizing experience.

He comes to us with a master's degree in political science from Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. He earned that degree and two conflict Resolution Certificates of Achievement while working with the Program on Analysis and Resolution of Conflict (PARC) and the institute in Creative Conflict Management. His previous academic training includes a BA from Oberlin College, where he had two majors, Peace and Conflict Studies and Government, and two minors, Religion and Black Studies.

Because of his commitment to community service he was selected to deliver the baccalaureate address at Oberlin's 1986 graduation exercises.

His activist experience is just as impressive. David served with distinction as executive director of Peace Action Maine and the Bucks County Peace Centers. His references were enthusiastic about his vision, knowledge, and speaking ability. Special mention was made of his passionate commitment to making the world more peaceful and just.

They told us that David would excite us with his vision and challenge us with his call to building our organizational clout.

Our conversations to date have convinced us that his references were correct. In fact, the National Peace Foundation included him in their 1995 Honor Roll. Also included are VFP's own Vice Admiral Ralph Weymouth and such other notables as Coretta Scott King, Elise Boulding, Roger Fisher, Senator Mark Hatfield, Father Theodore Hesburgh, and Andrew Young.

We're expecting great things from you, David. No pressure, but we'll be watching... and helping, too.

The first issue of the VFP Journal to be published after the move to D.C., edited by David Hart, carried this up-beat story of our welcome in that town:

Veterans for Peace Enthusiastically Welcomed to Washington, DC – April 1997

The DC community embraced VFP with warmth and enthusiasm for our proud history and our bright future at a reception on Saturday, April 12th.

Representatives from many prominent organizations came to the Stuart Mott House to wish VFP good luck in our new HQ in DC. They recognize that VFP has a unique and powerful voice on issues of concern to their organizations, and are hopeful that VFP will serve as a significant resource to the peace and justice community.

VFP's national board of directors was particularly pleased to be joined by Carol Richardson of School of the Americas Watch, Richard Eldredge of the American Legion, and Lora Lumpe of the Federation of American Scientist's Arms Sales Monitoring Project. We are thrilled to be so close to old friends, and are equally excited to be making important new contacts.

Although unable to attend, several prominent individuals sent greetings through our executive director, David Hart. Eugene Carroll, Rear Admiral USN (Ret.), deputy director of the Center for Defense Information, wrote, "Dear Mr. Hart: Welcome to Washington! I regret that I will be at the U.N. in New York on the 12th and unable to join you. Please extend all best wishes to the fine members of Veterans for Peace and remind them that all of us at CDI are here to help. Call on us any time we may be of assistance."

Stephen Strickland, president of the National Peace Foundation, wrote, "Dear David: All of us here are delighted to know about your new position as executive director for Veterans for Peace and to know that you are close by. Congratulations and all good wishes." Thomas Westropp, VFP member and former chair of the National Peace Academy Campaign, wrote, "Dear David, "Congratulations on your new assignment as head of Veterans for Peace. They are lucky to find a man of your caliber and I am sure the organization will progress and grow in importance under your leadership." The spirit of those gathered was ebullient. The mood was upbeat and positive. May this spirit infuse all our important work to come.

###

But the honeymoon did not last very long

Here is Sandy Kelson, again, looking back on David Hart's interim as Executive Director:

Phil Butler became president and I the vice president. Paul Walker, Jim Steinhagen and I were appointed as search committee for a new Executive Director. I warned the prospective employee, David Hart, at the time he was informed of our decision to hire him that he had to realize that if he accepted our offer that he would be the only full time employee and he had to do grunt work until VFP grew. The position was not like one with a well established and well funded organization.

The new director helped move VFP from Portland to D.C.

After the move, I and other members, including one who had served temporarily as Executive Director, Lee Vander Laan, and who worked closely with the new director, quickly became disheartened with his performance. However, others supported him fully. My objection was that he was not performing. He failed to be in the office with any degree of regularity and he failed to make reports about what he was supposed to be doing. I think he may have been overwhelmed with the job. He was young and may have found himself in a position above his head.

I felt responsible for having been a member of the search team who hired the Executive Director whose performance I found inadequate. Phil mediated between my harsh criticism of the director's performance and those who supported him.

I fought hard for the Board of Directors to demand a quick change in the director's attitude and, if there was no change, I advocated that he should be discharged. I found no merit in the position of those who supported him and I became very aggressive and horribly antagonistic. I think I felt personally responsible for VFP and that I had put it in jeopardy. I was afraid for the continued viability of the organization.

The director resigned after bitter infighting (February 1998) that I take full responsibility for. I think I was right in the position I took, but I handled it in a negative and aggressive way. I think what happened to me is not unlike what had happened to Jerry.

I was happy to see David Hart at the last demonstration against the war in Washington. He greeted me warmly and I learned that he is happily employed in an important position with a non-profit group.

The other mistake I feel responsible for loomed on the horizon; selecting and advocating Washington D.C as the location for VFP headquarters. I think many came to believe that

the environment inside the beltway was corrosive of VFP's effort. Members of foresight moved our headquarters to Missouri, into the heartland, and I attribute that move as being a great benefit to the organization. The other great benefit was decentralization and democratization of the group through the efforts of many but especially of Phil Butler, Peter Shaw and Woody Powell.

Meanwhile, the membership marched on

Even though VFP was suffering internal injuries, externally our members were increasingly active, making an imprint on the nation and the world, examining and reporting on the various costs of war and ways to avoid war. Excerpted selections from the 1997 collection of VFP Journals, edited by Ed Hart, later by then new Executive Director, David Hart, (no relation) shows a wide range of war and peace-related issues being pursued by our membership. It serves to emphasize a defining characteristic of VFP; it's inherent eclecticism, that is both a source of strength and frustration to the leadership.

VFP offers good offices in Peru (1997)

Veterans for Peace has invited leaders of both sides in the Peruvian hostage-taking standoff to take advantage of the good offices of veterans in negotiating an end to the crisis while there is still time to prevent bloodshed in the incident.

Acting President **Sandy Kelson** extended the offer to both Alberto Fujimori, president of Peru, and Nestor Cerpa, leader of the MRTA. Kelson invited Fusen Heishi No Kai, VFP's Japanese counterpart, to join in the response to any invitation from Peru. Members of the Tupac Arnaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA) took control of the Japanese embassy compound on December 14. They had gained entry to the embassy as waiters at a dinner attended by high ranking members of the Peruvian government and of the diplomatic corps, including North Americans.

At the *Journal's* press time, 72 hostages were being held. Tentative pre-meetings have taken place, but both sides continue in their positions; the MRTA insists they'll die in place rather than leave before their comrades are released from prison, and the president refuses to negotiate with terrorists.

Semantics are important. The MRTA doesn't want to be called terrorists and the government says it will dialog hut never negotiate.

###

Gulf War Syndrome—no cause, no cure

77,000 vets and dependents report illness (1997)

“I don’t know what I got,” paratrooper **Brian Martin** told the *San Jose Mercury News*, “but it’s killing me.”

Gulf War illness, initially called Gulf War syndrome, is still a mystery. The Pentagon at first denied there was any such thing. It then admitted that it might have affected a few dozen.

By October 1986, the official estimate had risen to more than 15,000. But veterans or their dependents have made about 77,000 reports of the illness; that’s more than 10% of the troops deployed to the theater.

Several possible causes have been investigated.

An early and still plausible one was advanced by **Dan Fahey** VFP San Francisco member, Commander of VFW’s Bill Motto chapter and Swords to Plowshares worker. He studied the effects of depleted uranium used in tank armor and shells.

Pyridostigmine bromide (PB) pills administered by the army to combat nerve-gas attacks became suspect when it was disclosed that French soldiers and others that hadn’t used them weren’t reporting the illness.

Pesticides used to kill desert insects are another chemical possibility still under investigation.

One navy construction battalion that was particularly hard hit by the problem alleged they were dosed by chemicals from a Scud missile that exploded over them.

The oil-well fires ignited by Iraqis driven from Kuwait were blamed by others for the problems they’ve experienced.

Many veterans were told it was all in their heads.

The currently most popular theory lays the problem to the destruction of Iraq’s Khamisiyah ammunition dump in March 1991. One factor lending credibility to that possibility is the great effort the Pentagon made to cover up the presence of deadly chemical agents in the munitions stored there.

Whatever the cause, or causes, the effects have been many and real.

Ailments range from simple forgetfulness to cancer to serious birth defects among children conceived after the return of veterans from the gulf, with joint pain, fatigue, headache, sleep disturbance and skin problems often listed among the symptoms.

As obscure as the cause may be, the problem is real. The National Gulf War Resource Center (then under the directorship of Charles Sheehan-Miles, later Steve Robinson) has undertaken to provide a voice for sufferers.

###

U.S. Army report questions use of depleted uranium **DU Munitions: Long-term Hazard for Vets & Civilians**

by Dan Fahey - (1997)

I recently met at a local VFP center with a group of Gulf War veterans having health problems. We talked about the various toxic exposures in the Gulf War, and the potential impacts of these exposures alone or in combination with other factors. When I mentioned exposures to depleted uranium, I was met with blank stares. Six years after Desert Storm, these veterans were hearing for the first time that armor-piercing rounds fired by American tanks and A-10 aircraft were made of depleted uranium, a highly toxic and radioactive byproduct of the uranium enrichment process.

All of the vets in the group were having health problems, and a couple are grappling with PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) issues. These veterans are not alone in their ignorance of depleted uranium. Before, during and after Desert Storm, military commanders withheld even basic warnings from virtually all US troops about the use and dangers of depleted uranium munitions.

As a result, thousands — quite possibly tens of thousands — of US and coalition soldiers climbed on and entered Iraqi weapons systems which had been destroyed and contaminated with depleted uranium.

When a depleted uranium round impacts a target, up to 70% of the round burns and is scattered in small particles in and around the target. Depleted uranium (DU) poses its greatest danger when it enters the body via ingestion or inhalation of DU dust, contamination of wounds, or as a result of wounds caused by DU shrapnel. Once inside the body, depleted uranium can cause cancers, kidney problems, leukemia, birth defects and other health problems.

On April 4, 1997, I met with several Pentagon officials at the Pentagon to discuss depleted uranium exposures in Desert Storm. I was extremely frustrated to hear them say that they think only about sixty vets were exposed to DU in the Gulf. When I asked them a question they could not or did not want to answer, they responded by saying that you have to weigh the costs of depleted uranium (read severe health and environmental consequences) against the benefits (effective at piercing armor).

An Army report completed in July 1990 — six months *before* Desert Storm — also expressed military concern about depleted uranium in terms of a cost-benefit analysis: “Following combat ... the condition of the battlefield, and the long-term health risks to natives and combat veterans may become issues in the acceptability of the continued use of DU kinetic energy penetrators.” (Danesi, ME., US Army Armament, Munitions and

Chemical Command, "Kinetic Energy Penetrator Long Term Strategy Study, July 24, 1990, Appendix 0. Vol. 2, 3-4)

As awareness of depleted uranium has grown, veterans' groups such as the National Gulf War Resource Center have increased their pressure on Congress to evaluate the dangers of depleted uranium penetrators. Individual members and chapters of Veterans for Peace from California, Michigan, Minnesota and Indiana have also been active in calling attention to these dangers.

Depleted uranium munitions have been getting more attention in recent months. Project Censored picked DU as one of its Top 10 most under-reported or censored stories of 1996. The May 26 issue of *The Nation* had an excellent cover story on DU. A New York film company is doing a documentary on DU which will air around Veterans Day on the Arts and Entertainment channel on cable TV.

As the US military expands its use of DU penetrators, and more countries add DU munitions to their arsenals, the risks to the health of soldiers and civilians increases while the advantage provided by the DU rounds decreases. By examining the legacy of land mines, nuclear weapons and Agent Orange, we can foresee the health and environmental devastation which could accompany the use of depleted uranium weapons in the conflicts of the next century and beyond. With this scenario in mind, let us act to prevent it from becoming a reality.

###

Close the School of the Americas

Father Roy Bourgeois, Priest of Peace and Justice (1997)



Father Roy Bourgeois, an authentic hero of the peace movement and member of Veterans For Peace, tells of plans for SOA Watch — including some that just incidentally apply to VFP's transition process . . . He's been in a process of transition of his own since Vietnam days, when he volunteered at a Catholic orphanage while

recovering from wounds and decided to spend his life helping poor people instead of killing them. But that's several other stories...

There's never been a better time for doing peace and justice work, Father Roy Bourgeois told the Journal. The Maryknoll priest and leader of the School of Americas Watch was overflowing with enthusiasm when the *Journal* talked with him in mid-February

Released just before Christmas from six months in Atlanta's Federal Prison Camp (following conviction for civil disobedience at the School of the Americas last year), Father Roy had spent a few days trout fishing and feasting with his family in Louisiana's Cajun country before striking out on a whirlwind speaking tour in January that included Minneapolis, Yale and the University of Connecticut, then a planning session in D.C.

He explained why this is such a good time for our kind of work. "All during the Cold War audiences used Communism as an excuse for their reluctance to accept our message," he said. "Now their excuse is gone. It's still not the Sixties, but the students are out there and they're fired up."

He's been surprised by the size of the audiences and their enthusiasm, father Roy said.

Minneapolis VFP turned out 200 in 8-below-zero weather his first day there and 350 more the next day. Yale University got out a good crowd for the first time, and even more showed up at the University of Connecticut. The crusading priest will be at Notre Dame and in the Midwest in March, and then it's on to Washington for the annual vigil on the Capitol steps April 19-29.

Congressman Joe Kennedy's just introduced HR 611 returns to the complete "Close the Doors" shutdown of SOA, abandoning alternatives such as revising the school's curriculum.

###

That spring, using the new facility in D.C. to coordinate events, Veterans for Peace came to say: *Close the Doors of SOA!* (1997)

Veterans for Peace members from thirteen states came to Washington in April for a ten-day vigil on the Capitol steps, intensive Congressional lobbying, and a "Pentagon parade-ground theater" action to close the US Army School of the Americas (SOA). VFP groups from as far away as California, Minnesota, Alabama, Maine and Florida joined about 1,000 others as part of the SOA Watch-sponsored Vigil and Lobby Action, April 19-29,

Rep. Joseph Kennedy, leading congressional critic of the SOA, **David Hart** and other VFP members led the closing ceremony for the Vigil on the Capitol steps. They worked in collaboration with the Ecumenical Program in Central America (EPICA), another organization working to close the SOA.

As part of the SOA Watch event, Veterans for Peace groups also participated in an April 28 vigil and action at the Pentagon. Seventeen people, including six Catholic nuns and two clergy, were arrested for digging a mass grave on the Pentagon parade ground. "Uncle Sam," dragging poor people from Latin America, led a procession of 225 veterans, religious leaders, students, and peace activists around the Pentagon in a silent funeral procession. At the parade ground, "soldiers" reenacted a death squad-style execution. With the first shot, 100 protesters planted a graveyard of crosses to commemorate the thousands of victims of SOA-spawned violence. At the same time 17 diggers stepped forward and began hollowing out a mass grave. Of the 17 arrested, 12

were charged and ordered to return for a June 6 court appearance. “We brought the SOA trail of suffering *back to where it begins — the Pentagon.*” *Father Roy Bourgeois.*

###

Two articles in the Summer 1997 VFP Journal delve into the culturally-embedded causes of war. Together, they demonstrate the persuasive power that veterans exercise when they integrate emotional response to war with intelligent investigation.

New study supports criticism of school militarization

JROTC: The Antithesis of Education

by Leo R. Sandy (1997)

(Dr. Sandy is a Vietnam era VFP member, associate professor of education, and consulting school psychologist.)

A recent study of the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps says “JROTC is antithetical to teaching students how to participate in a democracy, resolve conflicts peacefully, evaluate sources, and think analytically. Militarization of education and other social institutions may even pose a threat to the continuation of our democracy.”

This study, by an anthropologist, supports growing criticism of the JROTC program. JROTC has gained popularity in many schools in the South and some mediocre schools in other parts of the country. The Pentagon specifically targets minority children and children of poverty who, incidentally, rarely enter the officer ranks. This trend has for many raised concerns about the encroaching militarism of our society, especially with the end of the cold war. Several reputable organizations have spoken out against the proliferation of JROTC in our public schools. These include the Center for Defense Information, based in Washington, DC, and made up of numerous retired generals and admirals; the American Friends Service Committee; and Veterans for Peace, Inc. All of these have done research on JROTC and concluded that the program should not be provided in our high schools. The members of these organizations are responsible and patriotic citizens who cannot be easily dismissed.

JROTC is a developmentally inappropriate practice. High school students are in the process of developing identities, abstract reasoning skills, and principled morality. Thus, they need a curriculum which emphasizes their individuality, promotes critical and analytic thinking skills, and encourages perspective taking, service to others, and problem solving. These cannot be achieved through mindless activity. These skills are better accomplished in a nonmilitary context because they are inconsistent with military

expectations and values. For example, the JROTC curriculum stresses lock step repetitive drill, anonymity, uniformity, following orders, absolute obedience, concrete thinking, hyper nationalism and conventionality.

The anthropological study mentioned above was led by Catherine Lutz, of the University North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The in-depth study found that many of the promises that the program makes are not kept and that many of its claims are unfounded. For example, money for college is mentioned but only a small number of its graduates receive it. Also, there is no evidence that the program lowers drug use or prevents students from dropping out of school. A disproportionate amount of time is spent marching as if this activity *somehow magically* transforms individual characters simply by its repetition.

The curriculum JROTC uses mentions, among other things, the military success of pushing the Indians farther west and then wiping them out. JROTC texts present military solutions as inevitable and desirable. War is seen as a technical endeavor while its morality and human costs go unmentioned. The promotional literature also implies that cadets are more patriotic than other citizens, suggesting that militarism is equated to patriotism and that those who exercise their rights of free speech may be less patriotic and even subversive. ROTC was also seen in the study as emphasizing masculine values, suggesting that women can join but *they* should not try to change the culture.

Furthermore, JROTC is a major recruiting tool, although this is vehemently denied by its proponents. The rate at which its cadets go into the military — 45 percent — is much larger than that of the general population.

The continuation of a program that is defended on the basis that it helps a few kids straighten out or that it is a tradition is highly questionable. There are better ways to straighten out wayward students. The funds that support JROTC are being diverted from other programs that have a wider sphere of influence and a healthier impact on children such as the arts, UPWARD BOUND, peer mediation, field trips, conflict resolution training and the like.

A teacher or administrator could be hired for the same amount of money that supports JROTC. The proponents of JROTC counter this by saying that the particular branch of service matches school expenditures. However, the schools still must expend the money. Furthermore, the money of the military comes from United States tax payers. The military has no money of its own.

The conclusion reached by Lutz: “Expansion of the JROTC program constitutes a proliferation of military influence into what should be a strictly civilian world of education and youth services.”

###

How could I have been so quickly trained to kill and to enjoy killing?

A letter by VFP treasurer Charlie Atkins to the editor of the Columbia (MO) Daily Tribune, June 7, 1997.

The article ‘*Veterans look back on World War I, Memories of conflict painful today*’, in the *Daily Tribune* featured Wilbert Maupin, now 101, who served in 1917-19 in World War I. What struck me were the words, “Maupin, 101, can hardly remember the war without crying. Images of the trenches are too much for him. His daughter, Shirley Smith, is forced to pick up the stories where he leaves off. ‘They threw mustard gas in the trenches.’” Smith explains. “Daddy barely got his mask over his face. But it burnt off all his hair, damaging the roots. It never grew back.”



Wars never end for many of us that have been in the trenches. Maupin still cries from memories 80 years old. I still get depressed at times from my memories of the Korean War, 47 years ago. What has haunted me most, over these years was how I could so quickly be trained to become ‘a killer of men’ and to enjoy killing. I still remember cheering when our artillery shells blew the North Korean bodies up in the air.

A just published book, *Blood Rites*, by **Barbara Ehrenreich**, has helped me realize why it was and still is easy to teach young Americans, like I was, to kill. She proposes that our tendency to violence doesn’t arise from the time men were hunters, but from a much earlier time when we were the prey of large animals. Humans learned to band together and to first use fire to ward off predator animals and avoid being eaten. As humans developed better weapons, bows and spears, and with possible climate changes, large animals disappeared and humankind changed from prey to predator.

Ehrenreich’s view is that this change explains the special fervor humans bring to killing: “It is the religiosity of war, above all, which makes it so impervious to moral rebuke.” The aim of her book, she says, “is not to explain the existence of war, but, more modestly, to understand the uniquely ‘religious’ feeling humans bring to it.”

She points out that the twentieth century brought the steady advance of war, but also the beginnings of organized resistance to war. But warns: “**Any anti-war movement that targets only the human agents of war — a warrior elite ... a military-industrial complex ... risks mimicking those it seeks to overcome. So it is a giant step from hating the warriors to ‘hating war,’ and an even greater step to deciding that the ‘enemy’ is the abstract institution of war, which maintains its grip on us even in the interludes we know as peace.**”

Ehrenreich has helped me to understand why and how I became a “killer.” She has shown how the innate fears of the majority of Americans are exploited by the military-industrial complex to justify spending over two hundred billion dollars each year, mainly for weapons that should never be used. The struggle of the anti-war movement must be

against the *institution of war*, she says. And she points out that **“the passions we bring to war can be brought just as well to the struggle against war.”**

I suffer as many still do from being a warrior. I'm now, as a member of Veterans for Peace, working with many others “To abolish war as an instrument of international policy”. Our future memories of these non-violent actions will bring smiles, feelings of joy and comradeship. My hope is that many other veterans will join us.

###

Paul Walker, President 1998 - Army Intelligence – Vietnam era

Paul Shares His Vision for VFP

The Autumn 1997 issue of the Journal drew heavily on that August’s convention in D.C. The convention was a great success, drawing 155 members and a brace of important speakers. We met our new president, Paul Walker, who took over from Sandy Kelson with these comments:



Having been a member of VFP (and the Smedley Butler Brigade in Massachusetts) almost since the organization’s inception, I was delighted and a bit overwhelmed at the August convention to be elected your new president for 1997-1998. I can promise to try my best to fill the enormously successful shoes of our outgoing president, Sandy Kelson, and am very much looking forward to working with you all this coming year.

I served in the U.S. Army as a Russian Intelligence Specialist with the Army Security Agency (ASA) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the height of the Vietnam War, and had many differences with our foreign and military policies then. I opposed the war and also later opposed the escalatory and confrontational American and Soviet politics of the Cold War.

The demise of the Cold War, perhaps dating from the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, put much of the country asleep, assuming that peace had broken out. We now know better. Although the dangerous East-West confrontation has abated considerably, many challenges remain: the nuclear weapons arsenals remain inordinately high and expensive; the U.S. military budget remains bloated with pork-barrel spending and Cold War weapons; the Defense Department under funds new, post-Cold War priorities such as environmental cleanup, peacekeeping priorities, and non-lethal defense; the White House refuses to sign the international ban on land mines; Star Wars research remains over \$3 billion annually; the U.S. threatens to test new anti-satellite weapons; and we initiate so-called “subcritical nuclear testing” and a large nuclear research program while we call for a test ban.

Veterans for Peace has always made a critical difference. We speak with legitimacy and knowledge on issues of war and peace, life and death, and sensible foreign and military policies. It's time we once again renewed ourselves and our organization and joined the policy fights around nuclear abolition, land mine bans, veterans' rights, the need to close the School of the Americas, the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, and other critical and timely issues. With our new office now opened right on Capitol Hill in Washington our profile is larger than ever. We are truly needed now and must, as we have in the past, get going when the going gets tough. Isn't this what we all trained for?

A NATIONAL GOAL?

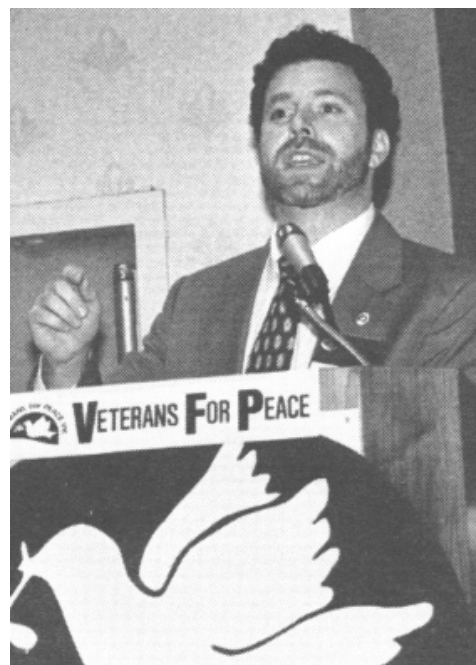
In an article titled, VFP Adopts National Goal: Abolish Nuclear Weapons, Executive Director David Hart reflected an attempt to rally the VFP chapters around a single issue. (1997)

At our 1997 National Convention we decided to focus our efforts on a grassroots Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. This project will take shape over the coming months, but already we are getting positive feedback from members and from allied organizations.

Please note that the selection of a National Project does not preclude other efforts within VFP. The Board of Directors and staff are convinced that our strength is in our diversity. We celebrate local initiative and grassroots leadership. The National Project is an attempt to coordinate our work to achieve greater impact. Our membership and chapters will help develop this project and will continue to take local action on a variety of issues. The Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons will be one prominent area of focus among our wide-ranging programs for peace.

General Lee Butler, USAF former Commander-in-Chief, US Strategic Command, who had overall planning and operational responsibility for all US strategic nuclear forces, writes: "nuclear weapons are inherently dangerous, hugely expensive, militarily inefficient and morally indefensible."

General Butler goes on to ask, "Can a consensus be formed that nuclear weapons have no defensible role? That the political and human consequences of their employment transcend any sensible military utility? That as weapons of mass destruction, the case for their military elimination is a thousand fold stronger and more urgent than for deadly chemicals and viruses already declared illegitimate?"



VFP says yes! We believe that VFP can play a vital role in shaping that consensus and we have undertaken a major effort to do just that. We set as our goal nothing less than the elimination of all nukes. With our eyes firmly set on that prize, we will take small but significant steps in that direction. First among them is the crucial battle to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The several other related issues, including nuclear weapons reductions (START II & III), Stockpile Stewardship Management Program (SSM P), a fissile material ban ("Fissban"), a de-alert of strategic forces, were all judged important but secondary to CTBT at this time. We believe that the CTBT represents an unusual opportunity to decrease the danger of nuclear war.

On September 22, 1997, President Clinton in his speech to the 52nd United Nations General Assembly announced that he sent the CTBT to the US Senate for its advice and consent. In our democracy, there is a major role for VFP grassroots activists on this key issue.

The President's transmittal of the nuclear test ban treaty marks the beginning of a process that we hope will eventually lead to the Senate's approval of this longest sought, hardest-fought nuclear threat reduction treaty. VFP members know that the American public has consistently supported a nuclear test ban treaty, and that if we make our voices heard it will be very difficult for the Senate to ignore that support. A recent national public opinion survey indicated that 80% of the American public supports approval of the nuclear test ban (ICR Survey Research Group, 1994).

The test ban treaty is a linchpin in global efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and to end the nuclear arms race. The nuclear test ban treaty is clearly in the interest of US national security. The CTBT will create a far-reaching monitoring system and new on-site inspection procedures to uncover potential treaty violations.

We have our work cut out for us. We have selected an inspirational long term goal and a significant first step in that direction. We need your active support to shape this program and eventually achieve our goals. Please let us know your suggestions on how to build this project.

We are considering many options, including a VFP designed program of outreach and education which only VFP could undertake, e.g. reaching out to Senate offices on CTBT ratification with groups of vets; pursuing VFP & VFW chapters for endorsement of CTBT ratification; design and production of a vets' brochure on CTBT ("Why veterans support a nuclear test ban") which could be used locally; and seeking support from prominent vets, e.g. the past three Joint Chiefs chairmen Crowe, Powell, and Shalikashvili — all of whom have endorsed a testing moratorium.

As you can see, we are just getting started on a fascinating and important journey. Please join us in this effort. We *need* your enthusiasm, wisdom, and local action to make this Campaign a success.

Editor's note: The Treaty was opened for signature in New York on [24 September 1996](#), when it was signed by 71 States, including five of the seven then nuclear-capable states. The CTBT had been later endorsed by one hundred seventy five states parties and been

ratified by a hundred twenty. [India](#) and [Pakistan](#), though not nuclear weapons states as defined by the [Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty \(NPT\)](#), did not sign; neither did [North Korea](#). Additionally, to enter into force, the treaty has yet to be ratified by (as of December 2005) [China](#), [Colombia](#), [Egypt](#), [Indonesia](#), [Iran](#), [Israel](#), the [U.S.A.](#) and [Vietnam](#), which is unlikely to happen in the near future.

As David Hart recognized, there were several other war-related issues that had captured the attention of our membership:

That same Journal issue carried stories about community peacemaking connections, a proposed VFP delegation to Mexico, led by Brian Willson, to study Mexican indigenous history and the effects of NAFTA and the Zapatista movement, reconciliation dialogues deriving from the Vietnam experience, VFP's involvement with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, racism and poverty.

We were introduced to Antonia Balazs, newly hired Administrative/Program Director. . . a graduate of Oxford University with a Masters degree in Modern History. She was VFP's representative at DC based coalition meetings. Antonia previously worked with the United Nations Information Center (UNIC) and was an Intern with a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Later, in 1998, when David Hart resigned, Antonia took over as interim Executive Director. She served until she left to pursue a career in research and Lee Vander Laan volunteered to be interim Director, early in 1999.

Two stories about VFP efforts to ban land mines:

One was about receiving recognition when the International Campaign to Ban Land Mines was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Veterans for Peace shares the joy of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL), which was awarded the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize for its global efforts to eradicate antipersonnel landmines. The ICBL is an unprecedented coalition of more than 1,000 non-governmental organizations in more than sixty countries. The award went to the International Campaign and its coordinator, Jody Williams, of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation.

Ms. Williams said, "The International Campaign to Ban Landmines is deeply grateful to the Nobel Committee for its recognition of our work to ban this insidious, indiscriminate weapon. Each of the 1,000 organizations in the coalition share this honor. Our strength

has been not only in our numbers and diversity, hut also in our determination and cooperation.”

Veterans for Peace is one of these organizations and can take its rightful place alongside the other members of our coalition, it’s a pivotal moment both in what VFP stands for and also in our effectiveness. As Ms. Williams put it: “The prize is also recognition that the ban movement represents a new way of conducting international diplomacy, in which middle and smaller powers take the lead in responding to and working with civil society to address urgent humanitarian needs.”

Maine VFP Gets Landmine Action

On April 15, 1997, Maine became the first state to pass a Joint Legislative Resolution memorializing the President of the United States to negotiate a ban on anti-personnel landmines.

In an all-out effort, Tom Sturtevant, Co-Director of Maine Veterans for Peace; Linda McKee, State Representative from Winthrop; the Maine Red Cross; and the Maine VFI members, ensured that this joint legislative resolution calling for a worldwide ban on anti-personnel land mines passed. The most important aspect of this resolution was Sturtevant’s and VFP’s insistence that the Ottawa International Strategy Conference be included in the resolution and urging the President to make the US one of the more than 100 nations supporting the “Ottawa process.”

Sturtevant and Maine VFP members spent many hours talking and preparing information packets for distribution to almost 200 Maine legislators in preparation for the hearings and vote on this resolution. On April 15th, the Resolution passed unanimously and was forwarded to the President. On July 14, Governor King presented Maine Veterans for Peace a Joint Legislative Recognition, an official expression of sentiment on behalf of the Legislature and the people of the State of Maine, for VFP’s efforts in calling for a worldwide ban on antipersonnel land mines.

— *Jack Bussell, Chair, Maine Council*



Governor Angus King presents official legislative recognition to Maine Veterans for Peace. From left, Linda McKee, State Representative from Winthrop, Maine Council VFP Chair Jack Bussell, Governor King, Maine VFP Co-Director Tom Sturtevant, and VFP founding members Ken and Marie Perkins.

VFP IN PRISON

One of Veterans For Peace's most dedicated and enthusiastic members was Myer (PJ) Pettyjohn.

The Myer Pettijohn Story – by Ed Hart

PJ was a good ol' farm boy from the northern part of Kentucky. He had a large family there, and they were all poor. He hadn't learned much about anything but the mule and the tractor that succeeded it. During Vietnam he was drafted, and being a healthy and hefty fellow, he ended up in the 101st Airborne. It was more than he'd bargained for and, like a lot of his buddies, he self-medicated with the drugs that were so readily available there. (Some say their value as morale boosters was recognized, like bingo and prostitutes, and that the military condoned the entrepreneurs who peddled them.)

He got through the war, but the peace was tougher. He (like everybody else who ever experienced combat, whether or not he realized it) suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the only cure seemed to be the hair of the dog that bit him. (The army, of course, couldn't understand that problem. They were so full of that stuff about the military building character that it didn't leave room for any contradictions. That's the nature of military truths. They're absolute.)

The dog that bit PJ, of course, was the habit-forming narcotics that had gotten him through combat.

After Vietnam had run its course, PJ went home to the farm. Life hadn't changed in most ways, and the chemicals that had gotten him through combat helped a lot with the adjustments to his civilian situation. One day PJ and two friends visited their dealer who, they'd learned, had been cheating them. PJ waited in the car while his friends went in to visit the dealer. When they came out the dealer was dead, and before long they were on trial. The second member of the pair who went inside turned State's evidence, and the trigger man died before the trial was over. That left only PJ to satisfy the State's need for revenge; he drew life. (All this happened in Tennessee.)

It didn't take PJ's custodians long to realize he was harmless, and he was put on the road to do maintenance work. He escaped and, innocently, went home to see his girlfriend. In the short time it took them to find him, she'd become pregnant.

All that was a long time ago. In the years that followed, PJ did a lot of thinking. There was still some thought about rehabilitation, even in Tennessee. At Wartburg, PJ's new home, they erected a new building for education, financed by Pell grants. (Somebody in the Department of Corrections had read studies that demonstrated the dramatic reduction in recidivism rates and in prison violence when prisoners were given educational opportunities. PJ signed up, and soon found himself liking it. And he was pretty good at it.)

But progress is inevitable. In 1994 both houses of Congress went sharply Republican. Prison reforms enacted two years earlier were repealed, and with them Pell grants for prisoners.

But PJ had been studying for the ministry, and the chaplain had given him a job in his office. A couple of years later Dean Yancey, the chaplain, said that PJ was the best

Christian he'd ever come to know, inside or outside the walls. Dean introduced him to a Presbyterian minister and his wife, who worked with the prisoners, and they came to see the good in him.

The preacher and his wife, Dick and Marge Hettrick, saw some VFP literature on a table at a church convention, with an application attached. They gave it to PJ, who talked it over with some of his friends, and they sent 10 applications in - enough to start a new chapter. Three members of the Alabama chapter were invited to deliver the charter to PJ and his buddies.

They made up a great chapter. Each year they took on a new project, financed by their income from the output of their hobby shop activities. One year they contributed to St. Jude's children's hospital in Memphis. Once they sent two underprivileged kids to summer camp. They bought books on peace programs for high school libraries and paid for school books and clothes for underprivileged children. VFP waived their dues requirement, but the chapter pitched in and sent \$30 per month to headquarters in lieu of them. (Besides that, they sent their free world VFP buddies prison-made presents several times a year, including Christmas, birthdays, and Veterans Day.)

PJ found a college that agreed to teach him their courses in religion by mail, for the catalog price. He got together all he could raise with his crafts, and the Alabama chapter made up the rest. After he got his bachelor's he was accepted for graduate school on the same terms. He earned his masters of divinity.

VFP had developed materials for programs in Alternatives to Violence and Conflict Resolution. Peter Shaw, of the Pittsburgh chapter, sent materials on violence avoidance to PJ and Charlie Atkins of Mid-Missouri provided information on Conflict Resolution. PJ developed training programs for inmate leaders. The courses were so effective that Chaplain Yancey gave a workshop at a regional conference for prison chaplains, and several adopted them. The Tennessee Department of Corrections began requiring that the courses be offered, taught by inmates, at all 19 of their institutions.

PJ designed and taught courses in Parenting Skills and Domestic Violence Prevention. For 15 years he participated in Straight Talk Panels for at-risk kids.

The nominating procedure for VFP's board of directors permits nomination by petition. The members of PJ's chapter submitted the petition and the Alabama chapter conducted his campaign. There was a challenge when the ballot was formed at the committee's table, but Chairman Paul Cox stifled it. "We've all done worse than he did," Paul said. (Five years or so earlier, at the convention in Phoenix, a member from Alabama had met Paul and greeted him with, "I understand you're an ex-Marine." Paul responded, "I'm a recovering Marine.")

The national board designated PJ coordinator of incarcerated veterans' affairs. He offered assistance to veterans in other institutions in setting up programs to cope with PTSD, learned violence, parenting behind bars and similar problems they share with their fellow inmates.

One of his students told a visiting VFP member, "I'm an expert in violence. I learned in Vietnam. Now I want to learn how to avoid it."

When conflict arose within VFP late in 1996 a major issue concerned the status of Jerry Genesio, co-founder of the organization. Jerry and a loyal percentage of the membership wanted Jerry to be appointed Founding Director and given a position on the board for as long as he wanted to serve; others didn't. Members of both factions threatened to leave if the dispute wasn't resolved according to their lights. Opponents argued that there was no vacancy on the board, and the constitution would not allow adding a member. PJ, who valued his seat on the board more highly than any other honor he'd ever received, wrote to suggest that he step down and that Jerry, who had almost alone opposed PJ's election, be appointed to serve in PJ's place.

PJ fasted regularly and worked out with weights to fortify his self discipline. But when he tore the ligaments that fastened his biceps at the elbow, the muscle bundled up around his shoulder. He was sent to Nashville for treatment, but the new DOC director personally halted the project, since the injury wasn't life threatening. It made his arm useless for the rest of his life

Two VFP members went to visit PJ in early 2003, and found his belly greatly distended. He was still conducting his classes, but within a month he was back at the treatment facility in Nashville, unbelievably bloated; the muscle tissues in his body and flesh had been absorbed into the fluids that filled his belly. It turned out that he suffered from hepatitis A, B and C. The DOC had known it for 10 years, but had never notified him or treated it.

PJ had always corresponded regularly with Tiffany, his daughter, and when she became old enough she visited him at Wartburg. Now she was 20 years old, and enrolled in nursing school. PJ knew he was dying, of course, and dreamed that he might be able to die at home, with Tiffany and her mother. Highly decorated and accomplished members of VFP (including Paul Butler, who had lived at the Hanoi Hilton for more than eight years and had become PJ's regular correspondent because, Paul said, they shared the prison experience) went to bat for him one last time. Several supporters of his plea for executive clemency had traveled to Wartburg to visit him and his chapter members. They joined forces with the Reverend Joe Ingle, leader of a prisoner ministry who had good political connections. They petitioned the governor for PJ and won - but too late. He died two days later, without leaving the State's custody.

The funeral was at Wartburg, attended by Tiffany and her mother, every inmate of the installation and most staff members and several outsiders, including VFP members. The ceremony lasted nearly two hours, to give everyone an opportunity to testify.

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UN REPRESENTATION

Michael Carley, an Associate member of VFP living in New York City, became our UN Representative in 1997. His acceptance article. In the 1997 Autumn Journal:

Ben Weintraub, for so long our accomplished UN Representative, decided to resign from that position this year. George Kelly took on the primary seat at the UN, and most of us did not expect me to exceed the “number two” position at the UN, if anything. However, circumstances have since changed. George Kelly, a wonderful man, decided not to retain the post, and now, on the gracious invitation of David Hart and the VFP Board, I find myself writing to you as your UN Representative.

On a selfish side, I’m ecstatic. International politics, the notion of resolving conflicts while working within the parameters of specific cultures, learning how relief efforts actually operate, the lofty notion of exploring what “conflict” is really all about — These are subjects that I grew to love in my too few days as a journalist some years ago. Furthermore, creating greater exposure for VFP — be it taking part in peace negotiations, election monitoring, the selling of the peace process to those in far more perilous conditions, reducing the world’s weapons arsenal with special attention to nuclear arms — will not only benefit us but, more importantly, it’s a chance for us have the impact we dream of so often.

The idea of myself in this position is still new to me. It’s terrifying. And I mean that in the best possible way because being granted this post quite exemplifies the entire meaning of the word “opportunity.” Quite obviously, it’s a magnificent opportunity.

Initially, I know from past study that any time you’ve arranged to conduct research at an unfamiliar institution, it takes some time to figure out how said institution operates before you can even start to get any work done. And the UN, on that level, is a monster. That’s only the start. Then comes the wonderful burden to actually enact change, a responsibility so obtainable for one reason only — my sincere and firm belief in the positive effects that this organization could have on this world. No other organization’s authority on its subject can be as trusted as Veterans for Peace and I am therefore backed by the strongest of belief in my so-called “constituents.” Both Ben Weintraub and George Kelly knew this, and acted on this. And I intend to follow that example.

On the eve of the last convention, Peter Shaw and I, reclining contentedly in the hotel lobby, joked that if we heard the word “potential” associated with VFP one more time, we’d throw up. Well, how ironic that the ball has slyly bounced in my path, and the onus is now on me. How wonderful to respect so highly those that you are given the task to represent. I pledge to you my best. My intent is not to be noble, it’s to be effective. And to prove it, I’m off to buy suits.

In exactly that order: Surprised, Thrilled, Terrified, Honored. Peace — *Michael John Carley, VFP UN Representative*

VFP CONVENTION – 1998 – Minneapolis, MN

Held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the structural problems of VFP seemed to fade in an atmosphere of fellowship deriving from recognition of our common objectives. This writer recalls being very impressed with the quality of speakers, workshops and, most of all, the personal achievements of the membership, from writing books to reporting on critical issues with authority. The following excerpts from the November/December VFP Newsletter edited by John Grant illustrates what I encountered:

Convention Workshops

John Grant (1998)

The only problem with the workshop line-up at the Minnesota convention was that one couldn't attend them all. From 9am to 5pm on the Friday beginning the convention, there were four sessions and six workshops.

Two were focused on the first-hand experiences of VFP delegations to Chiapas and Iraq.

Brian Willson and Woody Powell led the Chiapas workshop, telling of their trip to Chiapas in April as human rights observers. In their slides and their stories they told of how the Mexican army and paramilitary forces are brutally oppressing the indigenous people of that area in the far southwest corner of Mexico. The fact that the United States gives political cover and provides military material and training to support this cultural violence made their personal stories that much more poignant and sad.

Then there was the workshop led by Edilith Eckart and Fredy Champagne recounting a trip with Ramsey Clark and 80 other Americans into Iraq. Alan Pogue who also was in Iraq exhibited some black and white prints to back up Edilith and Fredy. The grueling nature of this trip was impressed on me when I tried to imagine a 21-hour bus trip -- eating, sleeping and everything on the bus -- across the deserts of Iraq. The stories they told were heartbreaking. Food shortages, mothers at hospitals devastated because their children were dying due to lack of the most ordinary medicines, an epidemic of mysterious diseases -- and on and on.

Paul Sullivan, a Gulf War tank vet and director of the National Gulf War Resource Center, led a fascinating workshop on Gulf War diseases, depleted uranium weapons and the Pentagon stonewalling and lying that goes on to this day. Sullivan, who has suffered from mysterious, energy draining illnesses himself, got himself a degree in political science and showed that he can hold an audience for an hour-and-a-half. He was at times dead-serious, at other times sardonic and funny. A great workshop.

The workshop led by Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer, a professor from Augsburg College in Minnesota, was more analytic. His topic was *Low Intensity Conflict and the School of the*

Americas. I had never heard such a lucid historical explanation for the existence of tile SOA and similar US military training schemes in the Third World.

He quoted famous Cold Warriors like George Kennan on the fundamental foreign policy reality that dawned on our leaders in the late 1 940s that if we were to sustain a culture that used such a disproportionate amount of the world's resources we were going to have to control the hue and cry from below in the Third World. The only way to do that was through the support of violence, The 'communist' label was eminently useful in this regard, since it tended to justify all extremes of deceit and brutality. It was hard to argue with such logic.

Manuel Carvalho led a workshop on the book, *Hell, Healing and Resistance: Veterans Speak*. It is a collection of first-person accounts by many veterans, including Paul Sullivan, the Gulf War vet who led the workshop mentioned above. The work was develop by the Christian-based Bruderhof Communities and supports a cultural change of heart away from the material and meaningless society we find ourselves part of. The workshop was arranged with attendees in a circle and Carvalho discussed his thoughts and interviewing methods. The discussion dealt with issues of conflict and violence and how soul searching and reconciliation in these areas are critical to effective political action in the pursuit of peace.

Last but not least, there was a workshop on The Big One --- nuclear weapons. It was led by John LaForge and Bonnie Urfer, two activists with Nukewatch, an organization that seeks to track the US military nuclear arsenal. Both have served time in prison for their efforts. They presented a lively and informative session on an issue that remains a priority for Vets For Peace.

Speakers Highlight '98 Convention

Michael Carley

From Friday dinner to Saturday dinner, the speakers our Minnesota chapter arranged for us was arguably the finest lineup we've enjoyed at a VFP convention thus far.

Senator Paul Wellstone (D-Minn) led off the weekend on Friday night with a speech that might have shown him to be just a little misjudging of his audience. As a result, vigorous proclamations concerning veterans' rights (admirable, but areas that VFP isn't very active in) were bellowed to a somewhat confused crowd. Caught by surprise, Senator Wellstone seemed incapable of handling the floor criticisms of his support for the recent attacks on Sudan and Afghanistan.

Bruce Kent, Director of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Europe, capped off the evening starting with a whimsical account of his experiences as a veteran. And in both literary yet personable tones, Mr. Kent then dove into the more serious subject matter, rattling off his observations on the current world nuclear status. We listened fully

because to drop out of his earshot even for a moment, as he so clearly conveyed, would mean missing something.

George Mizo, an ally from long ago, gave a brief but welcomed speech on Saturday night that only hinted at the amazing personal story he has that leads to the creation of *Peace Village*, the center in Germany he started for war-injured children.

Daniel Ellsberg, longtime activist of *Pentagon Papers* fame, closed the convention on Saturday night.

It was Hugh Thompson who was the highlight of our convention. Mr Thompson, the Vietnam helicopter pilot who, along with two others, stopped Lt. Calley from furthering the My Lai Massacre, recalled his story for us at a Saturday lunch. Covering both that fateful day in Vietnam, and his subsequent silencing from the government, Mr. Thompson displayed a sense of humor not seen on the episode of *60 Minutes* in which he was featured, But it was his sense of commitment and honesty that we will remember. As I awkwardly attempted to communicate to him one-one one:Most of us probably can't fathom what he went through on that day thirty years ago. But maybe he, in turn, can't understand how much his actions meant, and still mean to all of us.

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VFP'S FIRST NEWSLETTER

Until the 1997 convention in Minneapolis, VFP had published a series of JOURNALS, at irregular intervals roughly two or three times a year. These journals were very high quality writing and production issues—and costly. Something less expensive was needed to communicate with the membership on a more frequent basis.

VFP's first NEWSLETTER was published in November/December 1998, on regular copy paper, and on the Internet for the first time. By then, Antonia Balazs, who had come aboard as Program Director under David Hart in 1997, had been hired as interim Executive Director to replace David.

VETERANS FOR PEACE NEWSLETTER – Volume 1, Number 1 –
November/December 1998

FROM THE EDITORS

Co-editors Michael Felker and Alex Gillett would like to welcome you to our first issue. We, Executive Director Antonia Balazs and the Board of Directors intend this to be a regular paper, published initially on a bimonthly basis. The co-editors are from Philadelphia, PA and belong to Chapter 31, where we have been editing the local

newsletter, The Sounding Board, since 1997. Production will be by Jim Creaven (layout), Lee Vander Laan (web site posting), and the National Office (publisher).

This is your newsletter. While the editors may occasionally contribute their own opinions on issues, and may write news articles, we intend that the bulk of the writing be contributed by you, the members. We would like your submissions to be concise, to the point, and be about issues which concern you and you think will concern VFP in general. We will accept poetry and fiction.

We intend to inform you on the actions and debates of the Board of Directors. We hope you will feel free to comment on our reports and Board debates. We will solicit and publish information on the activities of chapters and individual members. Our goal is to make coordination among members and chapters easier.

Each issue should have a feature article on an issue of national importance, like the national project, Chiapas, Iraq, imminent U.S. war making, etc. We plan a calendar in each issue listing national, regional, and local events and projects, including those of groups like SOA Watch which are important to you. We plan to have notes on members; awards, illness, deaths.

Money: VFP does not have enough cash now to mail the newsletter to every member. The first two issues will be mailed to every member. We need your cooperation to get out the next issues. Our plan is to publish on the VFP Web site (<http://www.veteransforpeace.org>), e-mail to everyone we can, and paper publish as a last resort to perhaps 100-200 members. We need you to let us know how you can receive the newsletter. Can you get it e-mailed to a friend, job site, school site, etc.? Can you share it with others in your area? Can your chapter duplicate it and distribute? Please let national know as soon as possible, with the names of those who you can cover.

Publishing schedule: January, March, May, July, September, November.

We are now in flux. We plan to be flexible to meet your needs, and the need to communicate between national and you.

The editors had this comment on VFP's recovery from the events surrounding the departure of Jerry Genesis:

The convention discussion period Saturday morning which followed welcoming addresses by Board Chair Phil Butler, President Paul Walker, and Acting Executive Director Antonia Balazs proceeded without the feeling of eminent rancor which pervaded the past few conventions. Lacking this, speakers simply stood in line to talk about national cohesion, chapter and national projects, and issues which might not be on our screen like homeless vets, the Vietnam Friendship Village, Operation Stand Down, and others. As usual, Jewel Johnson of Texas led us in song. Over 35 speakers tied faces to names we've often heard. Speakers who rose to announce their return to VFP was the highlight. This year it was George Mizo and Jon Miles speaking for former President Jim Burkholder.

The next issue came out in early 1999 as a Winter issue

In it, Antonia Balazs' departure to pursue a career in research was announced. Lee Vander Laan was introduced as the new Acting Executive Director:

New Executive Director brings vision, experience to Veterans for Peace

Newly hired Acting Executive Director Lee Vander Laan is formerly VFP Director and Executive Vice President. Lee resigned his position with the board to avoid conflict of interest. He has been a member since 1989, a Vietnam vet, and active member of Smedley Butler Brigade, Boston and Samantha Smith Chapter, Ipswich, Mass. Lee helped design the VFP Roster, our database of members and the VFP website. We welcome Lee to his new position and ask members to give him their utmost cooperation.



Lee Vander Laan with daughter Tiffany,

The office had been moved once again, from 1511 K Street to 733 15th Street in Washington, D.C.

The major news was the swelling numbers of people demonstrating at the annual School of the Americas Watch gathering at Ft. Benning in Georgia:

S.O.A. Victory at Ft. Benning.

The annual demonstration to oppose the operation of the School of the Americas in Ft. Benning, Georgia resulted in a victory for the movement. "About 2,000 people were briefly taken into custody during the protest. Unlike past demonstrations, people who defied orders and walked onto the Ft. Benning property were not charged with trespassing. Instead, they were loaded onto buses, driven to a park about a mile away and released." (Philadelphia Inquirer).

When I watched the 600 cross the line in 1997, it was an incredibly moving sight. In 1998, "amongst the over 6,000 participants, as every account will attest, the intense feeling of exhilaration and of commitment spread throughout the ever-growing crowd. The numbers were remarkable, especially the numbers of young people, and there seemed no end to the many more who kept arriving. When finally it came time to start the slow procession across the line, there simply was no more room to form up on the ground to the left of the fort's entrance. And, in front walking four abreast and carrying the black coffins first went those 70 who were crossing a second time and face a large

fine and six months in prison and, then with white crosses, so many more that it was impossible to reckon the numbers. . . The most telling reasons for the legal decision not to arrest may have been, not the sheer numbers, though, but the probability of negative press for the SOA and the government. (Thompson Bradley).

A heartening and continuing aspect of the Close the SOA movement is the involvement of young people. Thompson Bradley accompanied a group of 36 students from Swarthmore College. The Minnesota buses are filled with students every year.

Many of us echo the sentiments of Sandy Kelson: "When I was bused onto Ft. Benning as a young soldier 35 years ago I was proud to be serving my country and when I was arrested and bused off today as a 54-year-old veteran I was once again proud to be serving my country.

Some VFP members expressed disappointment with some of the speeches of invited guests, and felt that with the failure of the line crossers to induce arrest and detention, "the anti SOA movement will be exposed as a charade." (Gainesville Chapter). It seems clear to me that these demonstrations will get larger and larger until the SOA is closed. As Thompson Bradley reports, "in its way the group that congregated at the gates of Ft. Benning must have looked all too much like a specter from the 1960's and a harbinger of a much more politicized and united force for the future."

Fr. Roy Bourgeois is continuing his national speaking tour. He was in the Philadelphia area shortly after his release from prison in September, and was in California in January-February. Look for him.

Wayne Wittman organized a unified presence of more than 60 VFP'ers at Ft. Benning.

Daniel Sullivan did a scathing, thoroughly-researched evaluation of the situation in Iraq after the Gulf War:

10 Gulf War Issues Overlooked by the President & Press

Daniel Sullivan

1. More than one million Iraqi civilians have died since August 1990. More than half of those are children, according to a United Nations (UN) report issued in late 1996. In 1998, Iraqi children continued dying at the rate of five thousand per month, according to Denis Halliday, the former U.N. official in charge of food distribution in Iraq until 1998.
2. Of the 697,000 U.S. troops who served in Desert Shield and Desert Storm, more than 248,000, or more than one in three, are considered casualties who have sought medical care by the end of 1998, according to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). More than 200,000 have filed claims against the VA, including more than 70,000 claims

for undiagnosed conditions possibly related to toxic exposures. More than 110,000 claim medical problems linked to the war.

3. The Gulf War continues. The Gulf War began on 8/2/90, when Iraq invaded Kuwait. On 1/14/91, the U.S. Congress authorized the use of force to expel Iraq from Kuwait via Public Law 102-1. U.S. military action began 1/17/91. A cease-fire was declared by George Bush on 3/1/91, and a cease-fire was signed by U.S. and Iraqi generals on 4/6/91. The President and Congress never officially or legally ended the war.

4. U.S. & European companies sold Iraq chemical & biological warfare agents as well as the "dual use" technology used to produce SCUD missiles.

Two thousand U.S. Gulf War veterans have filed suit against those chemical warfare agent-producing companies. Up until August 1990, the Bush administration actively supported and encouraged export of dual-use high-technology equipment to Iraq.

The Bush Administration also opposed a proposed weapons and high-tech trade embargo against Iraq, even though the U.S. knew the Iraqi military used chemical weapons against Iraqi civilians and Iranians between 1980 and 1988.

5. The U.S. Government frequently declares the Persian Gulf region vital to U.S. interests. Yet U.S. gas usage has increased since 1990 and the U.S. has become more dependent upon foreign oil supplies since the start of the Gulf War in 1990. There is no U.S. energy policy to reduce consumption and dependence.

6. In a report prepared by Lawrence Livermore Laboratory in 1990, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) had advance warning that bombing Iraqi chemical production sites in Iraq would result in the release of poison gas. U.S. military logs kept in 1991 confirm there were "credible and reliable" chemical detections made by highly skilled Czech Army chemical teams near U.S. troop positions a few days later as a result of the bombing. These same installations were again bombed in December 1998.

7. The Pentagon lied for five years about widespread chemical warfare agent exposures. From 1991 to 1996, the military said there were no exposures, and the DoD denied medical care and refused to conduct medical research into the exposures. In March 1991, U.S. Army troops destroyed an Iraqi arms depot containing chemical weapons, exposing tens of thousands of U.S. troops in the world's largest friendly fire incident. By 1997, the number of toxic exposures had risen from zero to nearly 100,000. Some new medical research into low level chemical exposures began in late 1997. In February 1998, the DoD revealed that the same chemical alarms, masks, and suits are still being used, even though Congressional investigators reported serious problems with them. The DoD is currently investigating more than thirty additional ammunition demolition incidents in Southern Iraq and Northern Kuwait.

8. The U.S. military failed to inform U.S. troops that some of the ammunition used in the Gulf War is made from radioactive and toxic depleted uranium (DU). Health precautions were not provided, radiotoxic measurements were not made, and soldiers' medical records were not noted to and exposure to DU is implicated in pre-war and current medical studies as causing cancer. Although limited training began in 1998, the DoD has not started any medical research to determine the health effects of breathing or ingesting DU.

9. The Pentagon failed to monitor the amount of pollution caused by more than 700 oil well fires. The military tested the blood of soldiers who arrived four months after the cease fire and who did not serve in the ground war in 1991 to determine the pollution's effects. The military has not started any medical research on oil fire pollution health problems.

10. Under a special "Interim Rule" issued by the Food and Drug Administration in 1990, the DoD continues using U.S. troops as experimental test subjects for anti-chemical warfare agent pre-treatment pills and anti-biological warfare agent vaccines. No informed consent is given, few records are kept or maintained to indicate who receives the drugs, and no follow-up research is conducted to determine the effectiveness and the side effects of the experimental drugs. This violates the human rights of soldiers, many of whom were coerced into taking the untested drugs. This also violates the Nuremberg Code, agreed to by the U.S., granting protection to troops against involuntary medical experimentation.

Fredy Champagne introduced the Iraq Water Project:

IRAQ WATER TREATMENT PROJECT PROPOSAL

Fredy Champagne

Members of Chapters 022 and 056 of Northern California are developing a plan for a project in Baghdad, Iraq in an effort to stop the undeclared war in Iraq, and in an effort to directly save lives among the children, the sick and elderly. The proposed plan is to dispatch delegates from VFP to Baghdad to begin the rebuilding process of repairing the damage to the Baghdad Water Treatment Plant. This plant, bombed during Operation Desert Storm in 1991, is functioning at half level, at best, due to the lack of spare parts to rebuild six of the twelve chlorinators. These chlorinators are imperative in the effort to provide badly needed clean water to the residents of Baghdad. Each machine can be rebuilt to function normally. Such a project could put VFP in the news, big time, and lead to increased membership and funding. We need to be more visible in our efforts to stop this war, and in efforts to end the suffering of the ordinary Iraqi people.

We submit this proposal in an effort to determine the extent of interest by the members of VFP. We wish to know who would be interested in going to Baghdad? Who would help on the committee to prepare this project? Who will help with fund-raising and media work? Who can help with the actual re-build of these chlorinators? Who has expertise in these matters? If interested in any of the above questions, we would like to hear from you.

Also in that issue:

GOODWIN IN MEXICO

Director Sissy Goodwin traveled to Chiapas, Mexico with Pastors for Peace. He drove a truck full of rice, corn, seed and tools for people displaced by the Mexican war against the Zapatistas in Chiapas, and for relief to victims of Hurricane Mitch.



CHAPTER NOTES Veterans Day 1998



From Jack Bussell, Maine Chapter. Braving inclement weather, Maine VFP and a group of African-American vets did the Veteran's Day Parade in Portland and outnumbered the American Legion at the wreath laying.

Pittsburgh. Led by bag piper Peter Shaw, VFP participated in the annual Veteran's Day event in Pittsburgh, handing out flyers featuring Mark Twain's War Prayer.



Summer of 1999 Newsletter

Coalition Calls for End to NATO Bombing, *Proposes International Diplomatic Solution*

WASHINGTON, DC, May 20, 1999 - Major U.S. peace and religious organizations launched a new coalition today calling for an end to the U.S./NATO bombing of Yugoslavia; an end to ethnically-targeted violence; and support for negotiations under institutions including the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The new group issued an "Appeal for Peace," calling for an international sponsored diplomatic solution to the war in Yugoslavia.

The coalition was formed earlier this month by leaders of major U.S. peace and religious organizations, including American Friends Service Committee, the Washington Office of the Church of the Brethren, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Fourth Freedom Forum,

Friends Committee on National Legislation, Fund for NA National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, Pax Christi USA, Peace Action, Sojourners, U.S.-Indochina Reconciliation Project, Veterans for Peace, War Resisters League, Women's Action for New Directions, and the Women's International League for Peace & Freedom. new Priorities in America, National Priorities Project, NETWORK:

At a press conference today, a representative of the American Friends Service Committee, a coalition member with humanitarian relief programs in place in Yugoslavia and throughout the region, offered a grim assessment of the impact NATO bombing is having on refugees trapped in Kosovo and with non-governmental peace-building teams. "Our current relief efforts to bring food and comfort to all the Kosovars have been made more difficult by the NATO bombing," said Carolyn Matthews of the American Friends Service Committee. She added, "The NATO bombing has undermined many years of our work to promote peace and democracy throughout the region. Important multiethnic groups in Yugoslavia have seen their leaders flee into exile."

The coalition will work to halt the escalating conflict in Yugoslavia by educating the public and members of congress about the failed NATO bombing policy and the negative impact on regional stability, efforts to promote democracy and the continued humanitarian disaster. The coalition will also work to increase public support for anti-war demonstrations across the country. "Multiple actions across the nation have been planned for the month of May and beyond," said Gordon Clark, executive director of Peace Action. "Activists are energized and mobilizing in increasing numbers. We are taking to the streets in the form of vigils, protests and marches."

Lee Vander Laan, Acting Executive Director of Veterans for Peace addressed the reasons U.S. veterans support the new coalition. "As veterans, we understand the consequences of war and do not believe the NATO bombing campaign in Yugoslavia will promote security for any of the region's peoples; an immediate cease-fire would be the most positive catalyst toward renewed talks and eventual resolution of the conflict," said Vander Laan. At the press conference today the Coalition for Peace in Yugoslavia released the following statement:

An Appeal for Peace in Yugoslavia

"We speak out of deepening concern and anguish over the continued bloodshed and human suffering in Yugoslavia. We call for an immediate end to NATO bombing and intensified efforts to bring a just peace in Kosovo. We condemn the atrocities and human rights abuses committed by Serbian forces in Kosovo, and we do not believe that NATO bombing will solve the problem.

"We are also horrified by the environmental degradation caused by the bombing, with its long-term consequences for all the people of the region. We seek a solution that ends the killing and destruction on the ground and from the air. Proposals for diplomatic settlement have been put forth by a number of governments and institutions of the international community. We encourage all efforts made in good faith toward a diplomatic solution and strongly urge our nation's leaders to pursue nonviolent alternatives.

“We urge an immediate cease-fire; a halt to NATO air attacks; and negotiations involving all interested parties. An end to the bombing is a prerequisite for any peace process to begin. We support the return of OSCE monitors in conjunction with the introduction of a truly international peacekeeping operation that would monitor the activities of the Serbian military force and the Kosovo Liberation Army.

“Nancy Small, national coordinator of Pax Christi USA, a national Catholic peace organization said, “The appeal encapsulates key concerns of peace and justice activists anguished about the killing in Yugoslavia by Serb forces, the KLA and the NATO air strikes. We believe sustainable peace requires negotiations involving several international institutions; bombing is clearly a failed a policy.”

Executive Director Vander Laan asks for your participation

By Lee Vander Laan

The challenge to VFP and all its members for the next year is very clear. I believe we need to reach beyond our present members for growth, financially and ideologically. But it is our members who have supported us for years: they continue to believe in VFP's mission, and trust that those elected and appointed make the right decisions for the organization. Therefore, failure is not an option, only success will do.

We must continue the mix of appeals for increased membership, outside grants and large donors who believe in the potential of the organization. Three-year pledges, the enhancement fund and lifetime memberships all play a role in reaching this goal.

We can rely on our base of members to sustain our present budget. To go beyond that, we must brainstorm and carry through on plans to further embellish our funds. We have momentum now in conveying to our members that we are serious in continuing this progress. Three newsletters in six months, donor appeals by letter, web-site appeals, and VFP actions this month say, "we intend to lead by leading, not by following." The continuity we display now speaks volumes about our organization. The support we give grass-roots efforts (Peace Bus, Iraq Campaign, etc.) tells our members we believe in them, and will support them. This is crucial to us now as much as taking comfort in adequate financing. The cart does not lead the horse. Actions will lead to secure financing. Financing does not guarantee action. I believe that VFP will maintain its membership and keep growing if the public sees that our ideas and activities are known.

Let us channel our focus to positive things: with level-headedness, compassion, and a steady hand on the wheel we can overcome the odds, and succeed I want to be part of Veterans for Peace before, during and after that process, as do all of our loyal members!

Fortunately, the group is greater than the individuals that compose it. We can give each other help when we need it, but no one individual can change its course irredeemably. We are fundamentally democratic, and that saves us from the tyranny of the few or the

many. We must remain loyal to the idea that when VFP succeeds in ANY way, we all succeed, be the actions small, seemingly unimportant, or grand and full of media attention.

I ask for your continuing support, your gifts of whatever magnitude, be it in dollars or talent, in the realization that Veterans for Peace fills a unique and important role in the future individually for each of us, and in our immediate and not-so-immediate world. Let's use each other's strengths to realize that goal.

--Lee Vander Laan, Executive Director

(Lee was chosen unanimously as Executive Director on June 17th, out of a field of impressive candidates. Ed.)

VFP CONVENTION – 1999 - Washington D.C.

We held it in Washington D.C. At the time, Hari Scordo was still Executive Director. Hari had put together the convention almost single-handedly and was trying to manage it as the VFP board was holding its annual meeting, largely without Hari. It was shortly after receiving harsh criticism from some of the board that Hari resigned.

Immediately after the convention, Hari led a group of veterans on a leafleting campaign in nearby Alexandria, warning the neighbors of the unsavory nature of the private military contractors in their midst. Hari wrote the following piece for that winter's (2000) newsletter, edited by Peter Shaw:

Old Soldiers Don't Fade Away Any More- They Just Keep on Making War and Others Always Die - by Hari Scordo

"Privatization, the process by which the responsibilities of government are transferred to unaccountable corporate hands, now occupies the halls of war making." Ken Silverstein, author of *Private Warriors* and a participant (via video) in a panel presentation at the VFP national convention. VFP members taken to civic duty entered the community of Alexandria, Virginia during the weekend of the National Convention last August to warn residents and business about a "General Gang problem" growing in their neighborhood.

Alexandria is the location of Military Professional Resources, Inc (MPRI). MPRI was founded over a decade ago and is led by retired military generals. It has a database of over 10,000 retired military officers and enlisted service personnel to call for temporary

duty. Profitable duty has taken war management into many areas including the Balkans, Middle East, Africa and it has recently reaped the U.S. "Drug War" project in Colombia. MPRI was the company that assisted in devising the "action plan" for the Colombian government to be presented to the U.S. Congress for utilizing the \$1.6 billion aid from the U.S. taxpayer coffers. MPRI is in the lucrative position to help alleviate the threat of Colombians with wrong ideas that are tripping up the business plans of Lockheed, Occidental Petroleum, Texaco, BP, Caterpillar, Bechtel, Pfizer and those otherwise wanting to retain efficient corporate use of resources and maintain "free market" economic values in Colombia.

A top MPRI official admits that by using their services "exposure risk for Uncle Sam" is lessened. The embarrassing Freedom of Information Act revelations of the "massacres" undertaken by government School of the Americas graduates makes it clear that a private company, because of legal "propriety information" protection, works better as a channel for secretive policy making. MPRI weapons trafficking ventures, promotion activities for military education inclusions such as ROTC in universities, and the knowledge that many of its war students have made good candidates for multinational guardians, gives it permanence in a "national security" sated state. More significant is the current thinking of many in the top brass of the military who feel they can best do the problem-solving for a nation floundering in democratic policy "debates."

New national strategies give the military a mandate to become policy makers; many "civilian" policy-makers are lined up in agreement. In an article entitled Politics for Warriors: The Political Education of Professional Military Officers, Lt. Col. Robert F. Hahn II analyzes the future of the military in the realm of the DOD strategies of "Operations Other Than War" and the need for political training of military officers (John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies, Harvard University, 1997).

In an overview he states, "These [policy] needs may not always be consistent with the goals, values, and resource allocation decisions of the nation as a whole. However, holding firmly to the Biblical injunction in Proverbs that, 'Where there is no vision, the people perish,' military officers will willingly provide whatever vision is necessary for what they perceive as the safety, security, and success of both the country and the members of their organizations." In effect, the military will play a more pervasive role in religiously designing and enforcing values and institutions internationally and domestically. Its goal will be "to lead others to accept and support the overall goal of a particular policy remains the same, whether the issue is stability in Bosnia or on the streets of South Central Los Angeles." MPRI, one of "their organizations," will be a convenient networking channel for maintaining an ever-flowing public money spigot to keep military corporate political education healthy.

The people and businesses in Alexandria were very co-operative in receiving the one thousand fliers handed out by VFP members informing them about the "General Gang Problem" in their neighborhood. Hopefully, after reading it they realized their "neighborhood watch" ex-tends to all peoples of the world. One of the mercenary gangs that takes resources, is involved with drugs, and endangers the life of community

members, is found head-quartered in a local carpeted office in the town where a general who rejected military entanglements drank at Gadsby's Tavern.

Also in that issue was the announcement of the My Lai Clinic project:

Veterans Asked to Help Repair Health Clinic in My Lai

(Winter 2000)

There is a call out for former US service people of all eras and ages to go to Viet Nam and work repairing a health clinic in My Lai. VFP Chapter 22 (Garberville, California), headed by Fredy Champagne, has started preparing a team. The trip would take place no earlier than late May, 2001, but would more likely happen in early June. This venture is a project headed by Cherie Clark who founded the famous International Mission of Hope (IMH) that operates in both Viet Nam and in India (and has done so with remarkable success for a quarter-century). To our unmerciful good fortune, Cherie has championed VFP's Iraq Water Project recently—even to the extent of accompanying that project's first delegation to Iraq this past October (and she'll most likely be with us on Team Two in March as well).

Cherie also has helped in the past with the Veterans-Viet Nam Restoration Project—she helped with the Friendship Clinic in Vung Tau, and the Vinh Hospital Wing in Vinh. They are asking veterans to help build a kitchen, a fence around the property, and to upgrade the power and water supply, the lawn, and finally to install glass windows where now there are only shutters. Cherie is also looking for donations for while IMH has raised \$50,000 for equipment, they are seeking an additional \$20,000 to pay for the repairs. The My Lai Health Center was completed on June 17, 1990 for \$35,000 (after IMH had raised \$50,000 for the whole complex). It currently serves 60,000 people from 6 different communes. 600-700 people per month come for medical exams. Since March 2000, IMH has been sponsoring \$500/month.

This amount has been used to pay for equipment and medications for the poor as well as for maintenance on the building. It's not much, but it is very valuable in difficult times. The My Lai clinic is a branch of the main hospital. There are 16 staff members at the clinic: 2 doctors, 5 assistant doctors and the rest are nurses and midwives. The top-level doctor at this clinic manages all of the health services in the province. The clinic has four main functions: • Provide medical equipment for common diseases • Give direction to communal health stations • Educate outreach on health matters; to detect epidemics; and direct health treatment and immunizations • Rehabilitation based on community.

Quang Ngai province (where My Lai resides) has a population 1.3 million. Some 130,000 of these are ethnic minorities from three main tribes: Co, Hre and Hdang Co-dong. There are 12 districts and one town. Five districts are in the mountains, one is an island, the rest are in the plains. Of the travel plans, Ms. Clarke recently had the following to say (although this should be considered STRICTLY speculative as, project-wise, it is very early thinking): "We would like to set the date as the first two weeks in June. I am working on hotel rooms at the fairly decent hotel at the end of the road leading to the clinic. I am thinking of spending seven days working with the workers if that sounds

logical to others. Perhaps fly into Saigon, spend two days to meet, brief, and whatever, fly to Da Nang. IMH has a bus that will meet us and we will probably rent other vehicles that will transport us about. Then if people are interested we could go to Hanoi by road which is a pretty good trip these days as they have fixed the roads. This would allow a stop in Da Nang for a night, a stop in Hue and Vinh to see the first surgical unit that IMH built and financed and also perhaps our project which is a huge orphanage for unadoptable children in Thanh Hoa province. Great place for a visit.”

One of the major events of that year was the renewed effort to get the Navy out of the tiny island of Vieques, off the coast of Puerto Rico. Here is an accounting of one of the protest events the eventually brought the navy to its knees.

***Veterans for Peace in Vieques: The Most Fearful Day of My Life --
by Emilio Garcia -- (Winter 2000)***

Tuesday, October 17, 2000 we were entering the Navy bombing zone with two purposes: to stop the military practices and to monitor the military practices. Because they were monitoring from the Public Square, we hid somewhere east of the bombing range. We made a shelter under a yagua palm tree and covered it with branches to keep it out sight of the helicopters that were passing over the location around 9:15 a.m. Cannon rounds were heard from the south and we knew they were live rounds because soon we also heard them explode on the beach. The clouds of dust rose forty to fifty feet in the air. We counted 236 sea to land cannon rounds. Planes were also dropping live bombs and helicopters were firing. There was a constant loud noise like metal hitting metal. At 6:30 p.m. we decided to move closer to the Observation Post (OP) because our partner Agapito "Pepo" Belardo felt ill. We entered the bombing range and were about half way through when helicopters began firing live rockets in the area in front of the OP. Unable to get Pepo to the OP we decide to move closer to the beach to the south. At 9:00 p.m. the bombing stopped and we decide to try again. When we were about two kilometers from the OP airplanes began to drop inert bombs. We waited and watched. Two planes dropped flares so we moved forward waving white flags so that we could be seen. Five minutes into our walk the ships began to fire. The first round landed twenty-five feet in front of us. We were about to retreat to the beach again but a round landed to our left and then to our right . We noticed that the rounds were coming in six round volleys so after the sixth round we moved out again walking fast and running when we could see well enough. We left the bombing area only to be close to where the helicopters were firing. At the entrance to the firing area from the beach there was a post with what seemed to be red wires attached. I started to say to my partner Belardo , "If the pilot is mistaken and thinks this is a target..." but before I could finish the helicopter came in low . I told my partner, "Hit the dirt. This guy is going to fire on us." He strafed over us with machine gun fire. Next I recovered my partner Navarro, who was in a muddy trench, and with the help of my partner Belardo we took him to the beach. Navarro told us he felt very dehydrated (he had diabetes and was going into insulin shock but this was not known to the others).

We hid between some rocks while the helicopter continued to fire along the beach and then in the bombing range with missiles as well. Two fires started by the missiles lit up the bombing range. About 11:05p.m. the firing seemed to have ended. Some flares were fired around the OP. Then we saw the flash of a solitary cannon fired from a ship but there was no impact explosion. I sent my partner Belardo to the OP to find medical help for my partner Navarro, who by this time was in serious condition and I thought he was going to die. My partner Belardo told me that when he got to the OP he entered, sat down in a chair and no one noticed that he was not regular military personnel. He identified himself as a "Peaceful Civil Disobedient", that he was there to be arrested, and that he had a partner on the beach who was ill and needed immediate medical aid. When the help arrived and we were arrested, a Puerto Rican soldier who was in charge of security on Camp Garcia asked me where the wounded man was because an accident on the bombing range had been reported. He asked me why we had done such a crazy thing as cross the bombing range. For him to tell me these things goes to show that they were watching us. They probably hoped that we would get out without being noticed by anyone else and thereby make a joke out of their security system. There was a lot of security but they never considered the determination of veterans who would enter the bombing range while it was being fired upon.

Emilio Garcia and Agapito Belardo are Veterans of the war in Vietnam. Angel Navarro is a veteran of the war in Korea.

Note from Alan Pogue: Lordes Perez, a Puerto Rican singer in the U.S., invited me to join a delegation of artists to Vieques. Kathy Gannett keeps the Peace Camp running smoothly in Esperanza, Vieques. On very short notice William Nemcik, VFP member in Puerto Rico, met our delegation at 1 AM at the airport and helped us greatly. The fishermen of Vieques have a special place in my heart. In their small boats they have faced the same danger as Emilio, Angel and Agapito. Vieques is a beautiful island populated by people who are as friendly as they are determined to have the U.S. Navy make it's long overdue exit.

The efforts of these men and many others were eventually rewarded when the Navy withdrew from Vieques in May of 2003. See David Cline's story in the section on MAJOR PROJECTS:

On the other side of the planet, VFP members were working to heal old wounds and encourage the development of a democracy free of coercion.

Return to South Korea - By Wilson (Woody) Powell --
(Winter 2000)

The following is a report on a brief trip to South Korea by VFP Korean War veterans Woody Powell (Chapter 61) and Charlie Atkins (Chapter 43), September 8-11, 2000.

We arrived the afternoon of the 8th and made our way to the Astoria Hotel, recommended to us by John Feffer, of the American Friends Service Committee.

Because of incomplete communications before we left the U. S., we were not met and did not make contact with the people who were to meet us until the following day. We managed to track them down at their office about noon. After getting over their surprise, they were indeed glad to see me. (At this point, Charlie Atkins had become very ill with bronchitis and we both decided the best thing for him was to stay in the hotel room and give himself a chance to recover. He was much better two days latter when we left Korea for home.)

They immediately got on the phone, and arrangements were soon made for a bus ride to Mansan and a meeting with Kim Yeong Man, a ROK Marine veteran of the Viet-nam war, founder of the Independent Teacher's Union in Mansan and president of the National Alliance for Re-unification (of the North and South Koreas).

We arrived at 11:00 PM after an eight-hour ride, We discussed the up-coming larger delegation of Veterans For Peace being planned for next spring and John Kim, the project leader. John is an ex-patriot Korean, now an American citizen, and a veteran of the army, having served part of his time in Korea itself.

It was made clear that any direct contact with John would have to wait until he has been checked out by Korean nationals in New York, where John practices Immigration Law. The concern is for the National Security Act which imposes severe penalties for consorting with anyone in sympathy with North Korea or representing North Korean interests. We did, however, exchange contact information against the day he would be cleared.

We were met by Vietnam Veteran, ex-ROK Marine, Kim Yeong Man, 55. He is the only one of 300,000 ROK troops who has turned in his medals and publicly apologized for his part in attacks on civilian populations in Vietnam. No one else spoke up -- but, then, no other veteran criticized him, either. He is trying and hopes he can someday form a significant contingent of veterans working for peace in Korea.

The next morning we rose early, had breakfast at the hotel, then traveled in Mr. Kim's van to Kokan-ri, where we met with the sole survivor of a mass killing that took place in September of 1950, fifty years ago this month.

I have reported her testimony and what we saw in the accompanying article "KOKAN-RI".

Afterwards, we went to Yeong Man's home where we met his wife and children. It was interesting that his children were just now getting to know their father, and to appreciate what he has stood for in his activism, just since his public confession. Over a wonderful meal of raw fish, garlic, chili sauce and raw vegetables, soup and one cooked fish dish, at a seaside restaurant two blocks from his home, we discussed the price people's families often are required to pay for their beliefs.

Yeong Man's father was there. a quiet, thin, long-faced man who had served in the Japanese army during the days of the Japanese occupation. He had no comment to make.

What we can do:

We left Mansan with the aspect of a spring delegation of Veterans for Peace from the states a positive possibility.

1. One important task for such a delegation would be to start the process of getting our government to recognize the killing of civilians at Kokan-ri and open an investigation.
2. Another would be to help Kim Yeong Man with his efforts to recruit Korean veterans to the peace movement.
3. Still another would be to address the Status of Forces revisions to make American armed forces fully accountable for environmental insults, criminal acts on the part of soldiers committed against Korea civilians and the devastations wreaked upon the Korean people neighboring the bombing range at Mae-hyang.
4. Someone came up with an excellent suggestion that we include students in some sort of workshop program which would feature a one-week minimum stay in Korea to visit such places as Kokan-ri and the villages around Mae-hyang, as well as other opportunities to see typical Korean life, meet cultural counterparts and come away with an "up close and personal" sense of the world beyond the borders of the U. S. A.
5. A man named Jaehun Choi, representing the KHIS Action Group, is coming to New York and Washington, D.C. on September 22 to organize a rally calling for the cleanup of the Maeh-yang bombing range. I told Serepina that John Kim would probably want to meet him and might be able to assist through the VFP contacts in Washington.

KOKAN-RI - September 9, 2000

We sat together on a stone bench holding hands. She was all of four-foot two, stocky, dressed in a pink tunic and flowered pants, tiny feet in black, rubber-soled shoes. Her hair was close-cropped and her skin fine-wrinkled and reddened by outdoor living. She was telling her story as the sole known survivor of a mass killing that happened fifty years ago this month, September, 1950. Her name is Hwang Jum Soon.

She squeezed my hand and rose to lead us through the rice paddy to an ancestral shrine she said came under attack by two groups of American soldiers after about one hundred old people and children took shelter from the war raging around them on that day.

She pointed to a grove of trees about 800 yards distant. "They were shooting from there." Then she pointed to a low wall, much closer, perhaps 60 yards off from the shrine, "They were shooting from there, also. Even though they could see we had a white cloth on the roof to say we were civilians."

She is speaking through our interpreter, who brought me, by bus, to Masan the night before to meet with Kim Yeong Man, a Vietnam war veteran of the ROK Marines. He is the only one of 300,000 ROK troops who has turned in his medals and publicly apologized for his part in attacks on civilian populations in that country. No one else

spoke up -- but, then, no other veteran criticized him, either. He hopes he can someday form a contingent of Veterans For Peace in Korea.

Yeong Man brought us here, in the cool of an overcast morning, to meet Hwang Jum Soon and listen to her story and her plea for a “fact-finding”. She wants to find her son, if he is still alive. Yeong Man says she has been here alone, without family, ever since the killing. He says her husband died just before the attack, but he doesn’t know how. He assumes he was shot by someone.

She tells more of her story as we approach the shrine, a stone-walled area about one-third acre square, with a raised wood and plaster building in the center. We pass through a wide, wood gate, into the courtyard. The shrine roof is curved tile, typical of the old Korea. Wood frame doors with panels swing open to reveal a highly-varnished wood floor. It looks chewed up in one section, and wormy in others. I realize I am looking at fifty year-old bullet holes, hundreds, perhaps thousands of them. They came from above and from below. The old woman, now seventy-two, tells how she, as a young mother, was holding her two-year-old son in her arms, trying to protect him as bullets entered her; “Here - here - here.” She pulls up a pant leg to reveal a puckered scar, very recognizable as a bullet wound. The other wounds were to her chest and arms, covered by the shirt. She said her baby was hit, but not dead, she thought.

Not only did they take ground fire, but they were hit from the air. Strafed, she said. She was the only one left alive, except, perhaps, for her son. She was taken away, unconscious, by villagers who came later, after the soldiers left. No one dared come back for fifteen more days. When they did, her son was not among the bodies removed for burial on the mountain behind the shrine. She hopes he was taken, perhaps even by a soldier, wounded as he was, and cared for. She hopes he is alive.

Before we leave, she stoops to pull a few weeds. This place is sacred to her, needs her care.

On the path back, she takes my hands in both of hers and looks me in the eyes. Through our interpreter, she tells us all that I am the first American soldier ever to come here since the day of the killing. She is very glad that an American veteran cares to come and learn from her.

I can only say, “I am so sorry.” I am speaking for myself, of course, but I am also speaking for all other veterans who feel as I do; that we need to make amends wherever we can, and to let people know that wars have very personal, very harmful, consequences, are certainly avoidable and unnecessary.

I promise to tell her story and join my voice with those who want to expose all such events and give our countries the chance to make official amends -- starting, in her case, with an investigation that just might, against all odds, find out what happened to her son.

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Jim Steinhagen, President, 1999 -- Marine veteran, Korea,
was finishing up his three-year term on the Board and stints as Chairman in 1999 and President in 2000:



Jim Steinhagen at the School of the Americas, November 2003, flanked by Wayne Wittman (reader's left) and Barry Reisch.

In many ways it was a difficult time for VFP. Our office was in D.C., with no full-time office personnel, and I was in Minneapolis, making it very difficult to manage. There were two part-time volunteers along with occasional visits by Bob (Van) Vandivier who, I believe, was also Board Secretary. The office was small and very cramped.

We did succeed in finding new office space, larger and still affordable.

At the time, the Board had difficulties. People were elected who did not have the financial means to attend meetings. I believe I instituted quarterly Board meetings, though I'm not positive. Prior to this, Board meetings were only held at national conventions.

There were two women on the Board, Rosemary Gould and Edilith Eckart. For various reasons both of them resigned from the Board, as did Eli Jaffe, who did so for reasons of age and health. Kieth Boylan was elected, but never came to a meeting. I asked him to resign, which he did.

Luis Ramos, from Puerto Rico, was elected to the Board and, as I recall, he also resigned because of financial problems.

We did make inroads in Puerto Rico because of the efforts of Jim Creaven, who fostered a campaign to end the US bombing on Vieques. I believe two new chapters were started in Puerto Rico, but I don't know if they are still active at this writing (June, 2006). The bombing ended in 2003.

Early in my term as Board Chair, Paul Walker was president, and Sandy Kelson and I met at Paul's home in Boston to interview for an Executive Director. David Hart was chosen. As our history shows, David did not last long for various reasons, not all of which were caused by him. I won't elaborate.

David was followed by Antonia Balzass, who also left when she found a better paying job. Lee Vander Laan was then hired as ED. He resigned after I asked him to keep me advised of where he was and why after some Board members complained he was unresponsive to their requests.

Hari Scordo served as ED for a short time after Lee, resigning shortly after the 1999 convention in D.C.

It is easy to see why membership languished when there was such instability at the upper levels.

In spite of our management problems, qwe chalked up some notable successes:

We staged very successful National Conventions in Minneapolis, 1998 and D.C., 1999; we established the Iraq War Project under the guidance of Fredy Champagne, Edilith Eckart and Michael Carley and finally, our present Constitution and By-Laws were developed and approved under the direction of Phil Butler and Alex Gillette.

Jim Steinhagen

Jim's final letter to the membership:

Dear VFP members and friends, Your response to our membership renewal letter was so very encouraging. My thanks to each of you who responded so quickly and generously. To those of you who still have a response sitting on your to-do list, please get it in as soon as you are able. The need for funds and membership is still great, as are the areas of concern in our violent country and world.

The coming four years are going to be full of challenges and opportunities for us and for all peace and justice groups. Imagine a more bloated military budget, a push for a Nuclear Missile Defense System by Bush and Powell, oil drilling in the Arctic Wildlife area and more. Get out your signs and banners for there will be a need for more Peace and Justice education than ever before.

Our incoming Board of Directors has many crucial decisions facing it, beginning at the first Board meeting January 19 and 20, 2001. Please be as generous with your resources (intellectual and financial) and your moral support as you can be.

After my three years on the Board, I thank each of you for your support and good wishes. In the coming year, I wish for each of us peace in our hearts, in our homes, and in our world.

Jim Steinhagen

Meeting of New Board of Directors

The new Board of Directors met January 19-20 in Washington, DC, at the Institute for Policy Studies offices located one floor above the VFP national office.

Those on the new VFP Board are: Ellen Barfield, Keith Boylan*, Paul Brailsford, Fredy Champagne, David Cline*, Sissy Goodwin, Erik Gustafson, John Kim*, Woody Powell*, Luis Ramos*, Barry Riesch*, Peter Shaw, Lee Vander Laan*. Members elected in November 2000 are indicated with an asterisk. Luis Ramos recently resigned from the Board, having been named by the new Governor of Puerto Rico to head the Office of

Veterans Advocate, a cabinet level position. Best wishes to Luis and congratulations on the appointment! Wayne Wittman, first on the list of Board candidates not elected, was named as Luis's replacement.

New VFP officers elected by the Board are: Barry Riesch (President), Ellen Barfield (Vice President), Woody Powell (Secretary) and Lee Vander Laan (Treasurer). (The installation of officers was held outside the Veterans Affairs Building coincident with the inauguration of George W. Bush that same day.)



The Board took its first action with the following press release:

VFP Press Release on Pentagon's No Gun Ri Report Veterans For Peace, Inc., the largest peace organization of American veterans, today called on the U.S. Congress and the United Nations to conduct an independent investigation into the No Gun Ri massacre of South

Korean non-combatants in late July 1950. Over a period of three days, an estimated 300 refugees were killed by artillery and gun-fire, and another 100 refugees died when U.S. warplanes strafed the area.

Veterans For Peace (VFP), a veterans organization dedicated to the abolition of war, was founded in 1985. Since that time, the organization has brought medical aid to Central America and evacuated wounded children from war-torn Bosnia for medical treatment. Currently, VFP is working on projects in Vietnam and the embargoed, war-torn nation of Iraq.

Last year VFP, whose membership includes Korean War veterans, established a special committee to focus on Korea. VFP contends that U.S. commanders were responsible for ordering the No Gun Ri massacre. In a statement released today, VFP called for a full apology and compensation to the survivors and decedents' families and called on "the U.S. Congress and the United Nations to establish a separate independent commission to investigate all allegations of U.S. war crimes, including the No Gun Ri massacre, committed during the Korean War."

After years of rigorous denials, the Army finally admitted that U.S. forces killed South Korean civilians in the vicinity of the hamlet of No Gun Ri. According to an Army statement released January 11, 2001: "An unknown number of Korean civilians were killed or injured" by small-arms fire, artillery and strafing by U.S. warplanes. The long delayed report was a response to the Pulitzer Prize-winning Associated Press report that broke the story in September

1999. In that report, Korean War veterans confirmed that at least 100 civilians were killed.

While acknowledging the importance of the Pentagon's long-overdue admission, VFP expressed outrage at the report's failure to give a full body count and to determine command responsibility for the killings.

VFP's new president, Barry Riesch, a Vietnam veteran who served with the 82nd Airborne, stated: "The Pentagon has lied to veterans, to the public, and to Congress in the past about Korea, Viet Nam, the Gulf War, toxic war-time exposures, and U.S. military ties abroad. The Pentagon has proved itself incapable of investigating itself. We believe a fair and impartial probe by independent investigators is the only legitimate recourse - for veterans, for our Korean brothers and sisters, and for the United States."

The Veterans For Peace statement continues: "While admitting that our troops fired on Korean refugees, the report justifies the killings as 'an unavoidable accident of war.' Such insults echo the whitewashed investigation of the My Lai massacre during the Viet Nam War."

Chung Koo-do, spokesman for a survivors' group in Seoul, has also called the Army report a whitewash. Korean survivors and victims' families are seeking compensation and an official American apology.

John H. Kim, Chair of the Veterans For Peace Committee on Korea, described the Army report as "evasive" and strongly condemned the U.S. Administration for failing to offer a full apology and due compensation to the victims. An ex-GI who served with the U.S. Army in Korea from 1972 to 1975, Kim explained: "By failing to produce an honest report on the No Gun Ri investigation, and by failing to take any meaningful remedial actions on the case, our government has undermined the honor and trust of all the American people, including all veterans who served for the American ideals of justice, freedom and human dignity."

CHAPTER 4 – MOVING TO ST. LOUIS

Woody Powell proposes – the membership disposes

Wilson(Woody) Powell, Korea Police Action veteran (USAF), National Administrator, later Executive Director 2001-2005. His story:

When Don Darling, in his capacity as member of the Board of Directors nominating committee, called and asked if I would be willing to run for the Board, I was not at all certain I was qualified. Until then I had done little more than participate with our small chapter in St. Louis, make a few trips of discovery into Mexico and Colombia, SA and visit little-known massacre sites in Korea. I was not at all familiar with the history, the inner workings of VFP, nor particularly inclined to get much more deeply involved.

Don felt, however, I had something to offer and persuaded me to run. I secretly counted on being easily defeated by a better known candidate. I ran on the October 2000 ballot and won a seat. The new Board was formed and held its first meeting in the D.C. offices of Paul Walker's Global Green organization. Our installation of officers was coincident with the newly-elected George W. Bush inauguration ceremonies, which we made much of by holding our ceremony on the street in front of the Veterans Affairs Building.

I believe it was at that initial meeting that I volunteered to keep the minutes and talked myself into the job of Secretary. Bob Vandivier was all too delighted to relinquish the task, which gave me some concern for what was to come.

It was immediately obvious to the board that the D.C. Office was virtually moribund. Ellen Barfield, along with her manifold other tasks, was able to come in once or twice a week and open mail, field a few phone calls. Bob Vandivier and one or two other local vets came in on occasion, as did a student intern named Jennifer (?) who was working on a VFP-sponsored video/film project that never materialized. Paid membership was down to around 500 and sinking for lack of follow-up and responsiveness.

As secretary, I found myself responding to the business of the board with ways to do it faster, with more accountability, using on-line techniques we were all just getting used to. I soon realized that essential information was hard to extract from the D.C. office, mostly because people did not know where previous Executive Directors had stowed it. The deeper I got into my responsibilities, the more apparent it became that the organization was seriously hampered by not having a constant, responsive presence at the headquarters office.

Meanwhile, I was getting better acquainted with the progressive community in St. Louis. That summer, they undertook to gut and refurbish a significant portion of the World Community Center, which housed the American Friends Service Committee, the Interfaith Committee on Latin American Affairs (which had been run by my good friend Sr. Maggie Fisher, the woman most responsible for awakening my own activism), the Human Rights Action Service, run by a remarkable local leader named Bill Ramsey, the

Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, headed up by Yvonne Logan and Dorothy Poor. Yvonne's husband, Joe Logan eventually became a member of Veterans For Peace and Dorothy was herself a WWII Marine.

Bud Deraps, (WWII, Navy) one of the original members of Chapter 61, St. Louis, which had formed in 1991 on the heels of the first Gulf War, was on the Board that ran the building and led me to a basement office he had once used that could be reclaimed for use by VFP. I looked it over as best I could, even though the entire basement was choked with furniture and boxes of discarded stuff from the refurbishing operation upstairs. The space was large enough for three desks and an assortment of file cabinets. The potential was apparent.

I talked it over with my wife, Joan, and my part-time employer, an old friend and VFP member, I was helping out with a start-up company. We determined that bringing the office to St. Louis, where I could manage it on a regular basis, was a feasible idea.

VFP CONVENTION 2001 – Albuquerque, New Mexico

The Thompson's, Sally Alice and Don, did a wonderful job of putting together a meaningful series of workshops and programs for our convention in their city that year.

Father Roy Bourgeois of the campaign to close the infamous School of the Americas and Ward Churchill, Native American author, lecturer, were the primary speakers. We had a good turnout of approximately 150 members, which was quite good for that time.

Most importantly to me, however, was the unanimous support I received to my proposal to move the VFP offices from D.C. To St. Louis, Missouri. It would cost VFP \$80.00 a month versus the \$800.00 a month we were paying in D.C.

The proposition was this; I would set up and man the office in St. Louis five days a week, four hours a day, regular as clockwork, in exchange for \$2000.00 a month salary. The condition of the treasury was such that we could not afford to remain in D.C. and my alternative appeared to be fiscally doable; especially since routine activities, such as answering phones, maintaining databases and issuing dues notices would be attended to.

When I put the proposition to the general membership at the Saturday, August 25, 2001 business meeting, there was unanimous agreement.

The wheels were immediately put in motion. Bud Deraps and I cleaned out the basement – a week-long task, painted the floor and the walls, sealed the leaking, seeping sections of the old rock masonry foundation.

The office arrives in St. Louis in time for 9/11

Meanwhile, back east, Lee Vander Laan rented a Ryder van, loaded it almost single-handedly with the D.C. office furniture and files and drove out to St. Louis. He arrived at the World Community Center on September 9th, 2001. Lee's report:

Dear VFP Board,

I am pleased to report that the VFP office was successfully moved to St. Louis on September 9th. You have heard from Woody that the office was functioning and operating. Indeed, Woody and I were both in the office setting up on September 11, that fateful day of the New York and Pentagon attacks. Our heart goes out to the innocent victims of the tragedy.

The extra time in St. Louis, due to the tragedy, was nevertheless well spent. Time for setting up and configuring all the office computers, each on a fast linked Internet connection, as well as networked VFP Roster database was accomplished, and considerable organization of files, desks, printers and phone/fax lines. Time was spent orienting and training Woody in the details of the office, and I left at the end of the week, confident that it is in good hands.

I will be submitting a detailed expense report of truck rental and expenditures in the near future. After driving the Boston, DC and St. Louis legs of the trip (not to mention loading the truck) and returning the same way by rental car, I am still in "recovery" mode, having just returned yesterday.

Woody's hospitality was incredibly cordial, and both he and his wife Joan deserve thanks for their true dedication to VFP and this new start for our National Office.

Also, I am pleased to report that the old VFP office has been sub-leased to the Indonesian Human Rights Network. The contract was initialed on September 17 and should be signed this week. Ellen Barfield and I have been working for the past two months on transferring the lease (given the approval by the membership and board at the convention), meeting with the building management and arranging the space and contract. Although we were required to sub-lease, it has been stipulated that IHRN would be required to find a replacement tenant, should they move before the lease end-date of December, 2003. They will assume the current rental rate of \$856.03 per month.

Many thanks to the St. Louis chapter and friends for assisting in off-loading the truck Sunday before last, and to the dedicated office volunteer, who we have an opportunity to hire part-time. Ruth Flannery would be a welcome addition to the staff, at very minimal cost. I believe the board should consider extending the budget to cover her expenses as an energetic, incredibly organized administrative assistant. Combined with Woody's obvious drive and dynamism, we have an excellent opportunity to excel.

There has been a rush of veterans and associates joining VFP this week, many old members returning, and new ones finding us. We are lucky to be in this position of stability, despite the obvious concerns for our nation.

Thanks to all for the opportunity to be a part of this.

Lee Vander Laan

VFP RESPONSE TO 9/11

Veterans For Peace, Inc. stress thoughtful action in response to world trade center and pentagon horror - September 11, 2001

September 14, 2001. Veterans For Peace, Inc., an organization of men and women who have served in the military and know the costs of war and terrorism as intimately as anyone can, consider the hijacked airplane attacks on the World Trade Towers and the Pentagon a grievous assault upon innocence; a cause for outrage, sadness and disbelief -- indeed the full range of emotions that must arise from such violence happening within the borders of our homeland.

Our hearts are full of anguish for the as-yet uncounted civilians who have died. We embrace the families they leave behind with a grief that echoes their own. Many of us recognize, yes, even bear, the same scars forming within the survivors.

On September 11, 2001 we witnessed the extent to which this century's cycles of violence have escalated to bring down the most visible symbols of power in the world. Many of us feel an overwhelming need to strike back, somehow, even blindly.

At this critical point, we believe it is essential to recognize that terrorists do not represent, nor are representative, of any community or country as a whole. We must not allow terrorism the power to create fear, suspicion and hatred -- or to direct our nation's domestic and foreign policies. We must not surrender to the cycle of retaliatory violence these angry people would push us into. Instead, we must come together and support each other, with faith and trust.

We do not believe this is a naive concept; rather, that it is a practical exercise that honors those whose experiences have taught them that there is a viable alternative to war and the cycle of violence. We hear the trumpets and drumbeats of retaliation, but in our hearts, we know that America can play another tune; one of reason and rationality, and respect for human life.

When the nation has digested the indigestible, we believe it must ask this question:

“Will military build-up, attacks upon foreign nations suspected of harboring terrorists, the suspension of cherished civil liberties -- the creation of Fortress America, with battlements flung around the world -- guarantee the safety of our citizens and preserve the freedoms defined by our Constitution?”

We condemn the violence perpetrated on America, but see clearly that the time for understanding cause and effect is now upon us. We must recognize this need, and change our actions to benefit the disenfranchised, understand the issues of power and its global effects, and seek a course of justice that will disable the cause of terrorism and render harmless the potential for devastation.

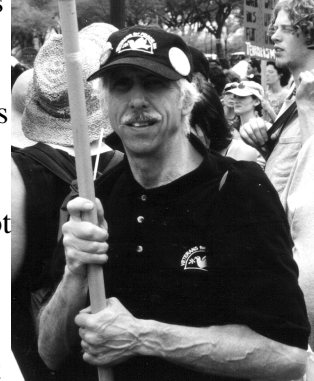
Offered by the Veterans For Peace Board of Directors

Barry Riesch – President, 2001, U.S. Army '68-'70

(U.S. Army '68-'70. One year in Viet Nam - first three months with the 82nd Airborne (colors were taken home as part of Nixon's troop withdrawals) remaining time with the 199th Light Infantry Brigade.)

President Riesch's Statement on 9/11

As President of Veterans For Peace, I believe I speak for all of us in saying that we at VFP express our heartfelt sympathies and condolences to the survivors and friends of the victims of the events of September 11, 2001. We are saddened by the tragic loss of life and angered by our government and media, who re-fuse to tell the truth and bear any responsibility for those events. We witnessed another tragic loss of innocent life because we have not yet learned to live in a way that does not require us to harm each other violently. Many of us were not surprised by the events. We at Veterans For Peace have been working for years to avoid such a tragedy, but our leaders do not listen, and now terrorism has hit on U.S. soil. How much more violence do we have to perpetrate on the world before we find a better way to resolve conflict? Insanity is sometimes defined as doing the same thing over and over and each time expecting different results. Our leaders are expecting good results from unleashing horrible violence on the innocents in Afghanistan in an effort to root out those that we helped bring to power. In the meantime, the U.S. could cause a humanitarian crisis of major proportions. We at Veterans For Peace know what the results of "Operation Enduring Freedom" will be; we have seen it time and time again. We call upon our government to bring justice to those responsible by trying them before a U.S. or International criminal court. We also call for a full review of U.S. foreign policy and its impact on the peoples of the world.



Those of us that oppose the way our government has chosen to respond to the terrorist attacks are being harshly marginalized by the majority, who seem to support the efforts being made. Many times we hear "well, we have to do something." They seem to think that we propose to do nothing. I don't think we are saying that at all, even though it might not be a bad thing to do. I have suggested a number of things since the very first day, such as: do a little stock taking of our lifestyle and foreign policy and its impact on the world; listen to what those who hate us are saying; get out of Saudi Arabia; lift the sanctions on the innocents of Iraq that have caused the death and suffering of over a million Iraqis; offer aid instead of bombs to the Afghan people; tell the American people the truth about our foreign policy and its effects for at least the past fifty years, tell the truth about Osama bin Laden and our involvement with him and the Taliban (such as in dealings with Unocal Oil Co.); tell the truth about our real concerns in Afghanistan, which has a lot more to do with oil than stopping terrorism or freeing the Afghan people from Taliban oppression; change our lifestyle in order to break our addiction to oil and war.

How about this - "try something different." Have we ever gone with something other than war and violence as our first response? Nobody likes my ideas. I wonder why? Maybe it is because war and violence are the easiest ways to deal with conflict, especially for our male counterparts. Will unending production of more sophisticated armaments and war ever make us more secure?

Some good news for VFP: We have now been the beneficiary of two full page ads. One ad ran in the New York Times (an open letter to President Bush from a former Marine Sergeant). The other ran in the LA Times (Halt the Bombing) as a result of Greg Nees writing the letter and Tom Adell making contact with Yumi Kikuchi and the Global Peace Campaign in Japan. She helped raise the bulk of the money to pay for the ads, which needless to say cost a lot. The first ad seemed to generate more response than the second, most positive and some negative. Both have generated new memberships and funds from the U.S. and Japanese Peace and Justice communities.

New York Times runs letter to President by VFP ex-Marine

The Global Peace Campaign was established September 15, 2001 right after the September 11 attacks. It was founded by a Japanese mother of four children, who joined with her friends in the USA and around the world after being inspired by a letter to President Bush by Greg Nees, a former US marine and VFP member. Almost single-handedly, Yumi Kiguchi raised the \$80,000 need to get Greg's letter into the Times. Early on she found Veterans For Peace and asked for our endorsement of the effort. We were delighted, of course.

Dear Mr. President:

I am a former Marine Corps sergeant who served his country well and was honorably discharged in 1970. I have never written such a letter before and I hope that it will somehow reach you through the bureaucratic filters. Like every other American, I was appalled by the death and destruction we witnessed September 11. We have suffered a horrible attack and far too many of us have suffered and died. Saddened and sickened by the carnage, I know you too are suffering with the victims and their families. I can feel your anger and frustration as well as your desire for active retaliation. I understand it well. It is a natural and justifiable reaction to such a heinous criminal act.

And yet I would counsel you to proceed carefully. A mistake on our part could easily widen the spiral of violence. Mr. President, you now have an historic opportunity to prove that the United States is more than just an economic and military power to be feared. You can show the world that the United States is also a civilized country that can be trusted to follow the law, guided by wisdom and compassion. I urge you to use all legal means at your disposal to determine who perpetrated this horrible crime and

to bring them to trial before the appropriate court. Let them indeed find the justice the world awaits and needs.

But I beg you, let not one more innocent life-American, Israeli, Palestinian, Afghan or any other-be lost. Too often our weapons have taken the lives of innocents. The military euphemism is "collateral damage," but in reality it is manslaughter if not outright murder. What right can we claim that allows us to take more innocent lives? Is that not also a form of terrorism? Should we lower ourselves to the level of those who attacked the World Trade Center or should we stand tall? You have chosen to describe this as an act of evil. I fear using such language will only inflame the situation and incite a lynch mob mentality. What we need is compassion and the cool reason to reach our true goals: peace, prosperity, and democracy for all peoples.

Lead us, Mr. President, with dignity and wisdom. Do not pander to the primitive parts of our beings. Show the world that you are a leader with the strength and courage to seek understanding and restorative justice, just as Nelson Mandela did in South Africa. Rather than characterizing the attack as an act of evil, I see it as a terrible last act of people who believed they had no other way to make themselves heard. It is critical that we see not only their willingness to use atrocious violence, but that we recognize the desperation which drove them to sacrifice others-and themselves.

As a former Marine, I know what it means to be willing to sacrifice one's life for a cause one truly believes in. While I see these people as horribly misguided, hate-filled and desperate, I do not believe they are cowardly or evil. If they see themselves as Davids fighting against a Goliath out to destroy their way of life, we certainly need not agree. But we must understand them if we ever hope to achieve a lasting peace and avoid a world locked down and bereft of the rights and freedoms we cherish.

Months ago, we saw magazine pictures of a Palestinian child cradled in the arms of his father. Innocently caught in a gun battle, the child died from bullet wounds and the father could not move to save him. As a father yourself, can you imagine the anguish as, pinned down and helpless, he felt the life ebb from his child? Such unbearable images and feelings drive people to the desperate measures we witnessed on September 11 in New York and Washington.

This moment of deep crisis is also a moment of immense opportunity. I urge you to move our world away from violence and suffering and towards peace, freedom, and abundance for all. Let voices of desperation be heard. Let the perpetrators have their day in court. Show them that we truly do believe in justice for all. Let us not make the mistake we did recently at Durban, but rather bring all voices to the table, even if they are screaming and telling the stories we do not want to hear.

We are truly a superpower, too used to talking and expecting others to listen. Show the world that we are also strong enough to learn to listen. I pray that you will not rashly lash out in violence. May God give you the wisdom to find the opportunity for peace that lies in this horrible tragedy. I hope that historians will look back and applaud a greatness of spirit and cool sense of reason that moved our globalizing world closer to justice and democracy for all.

Respectfully, Greg Nees

The evening the Times ran Greg Nees' message to the President, I received a call from the Bill O'Reilly show on MSNBC requesting an interview. I did not know Mr. Reilly from apple butter, but I welcomed the publicity and agreed to run down to the St. Louis Channel 2 studio that night to be interviewed on a live feed.

Once there, I was hooked up to an audio, sat on a stool in an empty studio, pointed at a TV lens and made to listen for twenty minutes to this aggressive personality attack a Red Cross rep for being slow in reparations payments to families of those who died in the Trade Tower attack.

Then it was my turn. I am told I acquitted myself okay by some members who just happened to come across the interview in progress and taped it. The most important aspect of that interview, for me, was the deference Mr. O'Reilly felt he owed me for having served. That told me us vets not only have a certain amount of automatically endowed power, but an obligation to use it wisely in the pursuit of truth. Afterwards, I wrote the following piece for posting to the membership:

SANITY AND NATIONAL DEFENSE or What Didn't Get Said On National TV By Woody Powell

I recently had the opportunity to be a guest on an evening TV show called "The O'Reilly Factor". I was told the host, Mr. O'Reilly, wanted the point of view of Veterans For Peace on the U.S. Government's reaction to the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. I don't really think that's what he wanted, for he didn't allow it to be presented. He wanted a counterpoint, a shove-off point, for his own point of view.

In the e-mails that came to me afterward, it was evident that quite a few people shared his view and felt mine to be that of a "Traitor, Commie, Lunatic, Coward, Yellowbelly (same thing, I think) and candidate for expulsion from the country.

The responses were not all that way. Many were positive. One, however, actually regretted the fact that I did not have the opportunity to fully express my view. That one needs a response:

The attacks were the most heinous criminal acts ever perpetuated on my country in my lifetime. I hurt for the people who died and with the people who survived them; amongst those survivors I count a beloved cousin.

I understand and share, having gone through something like it in my introduction to war in Korea, the succession of disbelief, dismay, fear, grief and anger pushed to rage visited upon us as a people. In my own case, after the rage, came the return of sanity, thank God. We need to be sane to effectively confront and defeat terrorism. Indeed it is our advantage, because terrorists are still back there in their rage and locked into the rigid thinking of the fanatic.

I believe it is our government's obligation to combat terrorism in such a way as not to re-create the conditions that produced it in the first place. That means, among other things, having to know what those conditions were and how they occurred. Understanding the terrorist. "Know thy enemy."

It may be, that in that process, we will come to understand ourselves a little better; certainly in terms of how we are viewed by much of the rest of the world. To honestly enter such a process, we must perform a most difficult task; that of examining ourselves. It is a fact of my own life that whenever I am under attack from someone, there is something I have done, some attitude I have assumed, that contributed to that person's perception. I remember Walt Kelley's Pogo and his amazing discovery that he had "found the enemy and the enemy is us." That bit of comic-strip wisdom has been a useful guide for examining my own behavior.

Whenever I get to this point, the accusation is that I am excusing the act. Let me say, categorically, that understanding the motive does not excuse the act. It does, however, give us an insight as to what we can do to make a real contribution to national security. I believe we have an immediate obligation to use our alliances and our resources to apprehend the criminals and bring them to justice. I'd like to see a trial in a world court. Probably won't happen, because martyrs can't stand in the dock. But we should make the effort.

After that, what? I do not think the U.S. has the resource or the will to become the world's policeman. That cop on that beat would never sleep, would lapse into paranoia and make all his citizens live in a fortress. Mr. O'Reilly actually said, that after we cleaned out this present nest of terrorists, we would prevent more from following them by "keeping an eye on them." Sorry. Not a plan.

A real plan would be to make a serious study of our relationships with the people of the world, not just their governments, who are often propped up and unpopular, and find ways to be a better neighbor.

In my neighborhood, we respect each other's little plot, ask permission to visit, buy our own plantings for our gardens, or share them, rather than steal the ones we find attractive in each others'. If a neighbor has a new addition to show off, we respond with admiration and, if we can afford it and really want one like it, we may copy it. We won't burn his down out of envy or some crazy notion of false egalitarianism. The prevailing attitude is one of mutual respect, not exploitation; genuine friendliness, which entails selfless giving rather than guarded cohabitation based on pure self interest.

In short, the people in my neighborhood know how to get along. Our government is invited to visit and find out how we, the American people in my neighborhood, do it.

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The sudden increase in the demands made upon the national office made it clear to me that I needed a lot more guidance than I had originally thought. Consequently, I persuaded the board to hold a meeting to talk over general strategy.

Strategy Meeting Report

Woody Powell, VFP National Administrator

A VFP Strategy Meeting was held on December 5-6 at a Franciscan Retreat Center some 30 miles outside of St. Louis. The participants were current and newly elected members of the Board (minus a few who were unable to attend), and a few individual VFP members who made themselves available for this admittedly informal exercise. They all responded very positively to my plea for help in formulating a direction for VFP. Adin Rogovin, a professional facilitator from Oregon, guided the discussion and deliberation. The following is a brief report on the meeting. We hope you will read this and conclude that your Board of Directors is making a serious and sincere effort to both improve intra-organization communications, and develop guidelines for chapter and individual actions that are responsive to the conditions of this particular time in history.

We met. Seventeen people in a circle, exchanging formative life experiences, sharing our views on peace making and war making, our frustrations, our feelings of inadequacy, fear of the magnitude of what we are being led into since 9/11 - and before

9/11. This happened as a necessary prelude to the practicalities of improving the effectiveness of VFP in terms of how we would like to be organized, how we can grow in membership, how we can improve intra-organizational communications.

We discussed the role of the national office as it has existed in the past and how it is evolving under the impetus of recent events. We feel we have arrived at the point where we need a point of focus all the chapters can respond to in ways commensurate with their various abilities and member talents; an outreach that will give us greater recognition for the enhancement of our work than we have so far achieved. Perhaps it will be doing on-the-ground work in Afghanistan, for instance, in conjunction with someone like the AFSC, gathering and disseminating truths to share with our fellow Americans.

We are thinking that this will help galvanize chapter activity and membership development. To that end, the discussion identified areas of weakness in membership, intra-organizational communication, public relations and information management. We have been making gains in all those areas, but we need to identify resources, people, within the organization that can help with those functions. For instance, Joe Farah, Indiana, has the credentials and the developed materials to help us with membership information packets, media packets, newsletter production, etc. Other people have been stepping forward in a number of capacities and we are on our way to developing the resources we need within and without the board.

We discussed personal responses to provocative situations we have encountered and are likely to encounter. We identified the need for counseling to help us in our responses; a resource we could make available to the active membership.

Actions:

1. A committee was formed to hammer out an up-dated position paper responsive to 9/11 and the outbreak of the war on terrorism.
2. A letter addressed to each state's congressional delegation, expressing opposition to our military response to 9/11 and the subsequent erosion of civil liberties, is being prepared. The letter will be circulated for comment before being issued to the chapters for them to issue for signature by as many veterans as possible. Such a widely endorsed document could be used as an advertisement, or some sort of media release.
3. We decided to investigate the advisability of collaborating with Yumi Kikuchi and the Global Peace Campaign (the force that raised the money to publish the now-famous Greg Nees letter as a full-page ad in the October 9, 2001, New York Times) in a project using her connections with people already on the ground in Afghanistan working in a relief capacity. Such a project would probably involve an initial exploratory expedition to that country. The purpose will be to examine how best to bring additional aid to the Afghans and come away with personal witness to conditions we can use to effectively counteract propaganda.
4. This communiqué is the opening effort to establish improved communications with all the chapters and members at large. It is our resolve to build participation through inclusion in the decision-making process. Part of this will be to create a regional contact structure, us-ing the board and others to make personal contact with chapters and members in their regions.
5. We will draw on special expertise within the organization to develop media packets and other such media contact aids that will be available to all the chapters. We hope to make this a continuing process so that we have materials responsive to events shortly after they occur. An events calendar, noting major nation-wide or area-wide events we wish to support with our presence and/ or sponsorship, will be an important aspect of this. We will use the national office as a collector and developer of talking points to help members with their public communications efforts.
6. Determined a need for a better division of labor between the Board, membership committees and the National Office Administration. This would include a budget, based on the current level of membership contributions and commitments. Woody Powell will submit a proposal at the next Board meeting.
7. We determined that the value of the strategy session was so apparent, in terms of improved understanding of ourselves as an organization and in loosening up our creative thought processes, that we will do it again next year.

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The invasion of Afghanistan in October of 2001, in reaction to the attacks upon the Trade Towers and the Pentagon in September, gave us a new area in which to practice the principles of peace. Allen Pogue, photographer and humanitarian, who had done so much work in Iraq, now looked to Afghanistan.

Board Passes Motion to Send Alan Pogue on Fact-finding Mission to Afghanistan

The Board has authorized VFP member and photo-journalist Alan Pogue to serve as a Veterans For Peace representative on the upcoming Global Peace Campaign (GPC) humanitarian mission to Afghanistan. Alan will document the mission's relief work of bringing aid to the dispossessed Afghan refugees in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and he will provide VFP with information that will serve as the basis of possible future VFP activity in Afghanistan. VFP will fund Alan's trip up to \$2500 with money raised by Yumi Kikuchi and the GPC for the national ad campaign. She has authorized the use of leftover funds for this purpose. Alan is to join the GPC aid group in Pakistan/Afghanistan around December 20.

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CHAPTER 5 – TRYING TO HEAD OFF WAR IN IRAQ

Dave Cline, President – 2002 -2007 , Vietnam, US Army 1967-68

His first communication with the membership appeared in the Winter, 2002 edition of the VFP Newsletter:

At the January Board of Directors Meeting I was elected National President of Veterans For Peace. This is a great honor for me, and I look forward to actively building our organization at this crucial time in our country's history. For those who don't know me, I am a disabled Vietnam combat veteran (25 th Infantry Division 1967-1968) and



have long been active in the struggle for veterans' rights, social justice and peace. I live in Jersey City, NJ, and am the father of two.

As Veterans For Peace we face a major challenge today. The Bush Administration's "War on Terrorism" has gone far beyond the initial claims of bringing those responsible for the September 11 attacks to justice. In fact very little progress has been made in that effort. Instead we have increased militarism and the threat of more war. The fighting continues in Afghanistan, and the number of dead and wounded-both Afghan and American-continues to grow. There are reports that the number of innocent civilians killed by American bombs is greater than those killed in the 9-11 terrorist attacks, although you wouldn't know that from our "free press."

Recently U.S. troops have been deployed to the Philippines, Yemen, Georgia and elsewhere, while government spokesmen openly discuss plans for another war in Iraq or Somalia and even Colombia. The President asked for an additional military spending increase of \$48 billion (reported in The Nation as more than the total military budgets of all other countries in the world combined), which may provide security for some military contractors' bank accounts but will do little to increase national security for most Americans. For us it can eventually only mean more taxes and fewer social programs.

We pride ourselves in being a free country, but today we find our civil liberties under attack by the misnamed PATRIOT Act and other legislation. Arab-Americans are being racially profiled, and several thousand immigrants have been incarcerated even though they have no connection to terrorism. In the name of national security our Constitutional rights are being undermined. Remember the oath we took when entered the armed forces. We swore to defend and uphold the Constitution from all enemies- internal and external.

Today we are being called upon to fulfill that commitment again. During the Vietnam era, members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War coined the phrase "winter soldiers." It came from Tom Paine's criticism of "sunshine patriots and summer soldiers," who were there when things were easy but disappeared when things got tough. Being a "winter soldier" meant you were committed for the long haul no matter how bleak the situation appeared. Today we are again called upon to be "winter soldiers." It would be easier to retreat into cynicism and inaction. Sometimes standing up for what is right is hard to do, but in the end if we don't do it who will. I remain committed to the struggle for peace and freedom and will do my best as President of Veterans For Peace, but I am just one person. Together we can make a difference. We ought to stand up for what is right and do what we can to promote reason and sanity in these trying times. That remains our duty to our conscience, our country and humanity.

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In that same issue, Woody Powell provided an up-beat report reflecting the new energies flowing into VFP:

National Office Report - Woody Powell, National Administrator

As your National Administrator I am pleased to report that your National Office is humming along in high gear. Here are the highlights of our activities since September, 2001, when Lee Vander Laan delivered the office to St. Louis in a Ryder Rental van.

Membership

Our membership has more than tripled and continues to grow daily. As of this writing [February 20], our paid membership stands at 1500. We believe our most recent mailing, which went to 3800 present and former members, will bring us to a much higher level in the next two months.

(The first three days of response brought in 61 members and \$3,200.) We will follow up shortly with an appeal for Associate memberships. Now that we are more solvent, plans are under way for a membership advertising campaign using publications that reach out to people most likely to share our views on the futility and waste of war.

Funding

Funds are flowing in with the memberships. We have added several more life members (\$1000 ea.) and anticipate being able to operate without deficits for the foreseeable future. Our funds have been augmented by a recently acquired grant of \$5,400 and another from the Global Peace Campaign for \$20,000, the result of the activity surrounding the fundraising for the New York Times and Los Angeles Times full-page ads. However, the trend is heavily in favor of dues income, which is providing us with a solid foundation for managing this office.

Outreach

Opportunities to connect with other organizations, provide speakers, field inquiries from the media are steadily increasing. Hardly a day goes by that we don't provide information or leads to qualified members who can inform the public on a variety of topics. The information files are pretty well organized and we are becoming more skilled at putting our hands on good data. We have been able to work closely with the Board of Directors on definitive statements representing VFP views on issues such as the men being held illegally (in our opinion) in Guantanamo Bay and, earlier, our general response to the events of 9/11. Recently, we learned how to produce, and put on CD, a modest slide show featuring Alan Pogue's pictures from his recent trip to Pakistan. They are being sent to all chapter contacts for their own use and dissemination. It is to be considered a sort of teaser for booking his exhibit and personal presentation on the refugee camps and the state of foreign aid in Pakistan. Merchandise sales are slowly increasing as chapters throughout the country come back to life and realize we are, indeed, there to support them.

Administration

We have two paid staff, working part time, plus the services of myself and whatever volunteer help is available from time-to-time. At that, we are working at top speed to get everything done. We are setting up a new accounting system that integrates intimately with the membership database and will give us instant reports on our status at any given moment. It will also allow us to easily manage the set-aside funds for projects, such as the Iraq Water Project, the Veterans Vietnam Restoration Project, Afghan Relief, etc.

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A number of voices began to be heard in opposition to the increasingly strident and lie-laden calls for war in Iraq:

A Peaceful Tomorrow on Tour

Woody Powell, VFP National Administrator

This morning I attended an event in St. Louis at which Amber Amundson and her sister-in-law Kelly Campbell both spoke. Tremendously moving. The two have a powerful message -- and connect very well with the simple sincerity of their presentations. Amber is the widowed mother of two, whose husband, Craig, lost his life in the Pentagon plane crash. He was an active worker for peace, in the military!

Kelly went to Afghanistan, with other women who had lost family on 9/11 and met with Afghan women who lost family to our retaliatory bombing. They established a relationship of common interest in Peace with them. We need to be tied in more closely with that effort. They are carrying their message of peace throughout the country.

I talked to Amber and offered our assistance in augmenting their venues. She was very grateful. Their website carries a complete list of future engagements. I am asking all you Veterans For Peace who live anywhere near any of those places where these women will be speaking to show up and get as many people out to hear them as possible. She speaks for a dead soldier who believed in working for peace. That's what we do, too. Check their schedule at: www.peacefultomorrow.org and let me know what you need for effective follow-up.

Ed. Note: John Grant, President of Philadelphia Chapter 31, reports that he was asked to introduce Amber and Ryan Amundson (Craig's brother) at an all-day peace event at Swarthmore College. John writes, "I expected very earnest people, but I was inspired with how committed and smart they both were. I introduced them as "veterans for peace" and was happy to connect the organization to their efforts. It is good to see the connection spreading.

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Place Peace on the Country's Agenda- Coleman P. Gorham, Maine VFP

America's history reveals the fact that we are in the habit of resolving conflicts by going to war. Maybe it is the result of a frontier mentality in which we resolve matters with a shoot-out at the OK Corral. We have been engaged in numerous wars and conflicts. We have de-signed and built a strong military force as a means of resolving our differences in the world. Seven of our Presidents have been military generals, one a colonel, one a Lt. Colonel and one a major. In recent years three of our Secretaries of State: Marshall, Haig and Powell, have been army generals, while eight recent presidents have served in the military. We have four military academies and many ROTC pro-grams in our colleges. We are well prepared to wage war. The subject of peace is nowhere to be found in the curriculum.

It is terrorism that now threatens the peace of the world. So, what is it that fuels this vehicle of terror and hate. According to psychologists it is anger and resentment that develop into hate. Whenever people perceive that they are treated unjustly and feel helpless to do any-thing about it, they feel compelled to project that anger onto those they blame for the real or perceived injustice. Those who are poor, hungry and uneducated are ripe candidates to become terrorists. Our President and his leadership team believe that by attacking, killing and imprisoning the terrorist they can solve the problem. Sure, you may treat the symptoms by hunting down and killing terrorists, but you can't kill the idea- the idea that some people feel they have been unjustly treated. Every effect has a cause. We must determine the cause and try to remedy the cause rather than just blindly attack the symptoms.

What are respected leaders saying about the causes of terrorism? Pope John Paul II is forever telling us that it is the inequity in how the world's goods are distributed that breeds terrorism. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan recently told the World Economic Forum that wealthy nations must do more to fight poverty and social injustice or risk growing threats from terrorism. He added that too much power and wealth is concentrated in the hands of too few people and countries. Financier George Soros stated: "We need to address wealth disparities and inequalities" Bill Gates stated: "People who feel the world is tilted against them will spawn the kind of hatred that is very dangerous for all of us." The managing director of the International Monetary Fund, Horst Koehler, stated: "Societies in the advanced countries are too selfish to give up their privileges."

We need to confront our greed. The above-mentioned leaders are telling us, in effect, that the division between the haves and the have-nots is getting wider and wider while violence and terrorism increase. Most of us don't like to hear this and respond by saying that we shouldn't try to change the status quo. Some of us respond by saying that to try to change the system is class warfare, social engineering or Marxism. Some of us say, "Don't mess with capitalism." Such responses are, of course, a smoke screen to cover up our insatiable greed. A climate of greed works against the spread of peace.

Is there a connection between Islam and terrorism? We know from our chemistry class that most of the earth's elements are benign when found alone, but when joined with other elements in a compound they can be explosive. Maybe when Islam is joined with certain conditions such as "social culture", poverty and ignorance, the resulting compound can become explosive. We know that terrorism doesn't germinate in a vacuum. Perhaps the wealthy nations should devise and fund a plan similar to the Marshall Plan which will be designed to help the impoverished nations eliminate the seeds of terrorism. Is there a politics of war? The formula seems to be: fail at peace, then declare war on terrorism and your approval ratings will go sky high. Most of us fell for the speech. Afterwards some of us placed flags on our cars and pick-up trucks and drove around pro-fessing our patriotism. Instead we should be doing something positive to contribute to world peace.

Some may say, "Well, we have the Peace Corps." But it doesn't make sense to have Peace Corps foot soldiers when our leaders have enlisted in the War Corps. Our war policy erodes the good works of the Peace Corps. If we truly believe in peace, we won't be intimidated by political correctness. Our voices need to be heard. We need to establish a Peace Cabinet Post and a Peace Academy. Instead of a "Call to Arms", let's have a "Call to Peace"! If you are moved by this idea, contact your elected officials. We need to place peace on the country's agenda.

Coleman Gorham is a retired U.S. Navy Lt. Commander who served in the Mediterranean during WWII, having made D-Day landings in Sicily, Salerno, Anzio, Elba and France. He is a new member of VFP. He can be reached at (561) 343-7132.###

War, Inc. 2002 - Mike Ferner, Ohio VFP

"So what is our mistake? We are also human beings. Treat us like human beings," says Gulalae, a 37 year-old Afghan mother living in the dust, hunger and fear of the Shamshatoo refugee camp in Pakistan. She calls Osama bin Laden an "outsider" and says that because of him, "Afghanistan is made into a hell for others."

Grim does not begin to describe the conditions Gulalae and her family endure. In one three-month period, in just one district of Shamshatoo, bacteria-related dehydration killed a child nearly every day. The misery in this refugee city is like a grain of sand on the beach of suffering that is Afghanistan. But Americans know little of it.

If you watch mainstream press accounts of "America's New War" you'd never know that as of Christmas, 2001, civilian deaths from U.S. bombing in Afghanistan surpassed 3,700-more than were killed in the attacks of September

11. The toll from unexploded cluster bombs, land mines, destroyed water and sewer systems and depleted uranium shells will no doubt reach into the hundreds of thousands. Add the additional innocents marked for retaliation as the international cycle of violence continues, and our war to end terrorism seems calculated to do just the opposite.

So why are we fighting? Of all the ways we could have responded to the attacks in New York and Washington, why war?

Numerous psychological, cultural and historical arguments can be mustered to answer that question, but the following does as well as any and better than most: "War is a racket. It always has been...A racket is best described as something that is not what it seems to the majority of people. Only a small 'inside' group knows what it is about. It is conducted for the benefit of the very few, at the expense of the very many."

Words of a radical peacenik? Only if a Marine Corps Major General qualifies as such. In his twilight years General Smedley Butler unburdened his soul as did other career militarists, such as Admiral Hyman Rickover, who admitted that fathering the nuclear Navy was a mistake and Robert McNamara, who almost found the words to apologize for overseeing the Viet Nam war. Unlike Rickover and McNamara, Butler named names and exposed for whom the system works.

"I helped make Mexico safe for American oil interests in 1914. I helped make Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys to collect revenues in. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefit of Wall Street. I helped purify Nicaragua for the International Banking House of Brown Brothers in 1902-1912. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for the American sugar interests in 1916. I helped make Honduras right for American fruit companies in 1903. In China in 1927 I helped see to it that Standard Oil went its way un-molested." Butler acknowledged that he'd spent most of his 33 years in the Marines as "a high class muscle man for Big Business, Wall Street and the bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism."

Thus did Butler simply and effectively expose a largely un-known truth-how the military serves the strategic interests of property in the corporate form. Much more commonly known is the corrupt practice of war profiteering.

"...Only twenty-four at the (Civil) war's beginning, (J. Pierpont) Morgan perceived from the first that wars were for the shrewd to profit from and poor to die in...He received a tip that a store of government-owned rifles had been condemned as defective and with the simplicity of genius he bought them from the government for \$17,500 on one day and sold them back to the government on the next for \$110,000...A Congressional committee investigating his little deal said of him and other hijacking profiteers, 'Worse than traitors are the men who, pretending loyalty to the flag, feast and fatten on the misfortunes of the nation.'" Lest examples from yore lead one to believe such traditions are no longer observed, consider the case of Eagle-Picher Technologies Corp. The company produces sophisticated batteries to power the guidance systems of "smart" bombs. Workers claim they were ordered to cover up defects on millions of batteries-defects that would ultimately cause the guidance systems to fail. How many Afghani civilians were killed by bombs "guided" by defective Eagle-Picher Corp. batteries?

In Afghanistan as in every war, corporations play a central role to protect their interests-whether those interests are the profits from waging war or the geostrategic spoils of war.

Forget for a moment the indictable war profiteers like J.P. Morgan and consider just one instance of how war wealth, generated legally, empowers the few "inside the racket" to

benefit economically and politically at the expense of the many. The du Pont Corporation will suffice.

Compared to some of its fellow racketeers, the du Pont Corporation's profits during WWI look downright patriotic. The company whose gunpowder saved the world for democracy saw its average annual pre-war profit jump from \$6,000,000 to nearly 10 times that amount during the war. By the mid-1920's the du Pont family had bought nearly a quarter of all General Motors Corporation stock. Not only did this investment pay off handsomely during GM's successful campaign to destroy urban mass transit systems, but who better than a du Pont to run President Eisenhower's Bureau of Public Roads and develop the National System of Interstate and Defense Highways along with Eisenhower Defense Secretary (and former GM President), Charles Wilson?

If war profits are invested this carefully, imagine how much planning goes into the geostrategic spoils of war? For a peek inside this game there are few better tour guides than President Carter's National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski.

Having also served on President Reagan's Defense Department Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy, Brzezinski is well-qualified to write *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. It's one of those books that begs the question, "why would anybody actually put this stuff in writing?"

Brzezinski describes the Europe-Asia landmass as the key to global dominance. He asserts that the fall of the Soviet Union cleared the way for the U.S. to become the first non-Eurasian power to dominate this critical area, "...and America's global primacy is directly dependent on how long and how effectively its preponderance on the Eurasian continent is sustained..."

In 1977 he named the Central Asian "stans" as the next center of conflict for world domination, and in light of expected Asian economic growth, he called this area around the Caspian Sea "...infinitely more important as a potential economic prize: an enormous concentration of natural gas and oil reserves...dwarf(ing) those of Kuwait, the Gulf of Mexico, or the North Sea...in addition to important minerals, including gold."

The former member of Reagan's National Security Council reasoned: "It follows that America's primary interest is to help ensure that no single power comes to control this geopolitical space and that the global community has un-hindered financial and economic access to it."

He further deduced: "That puts a premium on maneuver and manipulation in order to prevent the emergence of a hostile coalition that could eventually seek to challenge America's primacy." Leaving nothing to doubt, he clarified "...To put it in a terminology that harkens back to the more brutal age of ancient empires, the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep (satellites) pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together."

For those foolish enough to imagine an Earth not ruled by the U.S., he warns that "America's withdrawal from the world-or because of the sudden emergence of a successful rival-would produce massive international instability. It would prompt global anarchy."

Brzezinski warns to "keep the barbarians from coming together," and predicts "global anarchy" if U.S. dominance is threatened. The cold warrior's language, while picturesque, is not as precise as that used by Thomas Friedman, foreign affairs columnist for the NY Times. "Markets function and flourish only when property rights are secure and can be enforced...And the hidden fist that keeps the world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies to flourish is called the US Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps." With a Silicon Valley reference, Friedman updates General Butler's "I helped make Mexico safe for American oil interests..." comment. But updates aside, oil retains its century-old rating as the imperial standard-with now Afghanistan at center stage. And UNOCAL Corp. for one does not hesitate to demand that Afghanistan be made safe for American oil interests. "From the outset, we have made it clear that construction of our proposed (\$2.5 billion Afghanistan) pipeline cannot begin until a recognized government is in place that has the confidence of governments, lenders and our company. UNOCAL envisions the creation of a Central Asian Oil Pipeline Consortium...that will utilize and gather oil from existing pipeline infrastructure in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia." Smedley Butler learned that in war "nations acquire additional territory if they are victorious. They just take it." With today's popularity of corporate leasing programs, getting the use of additional territory-call it property-can be more profitable than actually acquiring it. But the end result is the same. "This newly acquired territory is promptly exploited by the few-the self-same few-who wrung dollars out of blood in the war. The general public shoulders the bill."

A modicum of historical perspective explains why America's New and Improved War is not a surprise. It's not just oil. It's not just acquiring territory or the use of territory. It's property and property rights consistently trumping human rights. The names change. The song has remained the same throughout our history.

For instance, check out a few lines of our Constitution: Article 4, Section 2. Embedded into the most fundamental law of our land is the duty to return property-in the form of slaves and indentured servants-to its owners. Or read Article 1, Section 10, the Contracts Clause. According to Peter Kellman, "The meaning is clear: the obligation of the government, as stated in the Preamble to the Constitution, to promote the 'general welfare' is secondary to the private law, the law of contracts." Or ask yourself why First Amendment rights of freedom of speech and assembly do not apply when you're at work? Or why corporations have more free speech rights than people?

Try this at home. Make your own list of how our world would look if America was a functioning democracy, actually governed by "we the people;" if human rights trumped property rights; if the vast decency, wisdom and compassion of the American people and not the interests of the propertied elite guided our foreign and domestic policies. Here are a few things I'd put on my roster:

- We wouldn't be bombing one of the poorest nations on earth, killing thousands of civilians who had absolutely nothing to do with the inexcusable attacks of September 11.
- General Motors Corp. would not be allowed to re-place mass transit systems with oil-addicted highways and automobiles.

- Representatives from UNOCAL and other corporations would not be able to buy their way into congressional offices and write legislation.

Not only could we generate a stunning agenda, we can actually begin making some fundamental improvements once we start finding ways to make the peace movement a democracy movement, and the environmental movement a democracy movement, and the labor movement a democracy movement, and... You get the picture.

Remarks similar to this article were presented by Mike Ferner at a May 19 peace rally in Toledo, Ohio.

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VFP CONVENTION – 2002, Duluth, MN

This year we held our convention in Duluth, Minnesota, on the campus of SCHOLASTICA COLLEGE. Chapter 80, under the leadership of Andy Anderson, WWII Navy veteran, did an outstanding job of putting it all together and solving the logistics problems associated with being so far from major transportation hubs. A summary of what transpired:

Patriotism Defined by Veterans - August 20, 2002

"Wrapping myself in the flag and blindly following the lead of a man who has never served into the morass of an endless war is not my way of loving and serving my country." Korean War veteran Wilson Powell, National Administrator of the St. Louis-based Veterans For Peace, during an interview at their sixteenth annual convention in Duluth, Minnesota, August 15-18, 2002.

Over two hundred attendees, including veterans of WW2, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, from 20 states across the country, shore to shore, gathered in Duluth to listen to speeches, attend workshops and hammer out resolutions addressing a range of issues that threaten the world with more violence, ecological destruction and poverty.

The veterans reaffirmed their commitment to apply their collective experience, energy and diverse resources to turning the U.S. away from the prospect of endless cycles of violence promised by the current administration's policies.

Resolutions passed dealt with opposition to the pending war in Iraq; the Israel/Palestine conflict and what we can do to help resolve it; the assault upon our civil liberties, led by the US Attorney General and Bush administration; respect for International Law by ratifying the International Criminal Court; payment of US dues in support of a viable United Nations; pursuit of a policy of peace, friendship and reconciliation in Vietnam; cleaning up anti-personnel land mines and abolishing their use forever; investigating the U.S. Navy's cover-up of the Israeli attack on the U.S.S. Liberty during the 1967 war; closing the School Of the Americas where foreign soldiers are trained and later turned loose on their own populations (recently renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for International Security); holding President Bush to his promise to end the bombing of the

Puerto Rican Island of Vieques in May, 2003; ending the partition of the two Koreas and withdrawing US occupation forces, there since 1945.

The veterans voted unanimously to make Adam Shapiro an Honorary member of Veterans For Peace. Adam is the New York Jew best known for his efforts to mitigate the violence in Palestine in the face of severe censure by his community back home,

The key resolution, passed unanimously, summarizing the veterans' major concerns, reads as follows:

The response of the US Government to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 has initiated policies which have already restricted civil liberties through passage of the Patriot Act and other repressive legislation, justified a military assault against Afghanistan, promised endless war against many other countries.

We believe that the jingoistic brand of counterfeit patriotism generated by the administration's actions and statements is stifling dissent and threatens genuine national security for the people of this country.

The resulting massive increase in military spending threatens social programs which should be serving to improve people's lives both here and abroad.

These actions, combined with our retreat from a host of international disarmament, environmental and criminal justice treaties, threaten democracy at home and diminish the prospects for peace and stability in the world.

Therefore, Veterans For Peace calls for an end to endless US wars and insists that assaults upon our Constitutional Rights be rescinded. Our government must stop functioning unilaterally and become a responsible member of the community of nations.

We commit ourselves to the struggle of re-directing our government toward these ends.

Veterans For Peace, founded in 1986, is a nationwide group of men and women who have served in several wars and concluded that war is a failed and counter-productive instrument of foreign policy. They work to educate people to the real costs of war, in terms of civilian lives as well as military, the destruction of cultures, the psychological damage resulting from stresses inherent in such unnatural activities. Many veterans go back to old battlegrounds to heal the wounds of war on both sides by building hospitals, businesses and, best of all, genuine friendships with former enemies. They frequently put their lives at risk, once again, by visiting areas of actual and potential conflict, seeking truth, offering friendship.

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One of the major contributors to the very successful workshops and programs was Diane Carlson Evans who wrote the following definitive piece drawing the distinction between being against the war while still supporting the soldier:

My Turn- Anti-war, not Anti-soldier, By, Diane Carlson Evans, RN

(Vietnam Veteran, Army Nurse Corps, 1966-72. Vietnam,, 1968-69)

On a bleak night in the Central Highlands of Vietnam in 1969, just a few miles from the Cambodian border, I sent another young soldier from the 4th Infantry Division, back to the United States.

This handsome young infantryman would not greet his waiting, anxious family with his timid smile and war weary eyes. After hanging yet another pint of blood, I touched his ashen face and looked into his sunken dark eyes filled with visions of war, memories of home, and fear of death. As I stroked his soft, cold face he whispered his last words, “I just wish I could see my Mom again.”

In that heartbreaking moment, I wanted to be his mother. He needed her grace and comfort and she deserved to be the one with him. He was still such a boy. As the color drained from his skin and life left this precious son, I instinctively knew that I could never let him go; he would be the guardian of my memories and rage at a government that betrayed us by not giving us a clear mission in Vietnam or reason to stay. Lyndon Johnson’s words, “We shall win this war at all cost” stung deeply as I softly whispered another goodbye to the cost-- a good soldier.

We all feared dying alone over there. We also feared going home to hostility, anti-war protests, to a contingent of Americans who didn’t appreciate our service, our sacrifice. This was a strange time in America when great numbers of people did not separate the war from the warrior. Surely and mercifully, the anti-war protests in America helped to put an end to the war.

Unfortunately, because of some callous people, many soldiers became the scapegoat, the target of their malice for war. No, I did not have rotten eggs thrown at me, nor was I spit upon like many returning soldiers. I received the cold hard words: “You’re no better than the G.I. baby killers; you’re over there oiling the war machine—saving those guys so they can kill more babies.” A fist fight at the Minneapolis airport broke out as two uniformed soldiers assisted me with my duffel bags while several protestors chanted more epithets at us, one saying, “let her carry her own damn bags, she’s in a man’s army.” Thoughts went back to my chief nurse who warned us to take our uniforms off before arriving stateside because it could cause trouble. Defiant, I wore it proudly, and while pulling the sergeant off one of the protestors he had quickly knocked to the floor, I yelled back at them, “Don’t take it out on us! We’re over there dying for god’s sake.” There was no apology.

What had happened to our America, the land of freedom and goodwill? Why had people turned against us? What had we done to deserve this? There are always more questions than answers when it comes to war. But one thing is certain: when our soldiers are deployed under executive order of the Commander-in-Chief, we know they did not start

the fire. They are obeying orders and must serve our nation. Our soldiers today are serving for the same reasons thousands before them have served: they believe it is honorable and the right thing to do.

We, the American people, must do the right thing, too. Let us not be silenced or held hostage to the notion that speaking against war is unpatriotic or anti-soldier. We must be part of the decision whether to wage or not wage war. We decide to follow our President and Congress because we believe their policies are right, or we stand up in protest and say “no, we do not agree, listen to us, because we believe you are wrong.”

Today, I have become an anti-war protester. That is: anti-war, not anti-soldier. There is a big difference. Wrong-headed individuals who would scorn our military personnel must be separated from those growing thousands of us who protest war in Iraq in a movement that its very intent is to keep our soldiers, sailors, marines, air men and women, coast guard men and women out of harm’s way.

I join those thousands of Americans who do not want to see them, or innocent civilians, suffer or die during a war that could have been prevented. I join those thousands who implore President Bush to let the inspections work; work with the United Nations, the Security Council, and the international community. We risk global anti-American sentiment of astronomical proportions if we engage in war with Iraq without the support of allies.

Finally, I have become a war protester because I honor the young man I sent home in 1969. I believe every soldier’s life is precious, and I do not wish to once again see innocents, our soldiers and civilians, be slaughtered or maimed by a war that could have been prevented. I don’t have the answers, but let’s go slow before putting our troops in peril.

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ANTI WAR DEMONSTRATIONS BEGIN

Dissent: Rally in Washington Is Said to Invigorate the Antiwar Movement - New York Times October 30, 2002

By KATE ZERNIKE

Emboldened by a weekend antiwar protest in Washington that organizers called the biggest since the days of the Vietnam War, groups opposed to military action in Iraq said they were preparing a wave of new demonstrations across the country in the next few weeks.

The demonstration on Saturday in Washington drew 100,000 by police estimates and 200,000 by organizers', forming a two-mile wall of marchers around the White House. The turnout startled even organizers, who had taken out permits for 20,000 marchers. They expected 30 buses, and were surprised by about 650, coming from as far as Nebraska and Florida.

A companion demonstration in San Francisco attracted 42,000 protesters, city police there said, and smaller groups demonstrated in other cities, including about 800 in Austin, Tex., and 2,500 in Augusta, Me.

"The rally was like a huge gust of wind into the sails of the antiwar movement," said Brian Becker, an organizer of the Washington protest. "Our goal was not simply to have a big demonstration, but to give themovement confidence that it could prevail. The massive turnout showed it's legitimate, and it's big."

Building on those demonstrations, a coalition of groups called International Answer - short for Act Now to Stop War and End Racism - is asking people to vote in a referendum called VoteNoWar.org, which organizers hope will serve as a counter vote to the Congressional resolution in support of military action in Iraq.

The coalition, which has absorbed several smaller groups around the country, is also planning another protest on Jan. 18 and 19 in Washington, to coincide with the commemoration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s birthday and the 12th anniversary of the Persian Gulf war. Organizers are also planning what they call a Grass Roots Peoples' Congress to publicize the results of the referendum.

Smaller groups that attended the demonstrations in San Francisco and Washington said they were planning their own protests back home. Protesters plan to march in New Orleans and Tampa, Fla., this weekend; in Charleston, S.C., in mid-November; and again in San Francisco on Nov. 22. A group in Louisiana is planning a peace walk between Baton Rouge and New Orleans at the end of November, and the National Council of Churches is discussing another rally in Washington for Nov. 24.

MoveOn.org is conducting an online petition drive and has raised about \$2 million for candidates, including the late Senator Paul Wellstone, who opposed a war in Iraq.

In California, college students are leading teach-ins against the war at high schools. Richard Becker, an organizer with Answer in San Francisco, said the group was setting up an emergency response plan to accommodate a mass protest - complete with sound systems, placards, the requisite permits and even portable toilets - on the day United States troops enter Iraq.

"There is not going to be one speech or one demonstration, after which everyone goes home," said Barbara Lubin, the founder of the Middle East Children's Alliance in Berkeley, Calif. "This is a movement against war, and it's building momentum."

Those who have been organizing and attending demonstrations for several months said

the swelling size of the protests showed how much antiwar sentiment had increased as the threat of war intensified.

In San Francisco, a march on Sept. 6 drew 2,500 people, one two weeks later, 6,000, and one on Oct. 6, 10,000.

"People are very emboldened right now," said Mike Zmolek, an organizer with the National Network to Stop the War in Iraq. "We've been in a financial crunch since we started - suddenly people are sending checks out of nowhere."

Mr. Zmolek said his organization had attracted 100 new antiwar groups across the country in the last three months.

The march in Washington was planned by International Answer, with coordinators of local chapters working in more than two dozen cities around the country. It attracted homemakers as well as college students, seasoned activists and those who had never attended any kind of political rally before.

"It was beautiful," said Merrill Chapman, 35, who called herself "just a housewife" in Charleston, S.C. "I'm in a very conservative town, and I feel like the lone voice. Being in Washington energized me, by seeing I was not alone."

Ms. Chapman had never been to a protest before the demonstration in Washington, but got involved after organizing a group called Thinking People in Charleston. She is planning a rally for Nov. 16 in her city.

In Houston, Lois Wright, a 46-year-old saleswoman in a drapery workroom, said she felt compelled to take the two-day bus ride to Washington, because the Bush administration seemed "hellbent on going to war."

"It's O.K. to do stuff in Houston, but nobody gets to hear about it," she said. "I felt if we were right in their faces, they couldn't ignore us."

Polls show that about 50 percent of Americans support sending ground troops to Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Antiwar organizers acknowledge some public support for military action, but said that until now, the voices of those who do not support the policy have not been heard.

"I think the president has considerable support," Mr. Zmolek said, "but I think the nation is pretty divided on this."

Certainly, there is still debate. In Austin, the University of Texas student government passed a resolution on Oct. 22 opposing an attack, by a vote of 20 to 17. Some students seek to have that vote overturned, saying it does not reflect the sentiment of the campus's 50,000 students.

###

In January 2003, David Cline, in his annual report, announced the formation of a coalition of veterans organizations, with the families of veterans and men and women currently serving; Veterans Against Iraq War (VAIW) and a proposed action in D.C. And across the country in early spring called Operation Dire Distress.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – January 2003

In January, newly elected Board of Directors members, George Johnson and Gene Glazer, assumed their responsibility, replacing Fredy Champagne and Paul Brailsford who's terms ended. I would like to thank both Fredy and Paul for their dedicated service to VFP and welcome the new members to the board.

At the recent meeting, I was elected to continue as national president along with Ellen Barfield as vice-president and Lincoln Grahlf as treasurer. Bob Heberle took over the duties of secretary from Frank Houde.

Your organization is healthy and growing. According to Woody Powell, Executive Director, since the convention in Duluth, we have added chapters 88 – Southern Vermont, 89 – Nashville, Tennessee, 90 – Broome County, New York, 91 - San Diego, California, 92 -Western Washington state, and reclaimed chapter 25 - Madison, Wisconsin. Our membership has climbed over 2500 paid members and increases every day – thanks to the website and the fact that we now have a responsive national office.

The challenge of serving as president of VFP in these dangerous times has been a great one. I hope that I have been able to provide some positive, forward thinking leadership and I look forward to continuing my efforts.

A two-legged strategy

The only way to resist and reverse what is happening today is to be vocal and persistent in our opposition to the current wave of militarism and war being imposed upon our nation and the world. To do that I believe we need to join with others in broad peace coalitions and citizens initiatives to demand sane alternatives to international violence, injustice, terrorism and war.

In cities and towns throughout the country, members and chapters of VFP have been active in grassroots efforts to these ends. and, nationally, VFP is a member of United for Peace & Justice and has worked with ANSWER on several national demonstrations. We need to continue these coalition efforts.

Announcing OPERATION DIRE DISTRESS

I also believe our voices are loudest and clearest when we take independent action as veterans. Most Americans have high regard for and value the opinions of veterans on matters of war and peace. We need to bring together a national coalition of veterans, family members, guard, reserve, and active-duty military personal so that the men and women who have first-hand knowledge of the military and war can effectively voice their opinions.

We have been building such a coalition through Veterans Against Iraq War (VAIW) and are now holding meetings to plan Operation Dire Distress in March, a limited incursion into Washington, DC to demonstrate and lobby against the war. I ask everyone to visit www.vaiw.org and sign the statement. More information on this operation will be forthcoming shortly.

I have seen times when I thought our country was in bad straits but nothing in the past compares to what is happening at home and abroad today. These are truly “times that try men’s souls” as Thomas Paine wrote; and it is up to each and every one of us to stay strong, recognizing that this is a long-term struggle. There is much to do, but together we can make a difference!

David Cline

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CHAPTER 6 - WAR WITH IRAQ

Operation Dire Distress, as noted in the section on MAJOR PROJECTS AND ACTIONS, came a tad too late to stop “Shock and Awe”, March 19, 2003; the preemptive attack by US-led forces on the sovereign state of Iraq.

Veterans For Peace responded, however, by solidifying its relationship with Military Families Speak Out, Veterans For Common Sense, Gulf War Resource Center, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and by forging alliances with other progressive organizations through support of the new coalition; United For Peace and Justice.

In June 2003, representatives of more than 325 local and national peace and justice groups from across the U.S. gathered in Chicago for UFPJ's first Strategy and Planning Conference. The conference was aimed to help coordinate actions to stop the Bush administration's program of permanent war, as well as solidify UFPJ's organizational structure. VFP was represented by Woody Powell, Executive Director, and Frank Ackles, both of St. Louis, MO. Frank volunteered to serve on the newly-formed UFPJ Steering Committee.

Back from Baghdad. Where next for the peace movement?

<c> 2003 by Mike Ferner

As "teachable moments" go, Baghdad and Basra a month before George Bush ordered those cities bombed was indeed memorable.

I saw the resilient human spirit alive and well after two decades of privation, war and repression. I experienced only warmth and graciousness, when my nationality might have elicited only hatred. I relearned the simple truth of universal humanity. Introduced to a budding, radical offshoot of the peace movement, I had a vision of how this, combined with the dawning democracy movement, might allow our species to finally leave behind the mire of war.

People have demanded peace for as long as their governments have waged warfare. The popular cry for peace, often stifled and typically left out of history books, echoes down the generations. For 30 years I've added my own voice for peace, with little hope we could do more than delay the next war. But last month in Iraq I saw something new and singularly hopeful.

While there, I met some 50 people associated with the Christian Peacemaker Teams and the Iraq Peace Team. These uncommon global citizens taught me much, including their attempt to revive a strategy dormant since the untimely death of Gandhi.

* In Colombia they accompany farmers going to market to help protect them from paramilitary thugs bent on extortion and murder.

* In the occupied territories of the West Bank these retired ministers and nuns, church deacons and young activists place themselves literally in the path of Israeli bulldozers preparing to level Arab homes. Indeed, while I was in Iraq, Rachel Corrie, a U.S. activist from a similar organization, was run over and killed by an Israeli-driven, American-made bulldozer.



* They respond to Arab suicide bombings on Israeli buses not just with statements, but by riding the buses.

* In Iraq they live alongside ordinary citizens and learn about their lives, thereby putting a human face on Ahmed the shoeshine boy, Mohammed the engineer, Fatima the clerk and thousands more about to become faceless statistics.

By way of lending encouragement to this brave band I reflected aloud that a hundred years on, people will look back on their efforts and remark, "So that was how humanity finally learned to abolish war!" I expressed confidence that this new direction of the peace movement will be favorably compared with early attempts to abolish slavery and win women's rights.

But considering the staggering odds they face, what will prevent their heroic work from becoming just another noble footnote? Consider these examples:

* The safe energy movement of the 1970's, for all its expertise and actual success at curtailing the nuclear power industry, was never able to usher in a sensible, sustainable energy policy, let alone establish citizen authority over the utility industry.

* After a century of struggle by the our labor movement, the U.S. still has some of the weakest unions in the industrialized world--unions that in the present crisis urge their members to write Congress instead of laying down their tools or shutting down munitions transport.

* Despite the legions of dedicated activists striving for universal health care, we are stuck trying to make a disease-care system a little less bad.

In these and many other cases, dedication, hard work and being right were not enough to counter the massive private power that consistently marshals our own government against us.

Will this promising, qualitatively different branch of the peace movement fare any better than the above efforts? When this war against Iraq finally ends, what will the peacemakers do? Make the occupation of Iraq a little more humane? Watch the heads of

oil companies march the nation to Gulf War III and then take to the streets again? Or can we graft this new branch of the peace movement to the sapling democracy movement, thereby forging the political power we need to create the life we want?

As a Spanish activist told a packed news conference in Baghdad: "This isn't only about peace, it's about democracy. Our governments are going to war against the will of their own people!"

POCLAD and others seek to strike at the root of why we keep organizing against one chemical, one plant closing, and one war at a time. It defines the missing thread running through citizen movements of the last century thusly: we labored mightily to lessen a corporate harm, achieve fewer parts per million or shorten a war, but we have not addressed the fundamental powers and privileges that allow corporate directors to write policy, define our values or plunge us into another round of butchery to increase their power and wealth.

We are saying, for one thing, that we must get corporations out of our Constitution. To the extent that legal fictions enjoy the rights of persons such as free speech, due process and equal protection, real flesh-and-blood persons are denied these rights and cannot have a democracy. Property rights of the few will always trump human rights of the many. The vast decency, wisdom and compassion of the American people will never be able to govern. And we are fated to suffer the consequences of plutocracy and growing fascism.

But what if...what if the peace movement, broadened by an influx of citizens outraged at this war and deepened by nonviolent activists interposing themselves in defense of endangered civilians, combined with the democracy movement to strike at the very roots of war? What if together we created new strategies and tactics not only to stop this war, but also to strip corporations of the privileges they have usurped from us; dismantle their power to govern; end forever their ability to direct our hard-earned wealth into armaments and empire? What if in so doing we also found the key to building an actual culture of democracy, a sense of real community to fill the void in our souls that can never be filled by the Shopping Channel or Blue Light Specials?

This is truly a dream worth pursuing. Reaching it is worth rethinking the way we organize. We may yet set a course that 100 years from now will finally achieve democracy and abolish war.

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United For Peace & Justice Holds Historic Conference – June, 2003

Wilson (Woody) Powell – Executive Director, Veterans For Peace

In an unprecedented effort to give voice to an increasing concern, 320 Peace & Justice organizations, represented by 520 delegates gathered in the Chicago O'Hare Holiday Inn, June 6-8, 2003 to organize against what they perceive to be the Bush administration's

march to military domination of the planet and its concomitant abridgment of civil and human rights.

Over the weekend, UNITED FOR PEACE & JUSTICE, an eight-month-old loose coalition-in-the-making, determined a structure for its organization, the core of a strategic program, and established a steering committee to carry everything forward from this point.

Among the organizations represented were, Military Families Speak Out, American Friends Service Committee, Peace Action groups from all over the country, Tikkun Community, Veterans For Peace, Women In Black, Pacifica Foundation, SOA Watch, Student Peace Action Network, Black Voices for Peace, Institute for Policy Studies. The spread covered the diverse interests, and united concerns, of women, blacks, foreign nationals, gay/lesbian/transsexuals, educators, neighborhood and regional Peace & Justice groups, and ideological, political action groups, such as the Greens and Socialists.

They were America at the roots.

In an exercise of democracy characterized by courteous deference to differing views, (despite sometimes passionate disagreement), working deep into each night, starting early each morning, the delegates came to agree upon:

1. A structure composed of a National Assembly, a 35-member steering committee, composed of 48.5% women, 51.5% people of color, 11.5% youth (under 25) and 11.5% gay/lesbian,transgendered, providing guidance and oversight to agreed-upon programs, activities and working groups.
2. A unified, core strategy for counteracting the present administration's policies through education, information dissemination and coordinated public actions. They committed to help replace the administration with new leadership responsive to the will and the welfare of the people it should serve.

To arrive at this point, delegates were tasked, in workshops and caucuses, to examine 86 strategic and tactical proposals and synthesize them into a few groupings for presentation to the National Assembly for prioritizing and presentation to the Steering Committee. Pride of authorship and cherished positions were subordinated to agreement and to further the process.

Facilitators worked with amazing patience and skill to condense skillfully-elaborated ideas into digestible morsels.

The full assembly plowed through what at times seemed to be endless amendments. However, comments friendly and unfriendly were kept under control, largely by the skillful management of Leslie Cagan of Pacifica Foundation who did most of the moderating, and the conference emerged with solid, working documents and a strong commitment to follow through with implementing actions.

The next National Assembly is scheduled for eighteen months from now, though interactive workgroups commence immediately.

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Please distribute the above as you see fit to your local media. Below is discussion of the implications for VFP.

1. The VFP membership will be pleased to note that our own Frank Ackles, Vietnam, Marines, Bi-State, MO-IL chapter VP, was elected handily to the steering committee.
2. This means we will be able to work in even closer harmony with the groups we have been working with.
3. We will be working together with more groups, amplifying our collective voices until people just have to listen.
4. We will have access to more and better information on a timely basis.
5. We will have significant input in terms of policy and strategy.
6. We will be in a better position to attract the veteran components of the allied organizations.
7. Our general outreach will be greatly augmented, our visibility increased, our credibility made greater use of.

###

How VFP gets America to listen

Woody Powell – June 2004 Newsletter

In this issue, I want to illustrate, through member experience, what is helping VFP grow and gain in credibility across the country. We are fast approaching an active membership of 4000 souls and recently-returned veterans from the current conflict are showing up with their own stories to tell.

Thanks to modern-age communications, we have been able to match story-tellers with audiences and media outlets across the country. That's the frosting. The real work of educating the public and affecting administration policies is being done in their own communities by our chapters.

Last April I sent out a questionnaire intended to reveal elements of activity common to our most active and effective chapters. My synthesis:

Chapters demonstrating the most vitality, those reporting they are a significant influence for peace in their community, cited these factors:

They meet regularly, most of them once per month; though some have informal gatherings for coffee, beer and conversation as well. There is a definite need for hard-

working members, going up against often willful ignorance, to be able to talk and re-charge each others' batteries.

They have a set of core activities to carry them over from month to month, such as regularly-scheduled vigils and public forums where videos are shown and testimonies given. There may be on-going projects, such as book-cover distribution, poetry contests, bus tours carrying the message and scholarship contests.

They are adept at publicizing their activities, having developed effective media relationships and the use of direct mail to solicit speaking and tabling opportunities at schools and other community venues.

They all feel their status as veterans gives them a decided advantage when it comes to getting people's attention and establishing a credible basis for our message of peace. Some members, new to activism, were pleasantly surprised by their experiences when, perhaps for the first time, they put themselves out there to share their experience, their ideas, and ask probing questions of citizens.

They address issues of most concern to citizens:

The deaths of their children serving in the military -- the effect of war upon our economy -- the possibility of a draft if this keeps up -- the condition of returning veterans -- the emerging realization of the disconnect been Bush administration statements and actions.

Arlington West

Just before hitting the sack one night, I surfed through CNN and came to a skidding stop. There was Lane Anderson, on the beach at Santa Barbara, standing before all those crosses, being interviewed. They were on national news big-time. How did they get there?

The success of this project lies, for the most part, in the fact that it happens every single week.

Lane Anderson: *"We look forward to Sundays. We are a community that has a common worthwhile activity and part of that activity is listening with respect to others. No matter how much anger you have at the Bush administration, when a family who has lost their loved one comes to you, the anger drops away. When they tell you that their son or husband died to bring freedom to the Iraqi people, you begin to understand what a delicate thing we are involved in.*

"... Americans have been drugged by media and consumerism, and are ready to be awakened. But we mustn't wake them with a slap in the face, we must wake them with a meeting of hearts, meeting around the sorrow of losing all these youngsters."

Hold On To Your Humanity: An Open Letter to GI's in Iraq – Stan Goff

VFP member Mike Ferner, from Toledo, left for Iraq in January, joining a delegation of Voices in the Wilderness. One item Mike made sure to carry with him is Stan Goff's open letter to GI's, Hold On To Your Humanity, briefly excerpted here. The full length version of Goff's letter appears on the VFP website www.veteransforpeace.org.

Ist Sgt. Goff was a Ranger in the 173rd Airborne in Viet Nam, and his son is a paratrooper in Iraq now," Ferner said. "He knows first-hand how our generation was suckered into a war in Viet Nam and how another generation is being suckered into this war in Iraq." Goff's letter, "...written in the language to which you are accustomed" tells GIs "...the lie that you would be welcomed as liberators was just that. A lie. A lie for people in the U.S. to get them to open their purse for this obscenity, and a lie for you to pump you up for a fight."

He writes that "In our process of fighting to stay alive (in Viet Nam), and in their process of trying to expel an invader that violated their dignity, destroyed their property and killed their innocents, we were faced off against each other by people who made these decisions in \$5,000 suits...with their fat f..... asses stuffed full of cordon blue and caviar. They chumped us. That's you now. Just fewer trees and less water."

The retired Army Ranger said he fit himself into a group of "untouchables...who could kill anyone, man, woman, or child with hardly a second thought." But, he learned, "When you take away the humanity of another, you kill your own humanity. You attack your own soul because it is standing in the way."

"So here is my message to you," Goff writes. "You will do what you have to do to survive...while we do what we have to do to stop this thing. But don't surrender your humanity. Not to fit in. Not to prove yourself...Not to lash out...Especially not for the Bush-Cheney Gas & Oil Consortium...And to preserve your humanity, you must recognize the humanity of the people whose nation you now occupy, and know that both you and they are victims of the filthy rich bastards who are calling the shots."

Ferner added that "this is the kind of no-nonsense letter I wish someone had given me as a 19 year-old corpsman, nursing hundreds of wounded returning from Viet Nam and Cambodia. I eventually came to learn that people like Stan Goff are telling the truth, but it took a long time."

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In October of 2003 Woody Powell was invited to participate, with Kathy Kelly of Voices in the wilderness and Bill Quigly of the Southern

Poverty Law Center, in a formal debate at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge. The three activists were put up against three staff members of the then-senator from Louisiana, John Breaux. Debate was well moderated, lively and the participating public demonstrated that support for the war in this part of the South, at least, was anything but overwhelming.

US FOREIGN POLICY IN IRAQ - Wilson (Woody) Powell

Executive Director, Veterans For Peace

October 22, 2003 (Prepared for the Louisiana State University Forum)

Where we are now

Since the invasion of Iraq, our military men and women have been subjected to the meanest, nastiest, most demoralizing form of guerrilla warfare. The opposition to occupation is increasingly organized, well-armed, and supported by a significant portion of the Iraqi people.

The Bush administration has demonstrated a policy apparently blind to the realities of middle eastern history and culture.

Is it possible that an over-reaching ideology, featuring the imposition of US-style democracy, has caused us to overlook the complexities inherent in a multi-cultural society?

Did they not realize that Iraqis might be fiercely jealous of their national identity, and have a still-vivid memory of western colonial rule?

And by arrogantly dismissing their objections to a pre-emptive attack Bush has offended nations who were once enthusiastic supporters. Now they are understandably reluctant to contribute men and money to our folly as the occupation drags on. [1]

The terrorists of the world have been handed a rallying point and a host of fresh recruits, making our own country less safe than before 9-11, and travel abroad unthinkable by many.

At home, we are creating a fortress America, where the politics of fear are eroding our civil rights.

In two years we will have expended over \$391 billion on this war and occupation. (estimated by Yale economist William Nordhaus) and who knows how much on our new Department of Homeland Security?

Meanwhile, education, medical care, infra-structure maintenance, and even a bare-bones safety-net for an increasing number of jobless, homeless people is suffering.

We are not meeting the fundamental needs of our citizens. We have not made them safer.

And if what goes around really does come around – we'd better duck!

How we got there

After 9-11, we had an opportunity to assess our policies, to find out why we were the target of terrorists, and to do something about it.

The first response of the administration was positive. The president showed genuine, I believe, compassionate concern for the victims. The world opened its heart to us – and it appeared there just might be a collective re-assessment of the events and policies that led to this extreme form of violence.

Taking advantage of a natural anger, but, I believe, guided by opportunism[2], the Bush administration responded by invading first Afghanistan, then Iraq.

In Afghanistan, the mantras were, “Hunt them down and kill them in their caves”; “Down with the evil regime”; ignoring how Unocal, a US company, wooed the Taliban as recently as 1998, wanting to cross their country with an oil pipeline.

For Iraq, they used non-existent links to Alqaida and the imminent threat of weapons of mass destruction; nuclear, chemical, biological. Never mind intelligence to the contrary and the persistent testimony of the UN weapons inspectors that the WMDs were not there --and certainly not poised for use in 45 minutes.

Last March, a group of us veterans attempted to deliver a petition against the pending Iraq war carrying the signatures of 3000 veterans to President Bush at the White House. Even though I had personally sent a letter and made several phone calls to arrange for its reception, the White House refused to send anyone out to accept it.

So much for the President’s respect for the men and women who, unlike absent-for-duty Lt. Bush, have actually fought the wars of this country.

The first thing the world took note of was the disproportionate nature of our response.

We killed far more people in Afghanistan than were killed on 9/11. 3700 civilian dead in the early stages alone.[3] Massive quantities of cluster bombs were used to devastating effect and are still killing, as indeed they still do in Southeast Asia.

The Iraq war tolls are higher and climbing daily. US military, as of 10/16 – 383 dead, over 1700 officially wounded; Iraq military, 11,000 dead; Iraq civilians, between 7000 and 9000 estimated.[4]

The next thing the world remarked was our inability to admit that we were wrong; wrong about the weapons of mass destruction, wrong in our assumption that democracy would flower upon the removal of the “evil regimes”.

The longer we tried to impose our will with military force, the stiffer resistance has become. Hatred, born of fear of the US, is crystallizing in the hearts of the very people we are trying to win over.

Why can’t the administration see the obvious? The distrust earned by previous betrayals (encouraging, then abandoning the 1991 Shia uprising, for instance) and our history of imposing puppet governments manifestly disqualifies us from a leading role in nation rebuilding.

Where we should be going

There is a myth that says that since Iraq has been under a tyrannical government for so long, because it is deeply divided internally between fundamentalist Muslim sects and ethnic minorities, because its economy is in ruins, it cannot establish its own system of governance. It must be imposed by the US, backed by a US-dominated military force.

I disagree. Iraq has a good-sized, highly-educated middle class, and has not been noticeably afflicted with religious fundamentalism, until recently. They had a functioning civil government. It is salvageable, I believe, by the Iraqis themselves.

Marine General James Mattis told Jim Lehrer on the News Hour recently that he had not lost a single soldier to guerilla activity. He said the communities in his area of responsibility were effectively self-governing already.

His technique? Help the Iraqis build their community institutions; schools, water and sewage treatment plants, transportation, civic councils. He had his men get out of their Humvees, take off their dark glasses, and look people in the eye as they were helping re-establish their communities. Building from the bottom up.

Poli. Sci. Professor Victor Le Vine, Washington University, (a Korean War vet and long-time Mid-East scholar) wrote in a recent op-ed that the U.S. was making a mistake trying to impose order from the top down, starting with an appointed council and a constitution. His solution was to re-build Iraq by encouraging the development of civil institutions at the community level and building up from there, as indeed General Mattis' experience supports.

Perhaps we should do more to fund the efforts of the Iraqis to rebuild directly -- instead of giving open-ended contracts to outsiders like Halliburton and Bechtel.

Be aware. Religious fundamentalism is growing. The window of opportunity to turn Iraq back over to its people may close entirely if we insist on further U.S. dominated occupation. That irritant will continue to radicalize the forces against us.

Remember what happened to the Russians in Afghanistan in the 80's when violent elements of religious fundamentalism rose to power in order to fight off another infidel invader? Back then, the US supported the fundamentalists both with arms and by withdrawing secular educational opportunity.

I will let an Iraqi prescribe what he thinks best for his country: Sinan Antoon, who left Iraq after the first Gulf War, then returned after the overthrow of Hussein's regime wrote his VFP friend, Harry Kahlil, recommending these three steps to rebuilding Iraq.

1 - End [the]occupation and have Iraq be under UN control. Yes, the US has lots of clout there, (meaning the UN) but at least that limits its influence and involves other parties more sympathetic to Iraq's plight.

2 - Immediate and concrete steps towards handing power to Iraqis.

3 - [Set up an] International fund to reconstruct Iraq with US leading the way, since it bears responsibility for sanctions and war!

WRAP-UP

I believe we're in trouble because this administration embraces and is trying to implement a dangerous ideology that calls for military and economic dominance of the world. It is self interest run riot and threatens to engulf us in unending conflict and bankruptcy.

The people of the world are resisting, by refusing to support our military adventurism and by fighting back with the only effective weapons left to them -- guerrilla warfare and terrorism.

The US needs to relinquish the paradigm of self-interest that drives these ruinous policies. It must adopt a paradigm that allows us to work cooperatively with other countries for the common good.

If it takes regime change at home to accomplish this – so be it.

I might add: Unless we learn to behave with a modicum of humility, there will be little left of this earth to inherit.

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[1] February 27, 2003, the eve of the Iraq invasion, John Brady Kiesling, veteran US diplomat, upon resigning from the State Department wrote: "The policies we are now asked to advance are incompatible not only with American values but also with American interests. Our fervent pursuit of war with Iraq is driving us to squander the international legitimacy that has been America's most potent weapon of both offense and defense since the days of Woodrow Wilson."

[2] Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, and a number of other Bush administration officials are known to have ties to a once-obscure policy group called the Project for a New American Century. In a white paper, written a year before 9-11, PNAC - which had long urged an American invasion of Iraq – they said that for the United States to assert itself properly as the world's lone superpower, "some catastrophic and catalyzing event - like a new Pearl Harbor" - would be required.
(<http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf>)

[3] An independent study by University of New Hampshire Economics Professor Marc Herold, estimated that, by May of 2003, over 3700 Afghans had died during the early stages of the war; many from cluster bombs that have kept on killing and maiming to this day.

[4] Several sources, including Iraq Body Count, Department of Defense.

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VFP CONVENTION 2003 – San Francisco, CA

The best-attended and, by many measures, the most successful convention to-date. It did not hurt that the venue was rich in history; our plenary meeting was held in the War Memorial Opera House where the documents creating the United Nations were signed in 1945. We had a stellar array of speakers and workshop leaders attracting the attention of Presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich, who disrupted his speaking schedule to address us early one Saturday morning.

The theme was an enduring one, carried over to the next year's convention in Boston:

Defeating Militarism and the Politics of Fear

The Veterans' Building of the San Francisco Civic Center War Memorial, historic site of the 1945 signing of the United Nations Charter, will again be host to veterans of war seeking peace, August 8 – 9, 2003.

Defeating Militarism and the Politics of Fear is the theme for two days of workshops and meetings by veterans old and young, men and women who have served from Iwo-Jima to Seoul to Da-Nang to Kuwait City. They will address the current political climate of fear and militarism and work out strategies to re-direct our country away from a go-it-alone foreign policy relying on military might, toward empowerment of local and international communities in a collective effort to seek peace.

Besides workshops, a Plenary Session and Commemorative Ceremonies in the Veterans' Building Herbst Theatre, there will be two evening banquets at the Cathedral Hill hotel, 1101 Van Ness.

Friday night's speakers will be:

Congressman Jim McDermott, (D-Washington), who was one of very few who voted against authorization of the war in Iraq. He is a Vietnam era veteran, medical doctor and psychiatrist with a strong background in PTSD treatment and veterans advocacy issues.



He will share the podium with William Rivers Pitt, best-selling author of “War on Iraq: What Team Bush Doesn’t Want You To Know”, “The Greatest Sedition is Silence”, and “Our Flag Too: The Paradox of Patriotism.” He is a political analyst for the Institute of Public Accuracy and Managing Editor for “Truthout” (<http://www.truthout.org>).

On Saturday night, author and Senior Lecturer for Creative Writing at UC Berkeley, Maxine Hong Kingston, (“The Woman Warrior”, “China Men”, Tripmaster Monkey”, “Hawai’i One Summer”) will talk about the Veteran Writers’ Group, founded in 1993. She will be joined by two members of that group, Monica Rosenthal, MD, inner-city trauma center physician and writer, and Ted Sexauer, Vietnam veteran, poet.

Other speakers, during the Commemorative Ceremonies on Saturday afternoon at the Veterans’ Building Herbst Theatre will be; Medea Benjamin, co-founder Global Exchange, recently returned from Iraq where she has set up an Occupation Watch Center in Baghdad; Kate Berrigan, youngest daughter of Phil Berrigan, recently deceased anti-war activist, and Liz Mcalister.

Rachel Corrie, who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in Palestine last March, will be awarded honorary membership in VFP. Her father, Craig, is a Vietnam veteran. He and Rachel’s mother, Cindy, will receive the honor. They have vowed to carry on where their daughter left off working for peace in the Middle East.

Entertainment will be provided by Barbara Dane, well-known folk and jazz singer, and Country Joe McDonald, best known for his “I-Feel-Like-I’m-Fixin’-to-Die Rag”, first performed by his band, “Country Joe and the Fish” during the Vietnam protest era.

###

Veterans For Peace” is gearing up to become a major national force to oppose the Bush Administration both at home and overseas.

By Stewart Nusbaumer

At the Veterans for Peace annual convention this weekend in San Francisco, the most pressing issue was not veterans’ affairs or government benefits or even homeless veterans, although these and more subjects were discussed. What fired up these aging veterans was the threat to our civil rights, and even more, the continuing war in Iraq. Veterans For Peace is not your traditional



veterans' group.

The largest antiwar veterans group in the United States, [Veterans For Peace](#) has 103 chapters from Maine to California to Florida. With the war in Iraq, membership has grown substantially. The New Mexico chapter had 11 members when it formed last year, this year it has 130. Overall membership has climbed to more than 3,500, doubling in a single year.

At its annual convention held this year in San Francisco's historic Veterans Memorial Building (the birthplace of the United Nations), an estimated 400 veterans discussed subjects ranging from gay and lesbian veterans to networking with traditional veterans' groups. Drawing the largest crowds were the meetings pertaining to the Iraq war and those strategizing to oppose that war: "Lessons of Recent Veterans' Anti-War Actions: Working Out Strategies Opposing Militarism," and "The Invasion of Iraq: Background and Personal Observation."

"The beginning of the end of war starts with remembrance," said Woody Powell, Executive Director of Veterans For Peace. "If this is true, then the beginning of starting war must be in forgetting."

Remembering and forgetting is the heart of every veterans gathering, but with these veterans there is a major difference. Remembering is put into the service of ending war, and forgetting is slammed for allowing war. Most of these veterans served during the Korean and Vietnam War eras, and now they want Americans to remember that wars to control other people's resources and sovereignty are not only wrong but will end in disaster for America. They know this from personal experience; they have no problem with remembering that war is seldom a good idea. And they want Americans to remember it was they who fought America's past wars, not President Bush and nearly all of his top advisors who today are so hawkish for war. It is they who possess the experience and the knowledge and therefore the credibility to be listened to on issues of war and peace, not the chicken hawks in Washington.

And veterans, said Korean War veteran Woody Powell, must remember that they have a responsibility to seek out citizens and speak at public forums — to not allow Americans to forget. The special responsibility of veterans to tell the truth about war was a constant theme, as was the need for Veterans For Peace to raise its national profile as the primary voice for military veterans opposing not only the Iraq War but also all of the Bush Administration's reckless foreign adventures.

Amongst these veterans, there is a sense of growing crisis, a feeling that America is in danger of changing irrevocably for the worse. "We are facing the greatest struggle of our lives," Vietnam veteran Dave Cline told a packed room of veterans. "What Johnson and Nixon did on a regional level, Bush is now attempting to do on a global level."

"Most Americans were against this war, but they were manipulated, they were systemically lied to," said Cline, who is the current President of Veterans For Peace. "Veterans attempted to stop the war, we organized a teach-in, a demonstration and

lobbying effort in the nation's capital. We worked hard.”

But the mainstream corporate media highlighted those veterans who supported the war, especially retired colonels and generals (paid by the media because of their contacts with the Pentagon), and tended to ignore veterans who opposed the war, often former enlisted soldiers and sailors. “What was truly surprising about this veterans’ effort to stop the Iraq War,” said Jan Barry, an organizer of [Veterans Against Iraq War](#) a new group that worked in a coalition with other veteran groups in opposition to the war in Iraq, “is how many career military veterans and politically conservative veterans opposed the invasion of Iraq. Opposition to this war is very deep and very broad in the veterans' community.” But this anti-war message was muffled and even ignored by the media.

Unable to stop the invasion and occupation of the war, Dave Cline continues, veterans pulled back; some became depressed. “But we’re gearing up again, this time to bring the troops home. We’ll join with other antiwar groups and coalitions in large actions, but we will also perform independent actions.”

Among the resolutions passed by the Veterans For Peace Board of Directors, one demands an end to the U.S. occupation of Iraq and another the withdrawal of U.S. troops. Still another supports a United Nation’s takeover of the security and reconstruction effort in Iraq.

“We have to demystify war, make it not glamorous,” former Green Beret Stan Goff told another group of veterans and their spouses. “And we need to reduce fear here at home but talking out, by going in the streets where people can see us and speaking out.” A woman spoke up, saying veterans are the “moral compass” of the antiwar movement, which brought a healthy applause.

Still, the central question remains: can Veterans For Peace transform itself into a national power to influence national policy? Will it continue to develop its veterans' grassroots network and will the media broadcast its antiwar message? Can Veterans For Peace become a powerful force for peace?

For over a quarter of a century, since the end of the Vietnam War, America has been without a strong veterans’ peace movement. In much of the public's mind, antiwar veterans are an anachronism. Today veterans support the President, not oppose him. Veterans lobby for veterans’ benefits not march against a war. Only those who really remember Vietnam, a dwindling number, remember there is a different type of veteran, a veteran for peace, not for war. As Woody Powell pointed out, forgetting is the start of wars. And many Americans have forgotten.

But Stan Goff is also correct when he said, “Veterans have the potential to strip this administration’s veneer of legitimacy -- which is why veterans are the administration's most feared group.” Veterans have the power to de-legitimize this administration because this is an administration of mostly men who avoided public service for personal advancement, an administration that sent young Americans off to Iraq by concealing the truth with lies, an administration that knows the American people are slowly turning

against this war, Bush's war. And more than any one group, veterans can make Americans remember.

Veterans For Peace wrapped up its three-day convention with a demonstration at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, implementing the pledge to resist militarism abroad and repression at home. Members are now fanning out across America, bringing that pledge to your hometown. Join them to bring our troops home now!

Stewart Nusbaumer is editor of Intervention Magazine.

Posted Sunday, August 10, 2003

###

Report From the Executive Director

Wilson (Woody) Powell

What has Veterans For Peace accomplished over the last two and a half years – the interval between the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and now?

We did not deter a violent response, despite the efforts of people like ex-Marine Greg Nees, backed by the Japanese Peace Campaign and VFP, who asked our president, in a full-page New York Times ad, to forswear vengeance; to work with the international community to root out the causes of terrorism along with the perpetrators.

We have not stopped war from happening in Afghanistan, nor in Iraq.

Does this mean we have failed? Hardly. It only means that many tasks still lie before us. It means that VFP has the best of reasons to exist, the best of reasons to organize and grow, the best of reasons to increase its effectiveness as a sane voice of credible authority on issues of war and peace.

Cornerstone For Future Development

Taking the lead and participating in open discussions about militaristic policies and the need to change them is, in my opinion, the cornerstone of VFP's future. Some of our chapters have developed exceptional programs from which, I think, we can all benefit. When I examine that which is working, I find the following elements:

Venues are carefully selected to reach the under-informed and vulnerable. Community colleges offer students both young and not-so-young, who are ready to hear good presentations on topics that effect their futures. Universities, Churches, public libraries, community centers are good venues.

Promotion is organized. Program leaflets are distributed well in advance, posted on grocery store, library, college, high school bulletin boards. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on radio, TV and in local newspapers are placed. Audiences are asked to return with friends for the next presentation, already scheduled and ready to go with fresh material. The press, TV and Radio are always invited by use of informative press releases.

The best presentations feature not only a good slide show or video, but the aspect we are best qualified to provide – *the sharing of a veteran's personal experience.*

The Role of VFP Projects

Projects support and augment this core activity. They are an important way for many VFP members to respond to their particular experiences with war and its consequences. The Jhai Foundation, My Lai Village, the liberation of Vieques, the Iraq Water Project, The Fact-Finding Delegation to Iraq in December, the very visible and effective “Arlington West” display by the Santa Barbara chapter – are but a few. These are rich sources of firsthand material for presentations, papers, op-ed pieces and demonstrations.

They are also opportunities for individual members to increase their personal effectiveness as peace-makers, by volunteering time and money.

We are not a top-down organization. Therefore, projects derive from an initial concentration of energy at the chapter level. The most effective ones advance themselves. A worthy project makes its own way into the collective consciousness of Veterans For Peace, then blossoms.

VFP is Growing and Speaking Out

To anyone doubting the energy of our response to these challenging times, I cite the fact that our membership has increased five-fold in that period. Every day ex-military people come to us saying, “VFP’s objectives fit mine exactly, I cannot sit by and let our administration lead us into more gratuitous violence – what can I do?”

Old chapters are re-vitalizing, new ones springing up – some in places considered most un-likely; the Carolinas, Georgia, Texas; areas known for being exceptionally supportive of the military.

The distinction between supporting the men and women of our military and supporting militarism in the name of imperialism is becoming better understood. Veterans For Peace, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out, and the Vietnam Veterans Association Foundation, have advanced this awareness with teach-ins, like Operation Dire Distress last spring, and the Bring Them Home Now campaign.

Our prominence as a force for peace has been acknowledged by C-Span coverage of several events in which Veterans For Peace have been major participants.

Veterans For Peace has been invited to every major peace and justice council, and now has representation on the United For Peace and Justice steering committee. (UFPJ is a coalition of over 320 organizations.)

Local press stories flow in from VFP actions, vigils, demonstrations and are posted on the website to serve as guides and examples for all of us.

Our convention at the Veterans Memorial in San Francisco was the most successful in terms of attendance and workshop quality ever. It attracted the attention of people like Dennis Kucinich who moved heaven and earth and a crowded schedule of speeches to be able to present his presidential candidacy to our members. C-Span was there. Our next convention, will be held in an equally significant venue, the week before the Democratic National Convention in Boston.

From my vantage in the national office, I field numerous requests from citizen groups for the presence of a Veteran For Peace. We have developed a list of VFP speakers in nearly every corner of the country, ready, willing and able to hold forth on the costs and causes, and antidotes for war.

I am deeply impressed with the quality of those members responding to these requests. The feedback is always positive, enthusiastic. Our credibility is widely acknowledged. Our experience, our thoughtful dedication to the common good is becoming well known and appreciated in communities throughout the country.

###

CHAPTER 7 - A NEW GENERATION OF VETS EMERGES

VFP CONVENTION 2004 – BOSTON

By the time the convention in Boston rolled around, the war in Iraq had generated a crop of seasoned veterans disaffected by their experiences and ready to speak out. Faneuil Hall was the perfect venue for the birthing of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW).

Largest Group of Returned Iraq Veterans to Condemn the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq

Veterans For Peace Press Conference, July 22 at 2pm

BOSTON, MA—**The first and largest group of Iraq War Veterans** will be speaking out against the war on Iraq at a **press conference on July 22 at 2pm at City Hall**. The six veterans will be focusing on their experiences in Iraq, the “ground truth” of this war, and what has happened to them since they have returned home.

PRESS CONFERENCE

WHO: Veterans For Peace

SPEAKERS INCLUDE the following Iraq War Veterans:

- **Alex Rybov**, participated in the invasion of Iraq with the U.S. Marine Corps. He lives in New York City.
- **Jimmy Massey**, was a Staff Sergeant with the 7th Marines during the invasion of Iraq. He lives in Asheville, NC.
- **Ivan Medina** was a Chaplain's Assistant with an Army engineering unit in Iraq. After returning home, Ivan learned that his identical twin brother was killed in Iraq. He lives in White Plains, NY.
- **Diana Morrison** was part of a Military Police unit inside of Baghdad. She lives in Northern California.
- **Tim Goodrich** served with the Air Force during the early phases of Operation Enduring Freedom. After being discharged he visited Iraq as a member of a peace delegation. He lives in Southern California.
- **Michael Hoffman**, participated in the invasion of Iraq with the U.S. Marine Corps. He returned to the U.S. on May, 10, 2003. He lives in Morrisville, PA.



WHAT: Press Conference focusing on the misinformation supporting the invasion, civilian casualties, problems returning troops face, and other tragedies of the on-going war in Iraq

WHERE: City Hall (in front of the AFSC combat boots exhibition “Eyes Wide Open: Moving from Fear to Hope”)

WHEN: Thursday, July 22 at 2pm

This press conference is affiliated with the **Veterans For Peace National Convention which will be held in Boston from July 22-25** just before the Democratic National Convention. Veterans For Peace, a national grassroots veterans’ movement, will be calling for ending the occupation of Iraq, bringing the troops home and treating them justly when they return.

In light of the recent Senate Intelligence Report on WMD, veterans will also face the haunting question Democratic Presidential nominee John Kerry asked to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1971: "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

In addition to the six Iraq War Veterans, **other veterans and members of Military Families Speak Out** will be available for interview at the July 22 press conference.

###

Their emergence also coincided with the Democratic National Convention, which immediately followed ours. VFP was able to field a small delegation of its own, thanks to the efforts of Mike Hamilton of the Seattle, Washington chapter, who was already an official delegate.

Reporters' Notebook, 7/29/04

Thursday, July 29, 2004

Vet uses Kerry's Vietnam phrase to oppose Iraq war

In the sweltering heat near the Boston Sheraton Hotel, William Perry of Levittown, Pa., stood holding a black and white banner that echoed Democratic presidential nominee John F. Kerry's testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1971. "How do you ask a soldier to be the last person to die for a lie," the sign read, this time in protest of the Iraq war.

Sweat dripped from Perry's forehead, and police questioned his right to hold it up in the midst of heavy crowd traffic, but he wouldn't budge.

The 57-year-old veteran, who served as a paratrooper in the 101st Airborne Division during the Vietnam War, said he had changed Kerry's word "mistake" to "lie" because he felt misled by the decision to enter the Iraq War.

"There were a number of lies to get the [Iraq war resolution] passed.

"It's a stronger word," said Perry, who is a member of Veterans for Peace, a group that has been a constant presence at the Democratic Convention. "We wanted to make it sound bite style like Republicans do. They take everything down to the simplest form.

"I want Kerry to come home to his roots, to the true passionate feeling that he had in 1970 and 1971 [when he argued against the Vietnam War]," Perry said. "I just hope we can get him to come back ... within 10 days of his inauguration."



Maeve Reston, Post-Gazette
William Perry, far right, and his banner in the lobby of the Boston Sheraton Hotel.

In April of 1971, in a statement before the Foreign Relations Committee, Kerry asked the committee: "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam? How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

###

The VFP 2004 Convention Summary

by Woody Powell, Executive Director

We have a mission.

Bobby Muller, Vietnam Veterans of America founder, our final speaker at the Saturday night banquet, brought the assembled veterans for peace to their feet, time after time, as he passionately rebuked US policies that have involved us in another war we cannot win.

He expressed fear that our present leadership is poised to send US troops into Saudi Arabia to defend the monarchy there, a move that could ignite a far wider conflict than the current fighting in Iraq.

He challenged Veterans For Peace to keep building our ability to use our hard-won credibility to steer our country's leadership away from this pending disaster and toward policies that have a much better chance of producing peace and stability in the world.

Bobby specifically charged us with creating what he called the "political space" in our home communities that would encourage John Kerry to adopt more progressive policies than those he is espousing now, as he woos the so-called swing voters.

Carrying the message forward

The selection of the city, Boston, and time, just prior to the Democratic Party convention, was intended to put us in a position to send out our most vital, central message; *that we must bring the troops home now if we ever expect to bring stability or legitimate independence and sovereignty to Iraq and the rest of the Middle East.*

We had an unexpected opportunity when it was discovered that three of our attending members were also delegates to the DNC; Wes Hamilton of the Rachel Corrie chapter in Olympia, WA, Anne Wright, from our new Hawaii chapter, and Vickie Goodwin from Montana. Wes informed us that the DNC was forming a first-ever veterans caucus and that the Veterans For Peace were invited to send as many members as they wished to attend a caucus meeting the Monday following our convention.

On Monday morning, Amy Goodman gave Wes several golden moments on her "Democracy Now!" radio program to articulate the VFP position.

The Tuesday morning Boston Globe reported, "About 400 members of Veterans For Peace held their convention in Boston last week. Many have stayed on to raise awareness

during the Democratic events. A few dozen of the antiwar veterans distributed leaflets or held signs outside the caucus at the Sheraton.”

Barry Riesch, past VFP president and member of Minneapolis Chapter 27 was quoted as saying, “We want him (John Kerry) to show the same courage he showed when he came home from Vietnam and spoke out against the war. I’ll vote for him, but some of our members are on the fence.”

A Packed Three-and-a-half Days

I will not try to fully describe all the events leading up to this powerful outcome. A few highlights:

The opening ceremony on the Boston Common by Wampanoag Indian Nation leaders, setting the tone of reverent thoughtfulness and respect for the common good.

Across the street, drawing the eyes of the public, stood the Garberville Chapter, Veterans For Peace Stop The War bus, that had drawn attention to the convention and to VFP as it visited cities and towns in America, on its way from California to Boston – and is now heading back with renewed spirit.

The opening plenary established the historical context of war with Howard Zinn, the vital role of the whistle blower, yesterday and today, by Daniel Ellsberg, and the emerging awareness of war as a consequence of gender-based ideology by Cynthia Enloe, who challenged VFP as a whole to listen more to the voices of women within the organization.

Thirty-six workshops, over a day and a half, addressed topics ranging from homeless veterans to effective chapter actions; from Israel-Palestine peace prospects to international law and atrocity cover-ups; from removing constitutional protections designed for people from corporations to recovering from war trauma.

In a long overdue action, a VFP Women’s Caucus was formed during a well-attended gathering and expectations are high that this caucus will play a valuable role in the future.

At the business session, we passed thirty-four resolutions dealing with the current war, the treatment of veterans, and other issues of concern.

Veterans Address The Nation

On Friday night veterans addressed the nation at historic Faneuil Hall. For three and a half hours, a capacity audience of over 700 sat entranced and uncomplaining, on hard chairs, listening to an inspired succession of speakers, beginning with Boston Councilors Chuck Turner and Felix Arroyo, who greeted us and presented a City Council resolution welcoming our convention.

Wayne Smith, a former combat medic and Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation representative spoke about the crucial role of veterans standing up for peace and freedom

and opposing those false “patriots” who would strip away our civil liberties and lead us into unjustifiable foreign wars.

We heard from Gary May, director of Veterans Defending the Bill of Rights on the need to oppose the proposed flag desecration amendment and other repressive legislation that threatens our constitutional rights and freedoms.

We listened to the testimony of the Iraq War veterans Jimmy Massey, Kelly Dougherty and Michael Hoffman who announced the formation of the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) to thunderous applause.

Nancy Lessin of Military Families Speak Out spoke to the duty and obligation we have to be there for the families of those who serve and for their children when they return.

A brief period of silence was observed in remembrance of those who died with an unrolling of a scroll bearing the names of the 911 US dead as well as for the unknown numbers of Iraqi casualties.

Dorothy Mackey of STAMP (Survivors Take Action Against Abuse by Military Personnel), a former Air Force Captain, revealed the extent of sexual harassment and rape in the military, effecting both men and women – a far worse problem than ever revealed by the military itself and a product of the endemic militarism that afflicts our nation.

We were reminded of the urgent need to abolish nuclear weapons by Hiroshi Tanaka, president of the Japan Council Against A & H Bombs and Terumia Taka, a Hiroshima survivor.

Daniel Ellsberg and Howard Zinn both warned us of the escalating danger of fascist-like repression if we have another four years under the current administration.

Songs were sung throught the program by David Rovics and by Charlie King and Karen Brandow, local musicians who provided powerful songs that related to the issues being discussed.

The Annual Membership Meeting

The membership heard that our numbers are growing and new chapters forming. We now have over 4200 dues paying members and 89 active chapters throughout the country. We are solvent. We are improving our ability to respond to chapter needs and to provide outreach materials such as videos, books and pamphlets.

We then launched into the resolutions, finishing up in time to listen to Scott Ritter hold forth on the illegitimacy of the reasons given for the Iraq War and affirm that war should be absolutely the last, the very last, option. He along with members Ken Mayers, were given awards for their service to the cause of world peace.

We concluded with our traditional Speak Out, where the members get a chance to make announcements, crow their successes, bemoan their failures and simply vent.

Dinner in the Library

Perhaps the most elegant, historically significant venue we will ever have for our annual banquet was the Boston Public Library reading room. A temporary platform was erected at the center of this broad, marble hall with high, vaulted ceilings. To the left and to the right, the thick oak reading benches, with their green lampshades illuminating dinner plates rather than books, marched off to the far ends. 295 people came to dine and to listen.

First we heard Amy Goodman come down hard on the mainstream media and advise us to get heard in our local communities through public access TV and radio and in any other way we can to counter-act the pervasive blanket of misleading news smothering the collective intellects of our communities.

We listened to Stephen Smith render his now-famous song “The Bell” and to Carol Noonan sing “Flanders Field” with such deep-reaching passion that it brought tears to many eyes.

Finally, Bobby Muller was hoisted in his wheelchair to the platform and began to sharpen the point of all that had gone before into a vigorous call to action; to change the administration and give our coming leadership the progressive base they need to support getting our troops out of Iraq, the US presence out of Iraq, and to meet our obligation to repair the terrible damage we have done to that country and to our reputation around the world.

Feedback

The fellowship was deep and binding; our own community of veterans powerfully affirmed in its purpose.

Countless members and guests told me, over and over, how much they had learned, how much better prepared they felt to carry the message, how empowered they felt to build their local membership and become the political conscience of their communities.

###

Baghdad: Energy Amid the Wreckage- by John Grant

Getting to Baghdad is not easy. After 24 hours of flying and wandering in airports, we had a 12-hour drive across the desert from Amman, Jordan, in two Chevy Suburbans, often at more than 100 miles an hour. All you see in the midst of this vast emptiness are Bedouin sheep herders and their flocks.

Our group was made of parents of soldiers currently serving in Iraq (one whose son was killed in March) and U.S. veterans of the Vietnam and Gulf Wars. We went to Iraq to see for ourselves what the U.S. occupation was like.

Baghdad is a city of great pent-up energy in the midst of wreck-age everywhere. After three decades of Saddam Hussein, 13 years of a U.S. embargo, and three wars ending in the invasion this spring, profound infrastructure problems persist while U.S. occupation leaders try to orchestrate their vision of a future for Iraq. Five-hour gas lines have become a regular feature of Baghdad life. We spoke with people in one line and were told that a month after the Gulf War and throughout the embargo, gasoline was plentiful and cost five cents a gallon.



Billy Kelley and Michael McPhearson visiting an Iraqi boy.

"We live in a country floating on a sea of oil!" one man exclaimed. "Why do we have such lines?"

Sabotage is cited as a cause, but that doesn't ease the exasperation or anger.

Electricity is sporadic and can go out for indefinite periods at any time, creating a vast market for small generators. Garbage mounts on streets everywhere. There is no phone system any of us could see; Americans and Iraqis with means use cell phones with a Westchester, Conn., area code. Sixty percent of the population is unemployed. In the city, unexplained gunfire is normal. Women don't feel safe on the streets. And there is always the possibility of a nightmare such as the New Year's bombings in Baghdad.

We visited several hospitals that complained of no antibiotics or heart monitors. We visited schools that lacked promised new books and supplies. Meanwhile, they all reported crews had come in and painted a few walls. Our attempts to get a list of schools where Bechtel Corp. had done contract work were unsuccessful.

Saddam's capture dominates the moment, but the facts of short-age are not going to change any time soon. Baghdad citizens are daily confronted with armed U.S. patrols. We saw them everywhere. Stand on any street corner for 45 minutes, and you will see two humvees, a young soldier in the first one pointing a machine gun forward and another in the second pointing a machine gun into traffic to the rear.

These were our sons and daughters. In what we were told was an unprecedented event, two group members drove to dangerous areas to see their kids. I accompanied a parent to Fallujah, where I saw a half dozen mortar rounds fall short of the perimeter. One group member trekked to the site in Diwaniya where his son was killed by a U.S. cluster bomb.

We told U.S. soldiers we were a peace group interested in "bringing you home." In every case, the response was a smile and often a thumbs up. "Good luck!" several soldiers said. For Iraqis, however, contact with these young Americans is not so warm. Wisal Alazawi, dean of the political science department of Nahrain University, summed up the dilemma

for many Iraqis. "It's absurd to talk about democracy while there is an occupation," she said. "The Governing Council is trying very hard, but the question is: Does the Council have the right to decide anything when everyone knows the U.S. occupation has veto power?"

She was referring to the 24-member governing body appointed by Paul Bremer, head of the U.S. Coalition Provisional Authority. We met with the December president of the Governing Council, Abdul Aziz al-Hakim, a Shiite leader who is, interestingly, out of step with the CPA plan for an Iraqi government, which would be selected by a caucus. Hakim and other Shiites would like a general election. He also said occupation troops should leave. "When?" we asked. "How about tomorrow?" he answered.



*Sheik Muayed, leading Sunni cleric
and Billy Kelley*

A visit to the CPA headquarters in Saddam's palace complex in the center of Baghdad - an area the size of Central Park with multiple rings of security, shuttle buses, cafeterias, and trailer parks for all the Halliburton employees - makes it clear we are not planning to leave anytime soon.

The question on my mind as I toured the CPA was: Which city was this giant brain center plugged into: Baghdad or Washington? As a 19-year-old, I had witnessed MACV headquarters in Saigon, and this felt like *dèjà-vu*. As in Vietnam, the CPA plan to orchestrate a government under military occupation seems more about control and disenfranchising selected sectors than it does about listening and real democracy.

Most Iraqis we spoke with were truly grateful Saddam was gone. Yet in the same breath, they wanted the U.S. military occupation to end. Shiites and Sunnis both told us the conflict among them and the Kurds was exaggerated and that they were fed up with war. What Iraq needs more than U.S. bombs and American soldiers in its streets is monetary aid distributed by nongovernmental organizations - not by corporations like Halliburton and Bechtel. It needs inclusive and fair elections. And it needs a well-trained police and a temporary U.N. peacekeeping force - not under U.S. military control.

No future in Iraq will be without rough spots - but the United States needs to ease its grip and allow the Iraqi talent, experience and energy we encountered to haul the nation to its feet.

John Grant (grantphoto4@earthlink.net) is president of the Veterans For Peace chapter in Philadelphia.

###

Letter From a Soldier's Dad



Fernando Suarez speaking to US soldier Luis Gutierrez near the site of his son's death. Photo by John Grant

Fernando Suarez's son, Jesus, a Marine, was killed early in the war. Fernando was with the VFP and Global Exchange group in Iraq. Thank you to Jorge Mariscal from the Project on Youth and Non-Military Opportunities YANO for the translation.

"Hello everyone: All is as well as can be. I was finally able to go to the place where my son Jesus had his acci-dent, a very lonely place near where there used to be an Iraqi National Guard base. I was

able to stand in the exact spot where Jesus fell. I placed the crucifix that my wife gave me in the ground and prayed, asking that wherever he is that he help us find peace. I took some earth, which may still hold Jesus' blood, for my return trip so that I can plant a white rosebush in a park in Escondido and place a sign that says: "For peace and brotherhood between two fraternal nations--USA and Iraq--in memory of Jesus Suarez del Solar Navarro and all the fallen in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

It was a painful experience. I wept, yes, I wept out of control and I asked my son's forgiveness for the times I was a bad father, for the times I punished him unjustly, and I know that from that marvelous place he now inhabits he responded that he loved me very much. I lost strength and the friends who were with me came to my aid and held me up, they all wept with me.

The press was there and they turned off their cameras and wept too and prayed that my son's soul rest in peace. Finally, my spirit calmed itself a bit. I now have more energy than ever because I am convinced that the energy my son left in that place has been transferred to my body and that he will be with me, nearer than ever, always protecting me.

I will tell you about other activities later. Thank you for your invaluable support, thank you, and receive greetings from all my travel companions. Peace" Fernando Suarez

###

VFP CONVENTION 2005 – Dallas, Texas

This year we decided to carry the message into the camp of the opposition and hold our convention in Texas – Bush Country, if you will. The University of Dallas was only too happy to host us and we put together a fine program that sent us off into a most remarkable year of accomplishment.

The convention was also the occasion for Woody Powell to officially relinquish his position as Executive Director and to introduce retired Army Captain, Michael McPhearson, who had already begun to prove a valuable asset in that position.

TOUR OF DUTY - Woody Powell

When Lee Vander Laan delivered the desk, computers and files of Veterans For Peace to the World Community Center basement in St. Louis, I was prepared to man the single phone and keep up the database, twenty hours a week. The idea was to have a steady, if part-time presence in the National Office. Provide a little stability and maybe VFP would survive.

That was September 9, 2001. Two days later, my job definition changed dramatically and VFP membership took off with the rhetoric that would eventually bring us into two disastrous wars on foreign soil; first Afghanistan and then Iraq, where today our brothers and sisters are still killing and being killed, wounding and being wounded.

Later that fateful month, Greg Nees, an ex Marine from Colorado, wrote a letter to President Bush, counseling him to hold off attacking anyone until the real cause of the assaults on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was addressed. It was picked up by a coalition of Japanese peace groups, who, working with VFP, raised enough money to buy a full-page ad in the New York Times.

The night it ran, I was approached by Bill O'Reilly's Cable TV production people and soon was staring at a camera in an empty studio, listening on ear phones while he ripped into a Red Cross representative for screwing up compensation to Trade Tower survivors. I'd never heard of Bill O'Reilly, until that night. I did not know what to expect. I am told I acquitted myself okay. But, boy, was he provocative!

He did something for me, however, that I will always be grateful for. Despite trying to dismiss our message by attacking the messenger, me, as a probable socialist, he still granted me respect for having served in the military.

Well, hell. I served in the military because I was a very young person, very naive, and a blindly patriotic product of WWII propaganda. I never thought that endowed me with any special status, especially when I knew I was only one of millions. But here was this big-mouthed right wing pundit deferring, however hypocritically, to my status as a veteran.

That's when I began to fully realize the power, and the obligation, we veterans have to apply ourselves to influencing policy and waging peace. What started as a somewhat frightening encounter, ended as a sublime moment of empowerment.

I must say, though, that most of my time, week to week, was taken up with mundane operational tasks, such as reminding members that they needed to pay their dues, organizing boxes of files into useful resources, setting up routines for categorizing and answering mail, electronic and snail; finding and developing staff to help with running an office that was always on the verge of being overwhelmed by an ever-increasing flow of people and organizations seeking position statements, membership information, endorsements and offering resources of their own for our use. We revived the newsletter and eventually turned the editing over to the very capable Michael Uhl. We struggled with learning how to do mass mailings.

We really began to take off when Jozef Hand-Boniakowski and Lee Vander Laan developed a website that soon became a powerful statement of who are and a resource for our members. As our reputation for reliable data grew, people learned to go to www.veteransforpeace.org for the truth about fostering war and waging peace.

Thanks to that expertise, we connected with our membership, through the Internet, in ways I never knew existed. It became clear that our membership was a virtual treasure of formidable talents; journalists, writers, researchers, sales-people, organizers, management consultants, academics, working stiffs, retirees with time and talent, speakers of conviction and passion.

I was also fortunate to have a supportive Board of Directors. Just about everything I felt I needed to do, they approved and facilitated to the extent they could. I owe Barry Riesch and David Cline, the presidents, and the members of the Boards I served under, a great deal of what I have learned about the strategies and tactics of peace activism. They were generous with their experience and patient with me.

I must talk about the staff many of you came to know. VFP has been blessed with good people showing up just when their particular contributions were needed:

Ruth Flannery, retired school teacher, walked in while Lee and I were positioning the furniture and changed it all around so it worked better. Later she employed her librarian/teachers skills to begin the organization of our files.

Kim Gaynor came a short while later, and with great enthusiasm took over merchandising and general office organization.

Then came Gabriela Inderwies, bringing her considerable skills to bear on our communications with the membership, the newsletter and our graphic representations.

Chris Snively, an Army veteran of the Bosnian occupation, joined us part-time and soon blossomed as our Program Developer, while, at the same time attending to merchandise mailings, taking phone calls, acting as a general assistant to the Director.

Leslie Hill eventually took over from Kim Gaynor as office manager and did brilliant work organizing our books and ever more complex convention accounting.

Cherie Eicholz, another Army veteran, now sits where Leslie did, and has moved us ahead to an even higher plane of efficiency and order.

Vidika Daniels, after six years in the Army, took over reception and other duties for a few months. When she left, there was a little less cheerfulness, for a while.

Chapters began coming back to life, and I was able to participate in guiding them through the awakening process. New chapters began to appear, new energies poured in from awakened veterans realizing that here was an outfit that would help them do something to make their experience count in the waging of peace.

I felt gratified, as I watched you mobilize local resources, nurture ideas, and put them to work in your communities. I felt I was amplifying something valuable when you shared your inspirations with me and I could make them available to the rest of the membership.

There were moments of angst and helplessness, too, when the Bush administration attacked Afghanistan, then moved us closer and closer to all-out war on Iraq.

One night, at the office, I took a call from a young Lieutenant in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. He told me he would soon be releasing a brace of rockets designed to annihilate everything in a forty-five acre area, in Iraq. He couldn't imagine himself using that awful weapon against people. He cried. I couldn't help him much beyond listening to his distress.

Another night, a police woman in Savannah, Georgia, called to share with me her deep confliction over being in love with a Marine sniper waiting in Kuwait to attack Iraq. She was conflicted because she had recently resigned her commission as a First Lieutenant in the Army over what she saw as a distortion of her mission in Bosnia from peace-keeping to occupation. She had felt cut off from the people she was supposed to help, isolated in fortress barracks, sending out armored patrols viewed as just one more menace in the lives of the locals. She realized that her lover would soon be thought of the same way, for the same reasons, and she was against the pending war.

I wonder what happened to her Marine. I'm sure I know what she thinks of the occupation of Iraq.

That these people found us, and felt they could share their deepest misgivings and confusions about war and peace, says everything there is to say about why we exist. If America has a conscience, we are at its core.

At times I thought we could break through to the mainstream media with our message of moderation and non-military responses to issues of national security and world peace. Calls for statements and interviews came in from some mainstream media, such as ABC news, BBC, CNN. More came from several overseas news organizations and independent media such as Amy Goodman's Democracy NOW.

Our public mobilizations did get on C-Span a couple of times, made local TV newscasts from time to time, but were largely ignored by the biggies; CBS, NBC, CNN, ABC. I admit to some discouragement when it was obvious we were being deliberately discounted.

But there is a certain cheerful attitude toward adversity that veterans seem to have in abundance. You shared it and you kept me from caving in to my own dark thoughts. I treasure the honesty and the generosity of spirit many of you displayed when you helped me think through the problems we were facing.

I had come to know some of you well enough to call you in my moments of confusion. Paul Cox, Peter Shaw, Dave Cline, Dave Collins, Dick Underhill, Sharon Kufeldt, Jozef Hand-Boniakowski, Steve Manley, Charlie Atkins, Wayne Wittman, Lincoln Grahlf, Don Connors, Dan Kelly, Frank Dorrel, Frank Ackles. Had I the time, I could add hundreds more to that list.

But there came a time, when it was time – to leave this post. I grew in this job. But I admit to having hit a personal ceiling. I could no longer call upon the necessary energy and flexibility of a younger self. I was confronted with my limitations.

VFP is maturing at a rapid rate, requiring a sophistication of leadership that is honestly beyond me. Not just the technical stuff, which I labored mightily to keep up with, but the arcane ins and outs of organizational development and skillful facilitation.

My successor, Michael McPhearson, comes to VFP at exactly the right time, with the right stuff. Once in St. Louis, he quickly assessed the inner workings of the office, picked up on the issues at hand and moved VFP smoothly into a higher gear.

Michael's resume' demonstrates an enduring commitment to peace and social justice. He served ten years in the U.S. Army, exiting with the rank of Captain. He has a sales and community service background and, most recently spent five years with The National Conference for Community and Justice, where he worked to develop, promote, and implement programs to fight bias, bigotry, and racism in America. At the same time, he worked for the Anti-Defamation League's World of Difference, facilitating diversity and inclusion workshops for high school youth, teachers and administrators.

Last May, I attended a series of meetings of local progressives in St. Louis. We were addressing what is probably the knottiest of organizational problems we face in our communities today; racial, social and cultural inclusiveness. Michael led the meetings. I was very impressed with his ability to draw from us thoughts we were unaware of having, and to present viewpoints some of us had never considered. I witnessed enlightened sensitivity applied to a firmly held objective; getting us to overcome deep separations and commit to the development of programs leading to more effective action in the pursuit of peace.

I knew for sure, then, that VFP had chosen well for its future.

I present to you your Executive Director, Michael McPhearson.

###

The Launching of Cindy Sheehan

No doubt the most significant event of the 2005 VFP convention was the launching of Cindy Sheehan into Crawford, Texas and the establishment of what has since become known as Camp Casey, after her son killed in Iraq. On a Friday night, this woman with a small voice and a big courageous heart stood before an audience of veterans and declared her mission in the most direct terms:

Cindy Sheehan Speaks

It's so great to be here. Last year when you guys had your convention in Boston, my son had only been dead a few months, and we were really honored because the Santa Barbara chapter took my daughter's poem A Nation Rocked to Sleep,

(and they did it again this year), and I remember Michael Cervantes, he brought the booklet over to our house and showed it to us, and I never dreamed in a year I'd be standing here in front of you as one of the speakers at your convention, I never dreamed I'd be doing this at all, but isn't it weird what life hands you. I can tell you the exact day I heard about VFP, it was May 4th, 2004, and my son had been dead exactly a month, and I was watching CNN, and something came on, it was a report on Arlington West in Santa Barbara, and we lived about 6 hours north of Santa Barbara, and it was the May 4th before Mother's Day, which was May 8th, and VFP was going to put it up on Sunday, every Sunday, so I called my husband and I said, "There's only one place I want to be on Mother's Day this year, I want to be at Santa Barbara. I want to go and see Arlington West." When we went, the first time we went, there was a little over 700 crosses, now there's over

1,800 crosses. We have this lying bastard, George Bush, taking a 5-week vacation in a time of war. You know what? I'm never going to get to enjoy another vacation, because

of him. My vacation probably - -this is really sad because I have a really cute dress I was going to wear to the banquet tomorrow night, but I'm either gonna be in jail or in a tent in Crawford, waiting until that jerk comes out and tells me why my son died. A man emailed me yesterday, I get contacted by all kinds of people with their stories, and he said Cindy, I read everything you write, I read it on LewRockwell.com, he said, "I get tears in my eyes, but today I cried real tears, and I screamed, because my dear sweet nineteen ear-old cousin was killed in Iraq." And he said, "Cindy, why didn't I save him? Why didn't I knock him out, why didn't I take him to Canada?" and I wrote him back and I said, "You know what? We all think that." I said to my son not to go. I said, you know it's wrong, you know you're going over there. You know your unit might have to kill innocent people, you know you might die. And he says, "My buddies are going, I have to go." He said, "If I don't go someone's going to have to do my job, and my buddies will be in danger." So what really gets me is these chicken-hawks, who sent our kids to die, without ever serving in a war themselves. They don't know what it's all about.

30 of our bravest young men have already died this month, and it's only the 5th of August. And the tragedy of the marines in Ohio is awful. But do you think George Bush will interrupt his vacation and go visit the families of those 20 marines that have died in Ohio this week? No, because he doesn't care, he doesn't have a heart. That's not enough to stop his little playing cow-boy' game in Crawford for 5 weeks. So, as you can imagine, the grieving parents who lost - - lost, I don't like to use that word, whose child was murdered, it's extremely difficult, you can't even get a small scab on our wound, because every day it rips open. Every day, I don't know why I do it because I already know that war is ugly, I already know that war is hard. But I open up the DOD site to see, who became an angel, while I was sleeping. And that rips my heart open, because I know there is another mother whose life is going to be ruined that day. So we can't even begin to heal.

So anyway that filth-spewer and warmonger, George Bush was speaking after the tragedy of the marines in Ohio, he said a couple things that outraged me. Seriously outraged me. He never mentioned the terrible incident of those marines, but he did say, that the families of the ones who have been killed can rest assured that their loved ones died for a noble cause. And, he also said, he says this often, and this really drives me crazy, he said that we have to stay in Iraq and complete the mission, to honor the sacrifices of the ones who have fallen. And I say, why should I want one more mother to go through what I've gone through, because my son is dead. You know what, the only way he can honor my son's sacrifice is to bring the rest of the troops home. To make my son's death count for peace and love, and not war and hatred like he stands for.

###

Camp Casey - by [Cindy Sheehan](#)

Sun Aug 07, 2005 at 02:13:38 PM PDT

**Camp Casey
Peaceful Occupation of Crawford, Texas
Day One**



The first day of the beginning of the end of the occupation of Iraq. Today we went into the belly of the beast in Crawford, Texas...and lived to tell about it.

On Wednesday, August 3rd, 2005, I had a brainstorm. I was so furious about the horrible loss of life, especially from the Marine National Guard unit from Ohio. I was also so heartbroken for the families who have been wrongfully left behind. Then to top off the indignity and profanity of the needless deaths, George Bush spoke out after the deaths and said 2 things that enraged me further:

[Cindy Sheehan's diary](#)

"The families of the fallen can rest assured that your loved ones died for a noble cause."

And

"We have to honor the sacrifices of the fallen by completing the mission."

The first statement is so blatantly false that it angered me for a couple of reasons. First of all, what is the noble cause? The cause changes at will when the previous cause has been proven a lie. Secondly, because many people in America, when they hear such drivel, allow themselves to be "assured." A lot of people heard that falsehood and said: "Whew, 14 Marines in one incident, that's bad, but the President said they died for a noble cause. We can get on with our consumering now"

George Bush has spewed the second filth many times and each time it upsets me more. As a mother, why would I want any other mother (American or Iraqi) to go through the same pain as I am suffering through? My son, Casey was an honorable man filled with an integrity rarely seen these days. I am sure that he would be appalled that George uses his death to justify continued killing. I am appalled that George exploits the senseless sacrifice of my family to justify his murderous policies in the Middle East. Also, does it bother anyone else that this man can take a 5 week vacation when our soldiers are suffering, dying and being maimed in Iraq? When innocent Iraqi people are being murdered everyday? When I will never be able to fully enjoy another vacation for the rest of my life?

So, I was so full of rage and feeling so helpless and like such a failure after all the work for peace that I have done. I was typing an email venting my rage when I had a brainstorm: I am going to Dallas for the Veterans for Peace convention, why don't I travel up to Crawford and confront George Bush? Why don't I go and demand answers to my

questions. I deserve answers to my questions, it is George's moral obligation as the man who is responsible for my son's death to see me. Please, no emails telling me that he has no morals. I know that). What did Casey and over 100,000 other wonderful human beings die for? What exactly is, George, the "noble cause?" And: I demand that you stop using my son's name and my family's sacrifice to continue your illegal and immoral occupation of Iraq.

After I wrote this piece of inspired and impassioned prose, I put my contacts into the email address line and pressed send. That's how the peaceful occupation of Crawford, Tx. began.

We convoyed up to Crawford from the VFP convention Saturday morning. We had the Impeachment Tour Bus filled with 12 people. We had representatives on the bus from VFP (Veterans for Peace), IVAW (Iraq Veterans Against the War, VVAW (Vietnam Veterans against the War), and GSFP (Gold Star Families for Peace). By the time we got out near Bush's vacation home, we had about 40 cars following us.

The details of what we went through when we got to Crawford have been well-blogged. From having to walk in a ditch, to being blocked by the county sheriff's department for walking on the road, to the Deputy Chief of Staff and George's personal National Security advisor coming out to try and b.s. us into submission, to the Secret Service continuously warning our overnight group that we were going to get run over and killed during the night.

After the initial action of trying to walk up to the ranch, we all went down to a shady place to set up our camp. We were trying to think of a name for our temporary home, when one of the men in IVAW suggested Camp Casey. So in honor of our fallen heroes, we dedicated the camp to the brave men and women who have had their lives ripped away from them by the greedy and power hungry people who rule our country.

The dozens of people who came out to support GSFP and the dozen or so who spent the night with me last night would like to tell America a few things:

We are not giving up until George talks to us.

We are humbled and grateful for the support and love we are getting from all over the world.

The beginning of the end of the occupation of Iraq was on August 6, 2005, and in of all places, Crawford, Tx.

###

Witnessing History - By Scott Galindez

t r u t h o u t | Perspective

Monday 19 September 2005

I spent three weeks in Crawford, Texas. The heat was unbearable; bugs were everywhere, including fire ants crawling into my keyboard. But I wouldn't have traded Camp Casey for any other story that I have ever covered.

I remember the frigid cold of January in Washington DC, when millions around the world said no to the war in Iraq. We covered the Democratic and Republican conventions, I went to Iowa and New Hampshire to cover the primaries. These were all stories that I will not forget, but what happened this August in Crawford, Texas, was historic.

Twenty years from now, social studies classes will be studying the impact that Cindy Sheehan, Camp Casey, and the September 24th March on Washington had on George Bush's Iraq policy.

There were several moments in Crawford when I thought to myself, "I am witnessing history." Cindy Sheehan was the spark plug, and has emerged as a leader of the anti-war movement. Other leaders also emerged at Camp Casey; it is not that they were new to protesting the war, but Cindy's stand gave them the national stage that they were unable to gain access to before.

I remember the first press conference that I attended, Day 6 of the camp. Cindy opened with her emotional plea for answers, and many other family members followed, letting the world know that she was not alone.

I remember Bill Mitchell and Dante Zapalla in tears as they placed flowers on their loved ones' crosses. It was the first day that the crosses from Arlington West were set up at Camp Casey. Veterans for Peace had been setting those crosses up for over a year - now they were on the national stage.

I remember when Larry Northern mowed those crosses down with his pickup truck. I was at the Crawford Peace House, typing my blog report; Cindy was a few feet away typing her daily blog post. The phone call came, letting us know that the crosses had been mowed down. A few minutes later, a volunteer sitting behind us shouted "No!" At first we thought she was just learning about the crosses, but she had just learned that her pen pal was killed in Iraq. Cindy immediately comforted her. Cindy Sheehan has an amazing gift for connecting with people individually. Everywhere she goes now, people want to meet her, and while others would probably be uncomfortable, Cindy with a hug or a word of encouragement connects with them all.

I remember the candlelight vigil the night that tens of thousands of people around the country held vigils in their communities. Aidan Delgado, a veteran of the war in Iraq, gave an impassioned plea for us to make sure that our military is never used again until all other means have been exhausted.

I remember **Hart Viges**, another Iraq War vet, talking about how hard it is for him to deal with the knowledge that he killed people defending their homeland. And Charlie Anderson speaking after learning that his wife had left him. Cody Camacho explained that his own wife left him because she didn't recognize him when he returned from Iraq.

Marine **Jeff Key** played taps at dusk every day, and one night invited the counter protesters across the road to join Camp Casey for a vigil honoring our fallen soldiers. Jeff came back across the street carrying a huge pole with the American flag on top, followed by the counter protesters, who sang and vigiled with Camp Casey.

Ann Wright, who, after decades in the military and diplomatic corps resigned in protest of the Iraq war, was the Camp Casey Commandant. Her leadership kept things organized and from descending into chaos.

Beatriz Saldivar, Dante Zappala, Mimi Evans, Celeste Zappala, Tamara Rosenleaf, and dozens of other family members of fallen or deployed soldiers also emerged as leaders of the anti-war movement.

Grammy Award-winning musician Steve Earle put it best: "It wasn't the fact that I opposed the Vietnam War that stopped it ... It was when my father came to oppose the war that it ended."

With Cindy, Beatriz, Ann, Dante, Mimi, Charlie, Jeff, Aidan, Cody, Celeste, Tamara, and the thousands of others who got their voice at Camp Casey leading the way to Washington this week, more mothers and fathers will begin to oppose this war.

On April 24, 1971, Vietnam Veterans Against the War were among the leaders of 500,000 people who converged on Washington to end the Vietnam War. On September 24, 2005, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Gold Star Families for Peace, Military Families Speak Out, and Veterans for Peace will be leading another huge march against today's war. As the call goes out far and wide to gather in the nation's capitol, history stands to be made again.

It was certainly a season of turmoil and disruption, and mother nature jumped on the bandwagon with one of the most destructive hurricanes ever to reach the shores of America; Katrina – followed closely by Rita, which ripped up what Katrina missed in the Gulf States. The organization that had developed around Camp Casey, the wide-reaching network of selfless, dedicated people that event had attracted, instantly came to bear on ad hoc relief efforts that turned out to be the first on the scene with the most. Pate Tate tells the story of one such effort by a bus load of veterans, wrestling with their PTSD while responding to the cries for help in a devastated southland.

HURRICANE RELIEF EFFORT – by Pat Tate

The White Rose Impeachment Tour bus departed from Camp Casey in Crawford, Texas on August 31 with our most honored passenger Cindy Sheehan on board. The bus crew consisted of Patrick Tate, Chapter 116 President, Fred Danforth, Associate member Chapter 116, Dennis Kyne, Chapter 101 and Gordon Soderberg, member at large. We also carried around 15,000 lbs of water, food and other supplies that were donated by Cindy Sheehan for Hurricane Relief out of the supplies at Camp Casey.

We arrived in Covington, Louisiana at about 1:30 AM to a city without any lights. We wound our way through the streets to our associate's home and crashed until daylight. The morning brought a scene of devastation which most of us have never seen in this country. We drove through town and arrived at a park adjoining a poor black neighborhood. It was here that we set up our first 'soup kitchen'. We unloaded the bus started cooking food on a one burner stove and were immediately swamped with locals looking for help.

We continued our kitchen efforts until about 5 pm., when we were approached by a local police officer who had noted that we possessed a generator. She told us that the shelter located down the road was without power, and that our generator would help make life more bearable for the evacuees. It did not take us long to determine that we needed to move, and we were onsite within an hour.

We had seen much in that first day and, with the assistance of our onboard satellite internet system, we began to share our experiences with the world at large. It was four days after the storm and the relief agencies were up and running, but folks from town had to drive ten miles to get food, water and ice. It sounds simple, but there was no power to run the gas pumps. The system could not adapt, that was our message.

We issued our call for supplies and volunteers, and to make it short the rest is history. We were discovered by Eric Weinrib, one of Michael Moore's web masters, and we became a project they supported. With Michael's assistance we were able to raise over \$500,000 in donations, over one million pounds of relief supplies, and we received the donation of countless hours of volunteer help from all over the United States, Canada and a few from other nations around the world.

We worked with a collaborative model in trying to manage our operation, and although there were wrinkles, we believe that it holds promise for future projects. Starting out in the field presented unanticipated challenges, but it proved doable, and we survived.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone within Veterans For Peace for their support of this project, and to encourage all to watch for updates. We have linked with several other NGO's including, SOS After Katrina, Plenty, Common Ground Relief in New Orleans and AIDSail in distributing the bounty that rained down upon our efforts.

The number of lives that we have touched is uncountable but to summarize the opinion of all we have met, 'Veterans For Peace Rules'.

###

Protesters Draw Link Between Katrina and Iraq War - Reuters

Monday 19 September 2005

New York - President George W. Bush's faltering performance after Hurricane Katrina, like his decision to invade Iraq, show his priorities are at odds with actions needed to keep Americans safe, anti-war protesters said on Monday.

"One of the bogus reasons that George Bush gives for this invasion (and) occupation of Iraq is to make America safer - and Katrina exposed that clearly he has made America more vulnerable through his policies in Iraq," anti-war activist and bereaved mother Cindy Sheehan told a morning news conference.

US troops fighting an unexpectedly stubborn insurgency in Iraq should come home to help face domestic challenges like the unprecedented humanitarian relief and recovery effort on the Gulf Coast, said the activists, who will stage a march on Washington this weekend.

When Sheehan later spoke in Manhattan's Union Square to a group of about 200 anti-war protesters, New York police broke up the rally and arrested a man over a dispute about whether their permit allowed amplified sound.

Morrigan Phillips, spokeswoman for the Bring Them Home Now Tour, which has been stopping in towns across America on its way to the march in Washington, said the arrest was the first since the group began its campaign earlier this summer.

Leaders of the coalition organizing the September 24-26 protest in Washington include Sheehan, who gained international fame by camping out for weeks outside Bush's ranch in Crawford, Texas.

The anti-war group United for Peace and Justice, spearheading the march on Washington, said National Guard troops and materiel deployed in Iraq were needed to respond to the tragedy in and around New Orleans.

Sheehan is the star attraction for the three-day protest, which will include nonviolent acts of civil disobedience at the White House and an interfaith religious service, organizers said.

After her soldier son Casey was killed in Iraq, Sheehan demanded to meet with Bush while he vacationed in Texas so he could explain why US troops were not being withdrawn from Iraq.

Bush, who had met briefly with Sheehan on a previous occasion, has declined to meet with her again.

"We were alarmed to hear the first company to get a contract in the rebuilding of New Orleans was Halliburton, another nonbid contract," said Leslie Cagan of United for Peace and Justice, which bills itself as the largest anti-war coalition in the United States.

The largest US contractor in Iraq, Halliburton Co.'s subsidiary Kellogg Brown and Root has been given a \$29.8 million contract to rebuild Navy bases along the Katrina-battered Gulf Coast.

Vice President Dick Cheney is a former head of Halliburton, whose subsidiary secured no-bid contracts in Iraq after the United States toppled Saddam Hussein.

###

VFP CONVENTION 2006 – Seattle, Washington

The Seattle convention was remarkable for several things:

Organization; from registration to final ceremonies, workshops and full-member sessions went off without a visible hitch.

Attendance; over 500 people registered – making it the best-attended convention yet.

Content; the flow of activities, from key speakers to workshops to strategically-timed press conferences created a dynamic that was inspiring, informative and activating.

It followed a pattern VFP has been developing and refining over the last few years; that of drawing in the media. Our conventions are as much about informing the public about current issues of war and peace as it is about informing ourselves and increasing our own effectiveness. This is consistent with chapter activities designed to reach an under-educated public, such as forums and film showings. We have been slowly gaining the reputation as the people to go to for truly “fair and balanced” information on events so superficially dealt with by mainstream media.

The fact that our membership, as announced at the convention, exceeds 6200 in 138 chapters means that a VFP presence can be found in almost every corner of the country.

Leading up to the convention was a well-publicized bicycle ride:



Members of Veterans For Peace (VFP) and Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) participated in a human-powered cycle ride in July and August to promote taking responsibility for the consequences of personal and community choices as a response to war. The cyclists departed from Eugene, Oregon on July 25 and pedaled to Seattle, Washington where the national

Veterans For Peace convention was held August 10-13.

The "Veterans Peace and Sustainable Living Ride" demonstrated taking responsibility for reducing our dependence on oil, an addiction believed to be a major cause of current wars. In the words of veteran Brian Willson, "A revolution of consciousness is needed, enabling us to recognize the sacred interconnectedness of all life. Once that is internalized, we naturally make different choices based on mutual respect." The cyclists believe that one of the most radical things we can do is stop consuming while recreating local, community-reliant economies.

The ride was initiated by Willson and Lane Anderson, both disabled Vietnam veteran peace activists from California. Willson, a double-amputee, rode a three-wheeled, arm-powered handcycle. Anderson, who has arthritic knees, rode a specially outfitted "Exycle" bicycle which provides extra bursts of hand-generated power. The ride was accompanied by several alternative-fueled vehicles, including "The White Rose," a VFP biodiesel bus from Mendocino. Community events were scheduled at each stop along the ride.

OVER-VIEW

NEWS ADVISORY

August 28, 2006

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Veterans Gather in Seattle to Sow Justice, Reap Peace and to Say, "No To War."

Who: Veterans For Peace, a national organization of military veterans including men and women from before the Abram Lincoln Brigade, World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, the Iraq War, other conflicts and "peacetime," chartered in 1985.

What: 2006 Veterans For Peace National Convention, at the University of Washington, in Seattle, WA, August 10th -13th

Why: To share ideas and develop strategies to Sow Justice, Reap Peace, resist war and provide Real Support for Troops by demanding Bring Them Home Now and Take Care of Them When They Get Here. Each year Veterans For Peace holds a national convention to examine current world conflicts, the U.S. government's role in these conflicts and ways to address ending war as a means to solve conflicts.

Over 500 veterans, associates, military family members and friends gathered for a highly successful convention. The theme of the meeting, Sow Justice, Reap Peace; motivated participants to attend 1-1/2 days of workshops addressing a myriad of topics such as chapter organization and innovations, communications, issues of war, environment and culture, human effects of war, and veterans support. The four day convention included an open to the public Friday night event featuring guest speakers, John Perkins, author of Confessions of an Economic Hit Man and Malik Rahim, former Black Panther and founder of Common Ground Collective, a New Orleans relief project, a Saturday business meeting and a Saturday night banquet. Highlights of the convention included a press conference by Sergeant Ricky Clousing, an Iraq war combat vet and U.S. Army interrogator, who announced his intention to turn himself in to U.S. military custody after being absent from his unit for one year. Clousing explained why he had no intention of returning to Iraq. "Each day I felt haunted by my conscience that my association in uniform at this time was wrong and my involvement directly or indirectly in this organization at this time was a contradiction to my beliefs."

Convention attendees stood in solidarity at a press conference on Military Sexual Trauma for SPC Suzanne Swift who has been sexually abused by members of the same command with which she has been ordered to return to Iraq. She has refused to go. She deserves immediate honorable discharge and full medical treatment. The Saturday night banquet saw 1LT Ehren Watada, backed by 60 Iraq combat veterans, address the convention. With a motivating speech, he explained why he refuses to go to the war in Iraq. He is the first commissioned officer to publicly refuse deployment. He refuses on the grounds that the war itself is illegal and a war crime and he is honor bound by his oath as an officer to resist illegal orders. For more information or to support these acts of courage visit <http://www.suzanneswift.org/> www.suzanneswift.org and www.thankyoult.org.

Voting members of Veterans For Peace passed several resolutions. VFP calls for Governors of the fifty states to exercise their power as Commander-in-Chief of their respective National Guard Commands "to pursue and exhaust every avenue in their power to immediately bring, or cause to be brought home, all National Guard troops presently serving in Iraq." VFP calls upon the, "U.S. government to shut down its 100 military bases in South Korea and bring our troops home now, instead of relocating them below Seoul." VFP addressed the current conflict in Lebanon condemning, "the targeting of civilians by both sides and calls for the United States Government to support an immediate cease-fire and promote negotiations involving all concerned parties to resolve all border disputes and prisoner release issues;" and "calls for the United States

Government to use the diplomatic and economic means at its disposal to secure a removal of IDF forces from Lebanese territory. " For the full text visit www.veteransforpeace.org/resolutions_passed_2006.htm.

Veterans For Peace is a national organization founded in 1985. It is structured around a national office in Saint Louis, MO and comprised of members across the country organized in chapters or as at-large members. The organization includes men and women veterans from World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the Gulf War, other conflicts and "peacetime" veterans. Our collective experience tells us wars are easy to start and hard to stop and that those hurt are often the innocent. Thus, other means of problem solving are necessary.

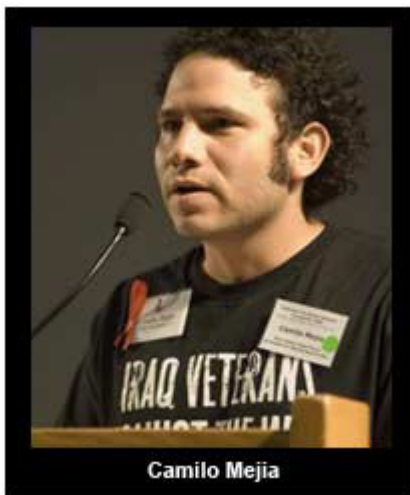
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A few key events:

Camilo Mejia and Dahr Jamal Speak at VFP Conference

Author: Doug Nielson with photographs by Elliot Stoller

Aug 12, 2006 10:19 Thursday's afternoon session of the Veteran's For Peace convention in Seattle included speeches by Camilo Mejia and Dahr Jamal with an introduction by National President David Cline. David Cline reviewed how after the peace movement experienced a series of defeats, especially with the last presidential election, the VFP convention last year helped start a process of revitalization, beginning with the Cindy Sheehan encampment at George Bush's ranch. Camilo Mejia addressed the need for the Peace Movement to support all oppressed people including the Palestinians. Dahr Jamal, just returning from Lebanon, described the situation on the ground there. He concluded his observations with dark predictions if the current course of US/Israeli aggression is not reversed.



Camilo Majia, the Iraq war's first military resister, made one of the more controversial arguments at the convention: In spite of all the aggressive acts in this current war, "there seems to be a reluctance within sectors of the anti-war movement to speak out and stand up against the atrocities committed by the Israeli government against the people in Palestine and Lebanon." Majia argued that in our search for Peace we should stand up against violence against all civilians -- without exception. We should stand up against all violence period. We should speak out against attacks by Hezbollah that have killed Israeli civilians, but our criticism should identify the aggressor in the broader conflict. The aggressor is not

the Israeli people, but the Israeli government and the Israeli Defense Force. More importantly, what we really should not forget is that the Israeli government has the full support of the United States Government.

Because sectors of the anti-war movement fail to denounce the criminal and disproportionate attacks upon the Palestinian and Lebanese people, the US government is able to deliver cluster and white phosphorus bombs to Israel, to remap the middle east, and to take control of it's natural resources. From Majia's perspective, the war against the Palestinian and Lebanese people is not a separate war from the war in Iraq. And it's not a separate war from the war in Afghanistan either. Or a separate war from the war against children across the world, 30,00 of whom die each day from lack of basic necessities such as water, food and shelter. It's also not a separate war from the war on women whose reproductive rights, physical well being and dignity are under constant assault by the US administration and by the larger capitalist establishment around the world.



Dahr Jamail began his 20 minute speech by examining some of the false assumptions behind what he called US and Israeli government propaganda about themselves. One of these underlying assumptions propagated by corporate journalism is that the US and Israel are benevolent powers that only use their military to defend themselves and only retaliate if attacked first. One small example is the fact that the corporate media has ignored the considerable documentation refuting the claim that Hezbollah crossed the border into Israel to capture the two Israeli soldiers in the incident that served as the pretext for the Israeli invasion. Another lie is that the entire Israeli population is galvanized behind the current

invasion. Jamail said a quarter million Israelis have left the country, another quarter million are hiding in bomb shelters and the Israeli economy has gone into a state of collapse. Jamail said the corporate media will not tell us the true degree of human suffering and destruction that is happening because they know this will turn us against the war. He said Israel is doing to the entire country of Lebanon what the US military did to the city of Fallujah in Iraq.

For the horrifying details see Dahr Jamail's weblog at <http://dahrjamailiraq.com/weblog/> Jamail said all the puppet regimes in the Middle East are now destabilized and in danger of being overthrown by their people. He predicted the likely invasion of Syria would draw Iran into the conflict which would, in his opinion, in turn draw in China and Russia. Jamail ended by pointing out that most criminals assume they will get away with their crimes but that we can't let this happen. He noted our governments assume we will not pay enough attention or have the time to seek out the information we need to see through the lies they tell us. But he expressed confidence that with the help of people like those attending the Vets For Peace convention the American people will find out the truth.

###

Ehren Watada - By Dahr Jamail t r u t h o u t | Perspective

Monday 14 August 2006

On Saturday night, I was lucky enough to be at the Veterans for Peace National Convention. For that night, Lt. Ehren Watada was able to give the following speech, which I've just received permission to post here. The speech was met with a powerful, standing ovation from the vets who've been there.

Lt. Ehren Watada, for those who don't already know, became the first commissioned officer to publicly refuse deployment to the unlawful war and occupation in Iraq. While



doing this on June 22, 2006, Watada said, "As the order to take part in an illegal act is ultimately unlawful as well, I must refuse that order."

Just as Watada took the stage and began to speak, over 50 members of Iraq Veterans Against the War filed in behind him. Watada, surprised by this and obviously taken aback by the symbolic act, turned back to the audience, took some deep breaths, then gave this speech:

Thank you everyone. Thank you all for your tremendous support. How honored and delighted I am to be in the same room with you tonight. I am deeply humbled by being in the company of such wonderful speakers.

You are all true American patriots. Although long since out of uniform, you continue to fight for the very same principles you once swore to uphold and defend. No one knows the devastation and suffering of war more than veterans - which is why we should always be the first to prevent it.

I wasn't entirely sure what to say tonight. I thought as a leader in general I should speak to motivate. Now I know that this isn't the military and surely there are many out there who outranked me at one point or another - and yes, I'm just a Lieutenant. And yet, I feel

as though we are all citizens of this great country and what I have to say is not a matter of authority - but from one citizen to another. We have all seen this war tear apart our country over the past three years. It seems as though nothing we've done, from vigils to protests to letters to Congress, have had any effect in persuading the powers that be. Tonight I will speak to you on my ideas for a change of strategy. I am here tonight because I took a leap of faith. My action is not the first and it certainly will not be the last. Yet, on behalf of those who follow, I require your help - your sacrifice - and that of countless other Americans. I may fail. We may fail. But nothing we have tried has worked so far. It is time for change and the change starts with all of us.

I stand before you today, not as an expert - not as one who pretends to have all the answers. I am simply an American and a servant of the American people. My humble opinions today are just that. I realize that you may not agree with everything I have to say. However, I did not choose to be a leader for popularity. I did it to serve and make better the soldiers of this country. And I swore to carry out this charge honorably under the rule of law.

Today, I speak with you about a radical idea. It is one born from the very concept of the American soldier (or service member). It became instrumental in ending the Vietnam War - but it has been long since forgotten. The idea is this: that to stop an illegal and unjust war, the soldiers can choose to stop fighting it.

Now it is not an easy task for the soldier. For he or she must be aware that they are being used for ill-gain. They must hold themselves responsible for individual action. They must remember duty to the Constitution and the people supersedes the ideologies of their leadership. The soldier must be willing to face ostracism by their peers, worry over the survival of their families, and of course the loss of personal freedom. They must know that resisting an authoritarian government at home is equally important to fighting a foreign aggressor on the battlefield. Finally, those wearing the uniform must know beyond any shadow of a doubt that by refusing immoral and illegal orders they will be supported by the people not with mere words but by action.

The American soldier must rise above the socialization that tells them authority should always be obeyed without question. Rank should be respected but never blindly followed. Awareness of the history of atrocities and destruction committed in the name of America - either through direct military intervention or by proxy war - is crucial. They must realize that this is a war not out of self-defense but by choice, for profit and imperialistic domination. WMD, ties to Al Qaeda, and ties to 9/11 never existed and never will. The soldier must know that our narrowly and questionably elected officials intentionally manipulated the evidence presented to Congress, the public, and the world to make the case for war. They must know that neither Congress nor this administration has the authority to violate the prohibition against pre-emptive war - an American law that still stands today. This same administration uses us for rampant violations of time-tested laws banning torture and degradation of prisoners of war. Though the American soldier wants to do right, the illegitimacy of the occupation itself, the policies of this administration, and rules of engagement of desperate field commanders will ultimately force them to be party to war crimes. They must know some of these facts, if not all, in order to act.

Mark Twain once remarked, "Each man must for himself alone decide what is right and what is wrong, which course is patriotic and which isn't. You cannot shirk this and be a man. To decide against your conviction is to be an unqualified and inexcusable traitor, both to yourself and to your country ..." By this, each and every American soldier, marine, airman, and sailor is responsible for their choices and their actions. The freedom to choose is only one that we can deny ourselves.

The oath we take swears allegiance not to one man but to a document of principles and laws designed to protect the people. Enlisting in the military does not relinquish one's right to seek the truth - neither does it excuse one from rational thought nor the ability to distinguish between right and wrong. "I was only following orders" is never an excuse.

The Nuremberg Trials showed America and the world that citizenry as well as soldiers have the unrelinquishable obligation to refuse complicity in war crimes perpetrated by their government. Widespread torture and inhumane treatment of detainees is a war crime. A war of aggression born through an unofficial policy of prevention is a crime against the peace. An occupation violating the very essence of international humanitarian law and sovereignty is a crime against humanity. These crimes are funded by our tax dollars. Should citizens choose to remain silent through self-imposed ignorance or choice, it makes them as culpable as the soldier in these crimes.

The Constitution is no mere document - neither is it old, out-dated, or irrelevant. It is the embodiment of all that Americans hold dear: truth, justice, and equality for all. It is the formula for a government of the people and by the people. It is a government that is transparent and accountable to whom they serve. It dictates a system of checks and balances and separation of powers to prevent the evil that is tyranny.

As strong as the Constitution is, it is not foolproof. It does not fully take into account the frailty of human nature. Profit, greed, and hunger for power can corrupt individuals as much as they can corrupt institutions. The founders of the Constitution could not have imagined how money would infect our political system. Neither could they believe a standing army would be used for profit and manifest destiny. Like any common dictatorship, soldiers would be ordered to commit acts of such heinous nature as to be deemed most ungentlemanly and unbecoming that of a free country.

The American soldier is not a mercenary. He or she does not simply fight wars for payment. Indeed, the state of the American soldier is worse than that of a mercenary. For a soldier-for-hire can walk away if they are disgusted by their employer's actions. Instead, especially when it comes to war, American soldiers become indentured servants whether they volunteer out of patriotism or are drafted through economic desperation. Does it matter what the soldier believes is morally right? If this is a war of necessity, why force men and women to fight? When it comes to a war of ideology, the lines between right and wrong are blurred. How tragic it is when the term Catch-22 defines the modern American military.

Aside from the reality of indentured servitude, the American soldier in theory is much nobler. Soldier or officer, when we swear our oath it is first and foremost to the Constitution and its protectorate, the people. If soldiers realized this war is contrary to what the Constitution extols - if they stood up and threw their weapons down - no President could ever initiate a war of choice again. When we say, "... Against all enemies

foreign and domestic," what if elected leaders became the enemy? Whose orders do we follow? The answer is the conscience that lies in each soldier, each American, and each human being. Our duty to the Constitution is an obligation, not a choice.

The military, and especially the Army, is an institution of fraternity and close-knit camaraderie. Peer pressure exists to ensure cohesiveness but it stamps out individualism and individual thought. The idea of brotherhood is difficult to pull away from if the alternative is loneliness and isolation. If we want soldiers to choose the right but difficult path - they must know beyond any shadow of a doubt that they will be supported by Americans. To support the troops who resist, you must make your voices heard. If they see thousands supporting me, they will know. I have heard your support, as has Suzanne Swift, and Ricky Clousing - but many others have not. Increasingly, more soldiers are questioning what they are being asked to do. Yet, the majority lack awareness to the truth that is buried beneath the headlines. Many more see no alternative but to obey. We must show open-minded soldiers a choice and we must give them courage to act.

Three weeks ago, Sgt. Hernandez from the 172nd Stryker Brigade was killed, leaving behind a wife and two children. In an interview, his wife said he sacrificed his life so that his family could survive. I'm sure Sgt. Hernandez cherished the camaraderie of his brothers, but given a choice, I doubt he would put himself in a position to leave his family husbandless and fatherless. Yet that's the point, you see. People like Sgt. Hernandez don't have a choice. The choices are to fight in Iraq or let your family starve. Many soldiers don't refuse this war en masse because, like all of us,, they value their families over their own lives and perhaps their conscience. Who would willingly spend years in prison for principle and morality while denying their family sustenance?

I tell this to you because you must know that to stop this war, for the soldiers to stop fighting it, they must have the unconditional support of the people. I have seen this support with my own eyes. For me it was a leap of faith. For other soldiers, they do not have that luxury. They must know it and you must show it to them. Convince them that no matter how long they sit in prison, no matter how long this country takes to right itself, their families will have a roof over their heads, food in their stomachs, opportunities and education. This is a daunting task. It requires the sacrifice of all of us. Why must Canadians feed and house our fellow Americans who have chosen to do the right thing? We should be the ones taking care of our own. Are we that powerless - are we that unwilling to risk something for those who can truly end this war? How do you support the troops but not the war? By supporting those who can truly stop it; let them know that resistance to participate in an illegal war is not futile and not without a future.

I have broken no law but the code of silence and unquestioning loyalty. If I am guilty of any crime, it is that I learned too much and cared too deeply for the meaningless loss of my fellow soldiers and my fellow human beings. If I am to be punished it should be for following the rule of law over the immoral orders of one man. If I am to be punished it should be for not acting sooner. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period ... was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people."

Now, I'm not a hero. I am a leader of men who said enough is enough. Those who called for war prior to the invasion compared diplomacy with Saddam to the compromises made with Hitler. I say, we compromise now by allowing a government that uses war as the first option instead of the last to act with impunity. Many have said this about the World Trade Towers, "Never Again." I agree. Never again will we allow those who threaten our way of life to reign free - be they terrorists or elected officials. The time to fight back is now - the time to stand up and be counted is today.

I'll end with one more Martin Luther King Jr. quote: One who breaks an unjust law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for law.

Thank you and bless you all.

The only thing Watada said that I would disagree with is that he claimed that he is not a hero. He is a leader, yet again, by taking this stance. And he may never know how many lives he has already touched.

Today, it is up to the anti-war movement to make sure his leadership touches as many soldiers' lives in Iraq as possible. Watada is making his stand. He needs continued support.

As he said, if more American soldiers in Iraq know that they, along with their families, will be supported if they stand up against this illegal occupation, countless more will follow, and this repulsive war will end.

###

Former Asst. Secretary General of the United Nations to take stand tomorrow for Lt. Watada at military hearing

On August 17th, U.S. Army First Lieutenant Ehren K. Watada, the first commissioned officer to publicly refuse to deploy to Iraq, will appear before a military court, for the first hearing of a case that raises core Constitutional issues about the legality of the Iraq war, freedom of speech, and the limits of presidential power.



Witnesses to appear tomorrow in Lt. Watada's defense: Prof. Francis Boyle, Dennis Halliday, and Army Col. Ann Wright (ret.)

Watada's civilian counsel, Eric A. Seitz of Honolulu, will call expert witnesses including former United Nations Undersecretary Denis Halliday, University of Illinois Professor Francis Boyle, an international law expert, and U.S. Army Colonel Ann Wright (ret.) to support Lt. Watada's contentions that the invasion of Iraq violated domestic and international law and that high level policies and rules of engagement permit, encourage, and condone the commission of war crimes in Iraq.

Watada announced his intention to refuse to deploy to Iraq in June, explaining "It is my conclusion as an officer of the armed forces that the war in Iraq is not only morally wrong but a horrible breach of American law. The war and what we're doing over there is illegal."

He has since been charged with three counts of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman, two counts (for the same statements) of contempt towards officials, specifically President G. W. Bush, and one count of missing movement. If found guilty of all charges, Lt. Watada faces over seven years in confinement. He faces over five years imprisonment for simply expressing his opinion that President Bush misled the American people into an illegal war. On August 17th he will appear for an Article 32 hearing, which is similar to a civilian grand jury hearing.

"The defense will prove not only that what Lt. Watada said about the war is true, but that as an officer in the United States Army he was duty bound to learn the truth about this war and having done so to refuse to carry out orders to participate in it," Seitz said.

For its part, the military has requested that two civilian journalists appear for the prosecution. Neither Gregg K. Kakesako, of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin nor Oakland-based Sarah L. Olson, of Truthout.org are expected to do so voluntarily. However, the military will have subpoena power later during the actual court martial, and requires their testimony to confirm Lt. Watada's "speech crimes."

Today, August 16th, supporters will converge on Ft. Lewis to demand that Lt. Watada not be court-martialed for fulfilling his obligation under international law to refuse illegal orders. They will gather beginning at 4:00 p.m. for a 6:00 p.m. rally at the Interstate 5, Exit 119 Bridge at the entrance to Fort Lewis.

Supporters nationally and internationally have called for a "Day of Education" to study and publicly pose the question, "Is the Iraq War illegal?" today as well.

###

Report from Sergeant Ricky Clousing Press Conference - Elliot Stoller

Aug 11, 2006 21:38



Over one hundred supporters turned out for Sergeant Ricky Clousing's press conference Friday morning. Clousing, who served in Iraq as an interrogator in 2004 and 2005, has been AWOL for over a year.

Speaking in eloquent support of Sergeant Clousing was Camillo Mejia who served nine months in jail as a conscientious objector. Other inspiring speeches were given by Hart Vigas, Michael Wong, Judy Linehan and Sergeant Clousing's mother, Sharon Pankalla

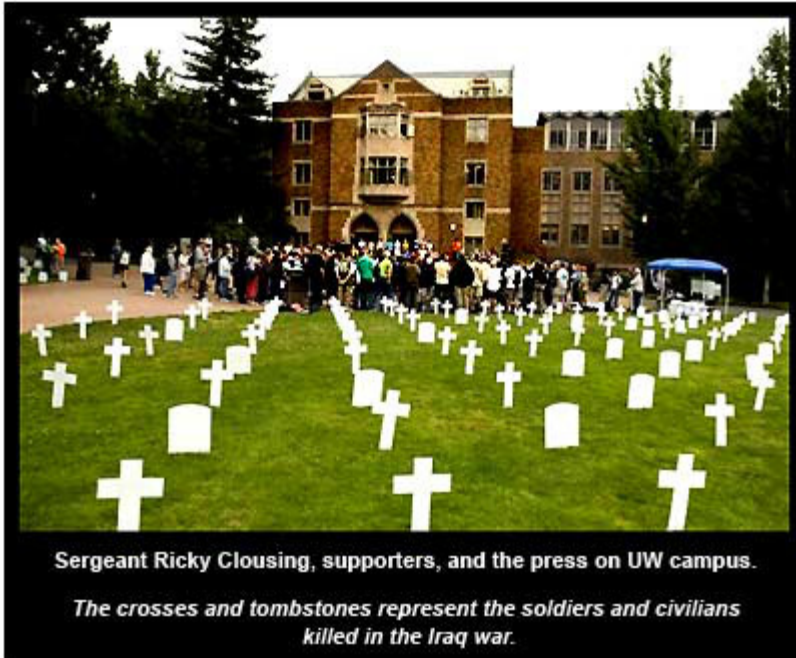
Excerpts from Ricky Clousing's statement:

"Throughout my training very appropriate guidelines for the treatment of prisoners were set. However, I witnessed our baseless incarceration of civilians. I saw civilians physically

harassed. I saw an innocent Iraqi killed before me by U.S. troops. I saw the abuse of power that goes without accountability."

What if orders given violate morality, ethics and even legality?

"We Americans have found ourselves in a pivotal era where we have traded humanity for patriotism. Where we have traded civil liberties for a sense of security. I stand here before you sharing the same idea as Henry David Thoreau: as an American, and as a Human Being, we mustn't lend ourselves to that same evil which we condemn."



Sergeant Clousing turned himself over to US military custody on Friday, August 11th.

Sergeant Ricky Clousing, supporters, and the press on UW campus.
The crosses and tombstones represent the soldiers and civilians killed in the Iraq war.

###

Veterans and War Resisters Enjoy Solidarity Picnic on US-Canada Border

by Gerry Condon Aug. 14, 2006

In a show of support for GIs who are refusing to fight in Iraq , 150 veterans traveled to the U.S.-Canada border on Sunday, Aug. 13, for a "solidarity picnic" with war resisters seeking sanctuary in Canada . Two buses and a caravan of cars ferried members of Veterans For Peace from their national convention in Seattle to Peace Arch Park , a neutral zone on the border between Washington State and British Columbia .

U.S. war resisters were accompanied by Canadian supporters, including World War II veterans. The War Resisters Support Campaign, with chapters across Canada , co-sponsored the picnic with VFP.

"This is the worse combat situation since Vietnam . War crimes are being committed

every single day,” said Kyle Snyder, 22, who was a machine gunner in Iraq . “When I reported the shooting of an innocent civilian, my superiors didn’t even bother to investigate,” continued Snyder, one of 30 U.S. military personnel who have applied for refugee status in Canada .

Colonel Ann Wright (ret.) told Snyder he was doing the right thing. “There is a time honored tradition in the U.S. military to refuse to follow illegal orders or to commit war crimes,” said Col. Wright, who resigned from the U.S. State Department in protest of the Iraq War.

“We’re here today to tell the war resisters that we are behind them 100 percent,” said Dave Cline, national president of Veterans For Peace. Cline, a highly decorated veteran who was wounded three times in the Vietnam War, called on the Canadian government to provide sanctuary for U.S. war resisters.

Musicians from both sides of the borders sang songs of peace while the 300 participants enjoyed a family style picnic in a festive atmosphere. Members of Iraq Veterans Against the War held friendly conversations with their war resister peers in Canada , and invited them to join their growing organization. Several of the war resisters have already fought in the Iraq War but fled to Canada after being ordered back for a second tour.

Kelly Dougherty, a woman who fought in Iraq , met with two young women who are AWOL from the U.S. Air Force. Dougherty, who was recently elected board chairperson of Iraq Veterans Against the War, has also been speaking out in support of Army Specialist Suzanne Swift, who has refused to return to Iraq after being sexually harassed by several of her superiors.

Suzanne Swift is currently awaiting her fate at Fort Lewis , Washington , where Sgt. Kevin Benderman has been imprisoned for 15 months for refusing to return to Iraq , and Lt. Ehren Watada, the first commissioned officer to refuse deployment to Iraq , is awaiting court martial.

Sgt. Ricky Clousing, who served in Iraq as an interrogator for the US Army's 82nd Airborne Division, announced his refusal to deploy to Iraq during the Veterans For Peace convention. Clousing gave himself up to military authorities at Fort Lewis .

###

Susanne Swift Story - "We demand Swift justice!" by Jeff Paterson,

Not in Our Name *Sunday Aug 20th, 2006 1:09 PM*

FORT LEWIS, WA (August 19, 2006) – Two dozen supporters of Army Specialist Suzanne Swift gathered outside of the gates of Fort Lewis to demand an immediate honorable discharge for the Iraq veteran. Organizers of “Camp Suzanne” intend to have an ongoing presence across from the fort entrance until the Army takes action on their demands. Statements of support from U.S. Army Colonel Ann Wright (ret.) and Gold Star Families for Peace co-founder Cindy Sheehan were read to gathered supporters, followed by a message via cell phone from Suzane’s mother Sara Rich.



Specialist Swift refused to return to Iraq because of the extreme duress she suffered in the form of sexual harassment at the hands of three of her commanding officers. One even coerced her into a sexual relationship, telling her, "If you say anything, I'll make your life a living hell." Swift has since been diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Nonetheless, upon being sent to Ft. Lewis after being arrested at her mother’s house while AWOL from the Army, she was forced back into fatigues and into active duty, even while her accusations are under investigation.

Last weekend, members of Veterans for Peace during their national convention in Seattle, held a press conference organized by the women’s caucus. Backed by many women veterans who clearly understood the very common abuses Spc. Swift has endured, Sara Rich spoke of her efforts to win an honorable discharge and medical benefits for her daughter.

<http://suzanneswift.org/>

CHAPTER 8 – IRAQ WAR GRINDS ON – ACTIONS PROLIFERATE

Starting with a follow up on Lt. Watada and Suzanne Swift, the scope of activity resisting war and militarism in general, along with all the injustice and social imbalance that implies, widened commensurate with a surge in membership.

By spring VFP had grown to over 7000 members and approximately 140 active chapters, with more joining each month.

Coordinated actions, involving Military Families Speak Out (MFSO), Iraq Veterans Against The War (IVAW), Gold Star Families For Peace (GSFP) and VFP, inspired by the march across the Gulf States late the year before, resulted in powerful messages delivered by authentic voices in communities across the country. For a more comprehensive accounting of actions see the section on MAJOR PROJECTS AND ACTIONS. This history by no means includes all the many actions taken by members in hundreds of communities around the country. - ED

Military judge rules “illegal war” debate forbidden during Lt. Watada trial

Jeff Paterson, [Courage to Resist](#). Updated January 22, 2007

Nearly two weeks after hearing arguments in the January 4 pre-trial phase of Lt. Ehren Watada's court martial for refusing to deploy to Iraq, and explaining his refusal to the press, military circuit judge Lt. Col. John M. Head issued a brief, tersely worded rulings on January 16, 2007.

In summation, “The defense motion for a hearing on the “Nuremberg defense” is DENIED. The government motion to prevent the defense from presenting evidence on the legality of the war is GRANTED.” The defense motion to dismiss the four political speech charges was also “DENIED.”

Lt. Ehren Watada during pre-trial hearing break on Fort Lewis, Washington. January 4, 2007. Photo: Jeff Paterson

In response to last week's rulings, Lt. Watada's civilian attorney Eric Seitz of Honolulu declared, "These rulings exemplify the fact that this is a military disciplinary proceeding, and apparently not an actual trial in which concepts of justice apply. Now let someone ask me if I think Ehren can get a fair trial in a military court." In summation, "These rulings are about as horrible and inept as I could have imagined," added Seitz.

Lt. Watada is scheduled to go on trial at Fort Lewis, Washington on February 5. He will face two years imprisonment for "missing movement," and four additional years imprisonment – one for each count of "conduct unbecoming an officer" – for his public statements critical of the Iraq War.

Legality of war ruled irrelevant and out of order

In a finding of fact, Judge Head noted:

"A hearing on the "Nuremberg defense" would consist of witnesses who would testify that the war in Iraq was a crime against peace, a war of aggression, and a violation of the United Nations Charter, other international law, and U.S. law. The accused would testify that his refusal to go to Iraq was based upon the belief that he would be committing war crimes because the United States was involved in a war of aggression and a crime against peace."

However, in conclusion:

"The accused's motive not to deploy and his belief about the lawfulness of the Iraq war are not elements of the offense. Motive is, therefore, irrelevant on the merits.... Even had the defense been granted the full hearing they requested, the decision would be no different. The evidence proffered all went to a nonjusticiable political question or to a [irrelevant] motive."

During the pre-trial hearing, Seitz asserted, "The legality of the Iraq War is not merely a political question. Lt. Watada's specific intent was to avoid unlawful actions in Iraq. For the sake of due process, we need the opportunity to raise this issue." Ruling on due process: DENIED.

All political speech charges advance to trial

Citing the military court's 1967 conviction of Lt. Henry Howe for attending an anti-war protest with a picket sign that read, "Let's have more than a choice between petty ignorant fascists in 1969," Judge Head dismissed out of hand any inherent protections of political speech for members of the military.

In a friend of the court brief filed in Lt. Watada's August Article 32 hearing, the American Civil Liberties Union wrote: "If the [political speech] charges leveled in this case are allowed to proceed, it would mean that service members are completely barred from voicing their honest opinions on political subjects of significant public concern. Silencing speech like Lieutenant Watada's violates the Constitution while it also harms the military and the public at large." Ruling on U.S. Constitution: DENIED.

During the pre-trial hearing, Judge Head even had to ask the lead prosecutor Cpt. Kuecker, "Hasn't the prosecution made these questions [of war legality] relevant by the

way you have charged this case? Aren't you trying to block these issues for coming in the front door, but opening up the back door?" asked Judge Head. "You have charged motive as an offense."

Kuecker feebly replied that there are two separate prosecutions going on. The first is for Lt. Watada missing movement to Iraq—a prosecution where his MOTIVE is so irrelevant that it needs to be barred from the military jury. The second prosecution will be for Lt. Watada publicly explaining his MOTIVE! Apparently this Orwellian formulation passes for military justice. Subpoena of journalists threatens First Amendment rights

In a move which threatens the First Amendment rights of journalists, the U.S. Army has subpoenaed journalist Sarah Olson to testify at the February 5 court-martial. The Army placed another journalist, Dahr Jamail, on the prosecution witness list.

With the ruling that all charges against Lt. Watada will go to trial, a showdown between these reporters and the military draws nearer.

Both journalists are fighting back, saying the Army's attempt to compel their participation in the court-martial threatens press freedom and chills free speech.

"Do I want to be sent to prison by the U.S. Army for not cooperating with their prosecution of Lieutenant Watada? My answer: Absolutely not. You may also ask: Would I rather contribute to the prosecution of a news source for sharing newsworthy perspectives on an affair of national concern? That is the question I wholly object to having before me in the first place," described Olson in an Editor & Publisher Op-Ed entitled "[Why I object to testifying against Lt. Watada.](#)"

The Society of Professional Journalists, the PEN American Center, Military Reporters and Editors, Media Alliance, the Los Angeles Times, and many others have published statements in support of Olson.

Colleagues and supporters of Sarah Olson and Dahr Jamail have formed the [Free Press Working Group](#) to assist in their defense. As independent journalists, they do not have access to corporate legal teams, so a fund has been established to cover travel, legal, and communications expenses.

Anti-war activists also drafted by Army prosecution

During the proceedings, Cpt. Kuecker repeatedly defended his subpoenas of civilian reporters Sarah Olson and Gregg Kakesako, and Seattle-area anti-war activists Phan Nguyen and Gerri Haynes, as "relevant" and "admissible" for the prosecution.



Journalist Sarah Olson, on assignment for the Canadian Broadcasting Corp., interviews war resister Pablo Paredes in Los Angeles, March 2006. Photo by Yasemin Kasim.

When contacted directly by Army prosecutors earlier in the month, Olympia, Washington-based anti-war activist Phan Nguyen refused to answer any questions without first speaking with a lawyer. However, Phan described Cpt. Kuecker's line of questions as focusing on the behind the scenes workings of the anti-war movement in the Pacific Northwest. "Kuecker basically demanded that I name the names of any key organizers that had anything to do with the public support campaign created to support Lt. Watada," explained Nguyen. "They are clearly on a political fishing expedition. Unless we fight back, this could have a chilling effect on anti-war organizing at a time when we have to step up to end the war."

Citizens' hearing reviews all evidence

Having anticipated the possibility of justice being denied in Lt. Watada's upcoming court martial, a [Citizens' Hearing was convened last weekend at Evergreen State College, Tacoma campus](#). 400 people packed the auditorium for two full days of testimony to fully evaluate Lt. Watada's claims regarding the legality and morality of the Iraq War. Rules of this hearing have yet to be released. Witnesses include: Daniel Ellsberg, military analyst who released the Pentagon Papers in the Vietnam War; Denis Halliday, former UN Assistant Secretary General; Richard Falk, Professor Emeritus of International Law at Princeton University.

###

New trial for Lt. Watada Oct. 9, 2007!

This is a call for help!

Dear folks,

The Army is threatening to go ahead with a new court of martial of 1st Lt. Ehren Watada on Oct. 9th. This is in gross violation of law and the Constitution, because his lawyers have appealed against a second trial on the basis of double jeopardy. For quite some time, Ehren's lawyers were proceeding on the assumption that since the appeal is in progress in the court system, the Army would cancel or postpone the Oct. 9th court martial. But now it is only a week and a couple of days away, and nothing has been cancelled or postponed. The trial is looking very much like it is on, yet nothing has been confirmed one way or the other.

If the court martial is indeed going to happen, we need all the help we can get! We need all our friends and allies around the country to hold teach-ins, demonstrations, press conferences (if you have lawyers who can address the double jeopardy issue, please have them speak), write letters to the editors, anything you can do, on the weekend prior to Oct. 9 and/or on the day of. Anyone who can to come to Ft. Lewis and support Ehren in this critical moment, please come.

The catch here is that the Army has us set up: If we mobilize in a big way and they postpone the trial, we may look foolish if we don't frame it right. On the other hand, if we don't mobilize and the court martial occurs, Ehren can be railroaded while his supporters are caught sleeping. Either way, this looks like a perfect ambush by the Army.

However, the primary legal point here is the fact that an appeal on the basis of double jeopardy, guaranteed in the Constitution, is under attack. If we mobilize around this basic point, then we are proved right no matter what happens. Even if they postpone the court martial at the last minute, the question would remain: Why did they wait so long? By not canceling the court martial immediately when the appeal on double jeopardy was filed, they were attempting to erode the core Constitutional principle of double jeopardy. In that case, if they postpone or cancel the court martial at the last minute, we can rightfully claim a victory. If they proceed with the court martial, we rightfully voice our outrage. By simply speaking the truth to their power, we turn their ambush on it's head.

Let me provide some background here. In pre-trial motions, the Army judge, Lt. Col. Head (the same judge who lied and forced a mistrial when things didn't go the Army's way in the first trial), said that double jeopardy didn't apply because they have "different rules" in the Army. When Ehren's lawyers cited specific Army regulations and case law that proved double jeopardy does apply in the Army, the judge simply rejected the facts out of hand. The entire pre-trial motions were very scripted and controlled by the judge, who told the prosecution what to say and limited what the defense lawyers were allowed to say. The appeal is still in process and there are several layers of appeal yet to be exhausted before the appeal has run it's course. It is clearly illegal and unconstitutional to hold a trial until the question of double jeopardy is finally resolved - but the Army is doing it. It appears that Ehren is about to be railroaded by a kangaroo court in which the whole proceeding will be very controlled and scripted and the outcome pre-determined. After they "convict" Ehren and put him in prison, perhaps the Army will then say that since he's been convicted and imprisoned, the appeal is irrelevant and invalid. This is what is going down.

Ehren's parents, Bob Watada and Rosa Sakanishi, and Carolyn Ho will be going up to Ft. Lewis for the court martial. So will folks from the San Francisco Bay Area including myself. Anyone who can, please join us! For those who can't, please organize some event in your local area to publicize this issue. Thanks very, very much.

I apologize for this extremely late notice. Ehren has been prevented from communicating anything of substance to any organizers because of heavy military surveillance, and this came to our attention only now. As you can imagine, there have been frantic discussions since then. Plans are being

thrown together at the last minute, and as of now I can't tell you exactly what will happen or what plans different peace groups might develop. Basically we are all flying by the seat of our pants and I would say to everyone everywhere, just do whatever the hell you can do with whomever is willing to do it with you. Please circulate this email widely among peace activists, thanks.

Michael Wong
Veterans for Peace chapter 69
Watada Support Committee
San Francisco
mlwong@jps.net

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Another odyssey begun at the VFP convention in Seattle:

The Birth of an Activist

Sarah Rich

As Suzanne and I attended the rally for Lt. Ehren Watada on the first day of his court martial, she turned to me and said, " Mom, where are the kids my age? Where is my generation?" I replied that if it had not been for what she had been through she would not be there protesting with me. She would be home sleeping or actively involved in the self-centered life of a normal twenty two year old.



Has Suzanne learned a lesson from this terrible experience? Oh yes, she has. The Army has taken a semi apathetic self centered teenager and turned her into a fierce warrior for peace and justice. As we keep saying or I should say, chanting, everything happens for a reason. I said this the entire time Suzanne was in Iraq. I knew she was there for a higher purpose; she was walking through the fire to come out the other side truly changed.

Suzanne was not against the war in Iraq when she went there. She completed her training with just the right amount of brain washing to tell me what an awful person she thought Jane Fonda was for not supporting the troops in Vietnam and how she really liked being a soldier. Hooha! She was proud to be doing the work of a Military Police officer and proud of her nation. I tried to bring her back to reality, but to no avail.

She suffered in Iraq, but could not talk about the depths of her trauma because good soldiers suck it up. She built a wall around her emotions the best she could, but still there were things that happened to her that she could not keep from me. I kept careful notes

and saved her e-mails and chats. She knew I was doing this and felt better that if something happened to her I would know the real story of the men who were in charge of her in Iraq.

I sent her a copy of Fahrenheit 911 by Michael Moore for her to watch. She showed it to some of her fellow soldiers in Iraq. They were disgusted. This was around the time of the elections and morale was low in Camp Lima. I saw a slight glimmer of hope that Suzanne was making baby steps to think for herself again.

That changed the longer she stayed in Iraq, she became more depressed and there was nothing I could do to encourage her or lift her spirits. At this time she was talking about killing herself.

When Suzanne returned from Iraq, I asked her if we could take action against the MLeister now? She replied with a flat voice that she cannot take action against him. She was unwilling to dredge up those horrific memories. In addition she had to redeploy to Iraq within the next 18 months and it would not be safe to be a whistle blower against someone who had power to make her life a living hell.

I urged her to get help for post traumatic stress disorder, she refused my help and says she is fine and there is no way she can deal with that "stuff" until she is out of the Army. I stopped asking and just did what I could to support her.

About a month after she returns from Iraq, she called me in hysterics. I asked her to slow down and tell me what was going on. She told me through her tears that she was sick of being treated like a whore by the Army and was going to officially report it this time. "Tell me what happened," I asked. She told me about her Sgt. telling her to report to his bed, naked. She said she was going to make a formal complaint and break her chain of command. She sounded scared to death, but I quietly told her it is the right thing to do and that these guys need to be stopped. She courageously told on her squad leader. I was so proud of her for finally standing up for herself.

The US Army interrogated her and treated her as if she were the criminal. They told her to look up the word honesty in the dictionary and implied she must be seeking revenge against the Sgt. The worst part of it was that the rest of the unit shunned her for some time because in their eyes she had let her unit down, and been disloyal to her unit. What she did was a abomination in their eyes, making her not only a whore but a bitch.

Suzanne put her head down and continued her work. When she was told she was going back to Iraq 11 months after her first deployment ended, she questioned the order because she was supposed to have 18 months of stabilization time. The military representation told her that she must sign a document waiving her rights to her stabilization time. I was furious and called my representative and my senators. They all gave me the same answer, they needed a privacy act waiver signed by Suzanne. When I asked Suzanne, she told me she was ok and was just going to go to Iraq. She said it wasn't so bad and she could handle it. I sat on my hands and did nothing but emotionally prepared for her to return to war.

At that point, Suzanne was not thinking about opposition to the war; she was fully focused on survival, and getting through this deployment safely.

Confronting imminent redeployment she went AWOL. Later the Army would contend that she went AWOL because of her mother's political beliefs. I only wished it was that. If it was because of my political beliefs she never would have gone to Iraq the first place. Then they tried to say it was because of her own anti war beliefs. That would have been a dream come true. But the truth was that my daughter went AWOL out of pure fear; fear of what her command had done to her in the first deployment and rejection of being treated like a "deployment whore" again. This was not a decision it was a reaction.

All through Suzanne's time being AWOL , she was not active against the war. She listened to me as I became more and more outraged at what our administration was doing: abusing our military and committing genocide on the Iraqi people, but she was not involved. When I asked her to speak at a Eugene rally last March , she said she could not speak about the war and her experience. The idea overwhelmed her. So, we wrote a piece together in which she said that maybe the United States needed someone to come liberate us! That gave me a glimmer of hope that she was waking up from this brainwashing and might become politically active.

Two days before her arrest, Suzanne and I watched a video by a young U.S. Army Lieutenant named Ehren Watada. He was going to refuse to deploy to Iraq and we were both very impressed and talked about his courage.

Without warning it happened. Suzanne was traumatically arrested in our home and taken to jail in handcuffs. The Eugene police officers had no warrant just an e-mail on the police car computer screen saying, "hey buddy will you pick this one up for us?" She was strip searched and denied urgent medical care for an abscessed tooth for 12 hours. She says she wept harder than ever in the cell by herself that night.

They took her to Ft. Lewis a few days later and put her under the supervision of the original harassing Sgt. from Iraq. She called me in tears again. I made some phone calls and she was moved to a new unit and a no contact order was issued for this Sgt. Eventually she was allowed to come home a month later for a visit.

The Oregon Country Fair where I tried to introduce her to Amy Goodman, but she refused to engage and merely walked away. I made my apologies to Amy about her abruptness.

Despite her apparent lack of interest, we had a rally for Suzanne on her 22nd birthday at Ft. Lewis. Ehren Watada was at the rally along with his mother, Carolyn. Suzanne had an instant connection with Ehren and continues to see him as one of her personal heroes. Suzanne was shocked and embarrassed but grateful by how many people were there to support her.

There was no overt change in her attitude until one day Suzanne watched the movie "Sir No Sir" and suddenly put it all together. She called me in a frantic state of " MOM!! I watched the movie! We have to DO something to get the truth to the troops so they will stop fighting" My heart soared and I started to give her books and other literature about what the administration was doing to our country. She literally devoured the information.

I was invited to attend the national conference for Vets for Peace and we asked Suzanne's attorney if she could go. He replied that she was forbidden to attend. So, we snuck her in anyway. Then some real magic began. We snuck her in and she got to meet with a group of powerful veterans, Iraq Veterans Against the War. (IVAW) and Colonel Ann Wright. This was a HUGE turning point for Suzanne. She spent many hours with other Iraq women vets and Suzanne's eyes began to sparkle for the first time in forever. She told me, "Mom, these women really understand me. They know what I have been through." It was so good to have these connections for her to build her strength and energy to start speaking out.

We had a press conference that weekend at the VFP conference about Suzanne's case and sexual assault in the military. Many powerful women vets talked about what their experience had been and their support for Suzanne. What they did not know was that Suzanne was on the second floor looking down on us. She watched the entire press conference with unblinking eyes and I think this was a time when she saw just how impactful her speaking out has been on the women of this nation.

I finally, as a mother and an activist had hope for my daughter's emotional and mental well being.

As time passed, the military officials at Ft. Lewis played their hideous hurry up and wait games with Suzanne's life. Suzanne made some very good friends among the people that started Camp Suzanne who were caring and supportive. Suzanne found herself leaving the barracks in the evening to go and spend time with them. She also would sneak off base to attend Ehren Watada rallies and wear her Ehren Watada t-shirt. I warned her that it could be used against her and she wore it anyway. I was bursting with pride.

One night at home, Suzanne was getting ready to head back to Ft. Lewis. (She was being allowed to come home to Eugene every other week to see her civilian psychologist) She asked, "What was that ladies name who has the radio show and was at the fair?" "Amy Goodman," I replied, my curiosity peaked. She asked "What is the name of her show?" I replied, "Democracy Now" She asked if I thought she could download it onto her pod casts. My heart jumped for joy. I was so excited at the thought of my daughter listening to Democracy Now. When Amy called a few weeks later, I handed the phone to Suzanne telling her Amy Goodman was on the phone and wanted to talk to her. Suzanne's jaw dropped she was so in awe of Amy and her work. The next day Suzanne did her first radio interview on Democracy Now.

When Suzanne was asked by the Army to sign a statement including a part that says she was not sexually abused, she called me once again. " Mom, do you know what they want me to sign?" she explained it to me and I asked her what she wanted to do about it. She

spoke strongly, " I am not going to sign it, it's not true." This was another turning point where Suzanne could have just signed the paper, not told me what it said in its entirety, and avoided being stripped of her rank and sent to prison. She refused the deal and would not sign. Her attorneys were furious at her for refusing to sign, but she held her ground. The attorneys went back to the drawing board and came up with a new "deal". With this deal she signed a statement and she experiences a summary court martial with an uncertain outcome. She would probably go to prison, but it would not be for a year, more likely a month.

She faced her court martial with dignity and courage. It had to be one of the hardest days of her life. She was stripped of all rank and sent to prison for 30 days. I could only imagine the inner strength it took her to stand up for herself and do what was right. The only time she cried during the court martial was when she explained what the molester did to her in Iraq and how humiliated she felt.

Suzanne went to prison, but she remained strong and resolved. She did what she had to do to stay true to herself and not let the Army break her down.

When Suzanne was released from prison, she was much quieter and determined. She came home to Eugene for the weekend and for the first time wore her Iraq Veterans Against the War T-Shirt. She looked at me with a wide smile, and told me she never wants to take this shirt off. It was good to have her at a rally and holding her signs for peace.

During the time of Ehren Watada's court martial she attended the rally with me on the first day. She wore her Watada shirt and got on stage with other IVAW members to support Carlos Arredondo when he spoke about the death of his son who was a Marine in Iraq.

The next day she dressed in her civilian clothes, brazenly went to the visitor center and registered for a pass to attend a day of Ehren's court martial where she sat next to Colonel Ann Wright. When she told me she was going to do this I warned her to use caution. She replied, " Mom, what will they do to me? Send me back to Iraq to be raped and /or killed? Send me to prison? They can't reduce my rank anymore. Ehren is taking a stand for all of us and I want to be there to support him and let him know he is not alone."

She went to the trial and was punished later by having all of her civilian clothes taken away and having a guard on her at all times. We laughed at this and took it all in stride.

A few days later a photographer from the New York Times Magazine was coming to Ft. Lewis to take pictures for a piece coming out about women in the military. When the command at Ft. Lewis heard this they told Suzanne that if she participated in this interview she would be face administrative action again A.K.A. another court martial. Once again Suzanne stood up to command and refused to take no for an answer and called her JAG attorney and he worked it out so she could do the photo shoot.

Now, Suzanne is in Ft. Lee Virginia doing her Advanced Infantry Training to be a shipping and receiving clerk. She goes to class every day wearing a uniform with a combat patch, a blank spot where her rank used to be and the name SWIFT for everyone to see. Many people have put this together and know who she is and tell her she did the right thing. She will be sent to Ft. Irwin, California in April to await further orders.

It is amazing to me how much we have to be thankful to the Army for. They tried to break my daughter down and shut her up, and in the process created a strong advocate for women around the world. Imagine if they had done the right thing and protected her from MLeister in the first place or given her an immediate medical discharge when our attorney contacted Ft. Lewis right after she went AWOL and was diagnosed with PTSD. How simple and right it could have been. But the US military did not understand what they were doing or Suzanne's fortitude.

So, when Suzanne asks where her generation is in the peace movement, I tell her to look in the mirror and all around her. All of the other soldiers she knows are just activists waiting to be born and she could be just the one to help them wake up. She has the story, the energy and the intelligence to be a powerful activists. She just needs to be visible and speak out!

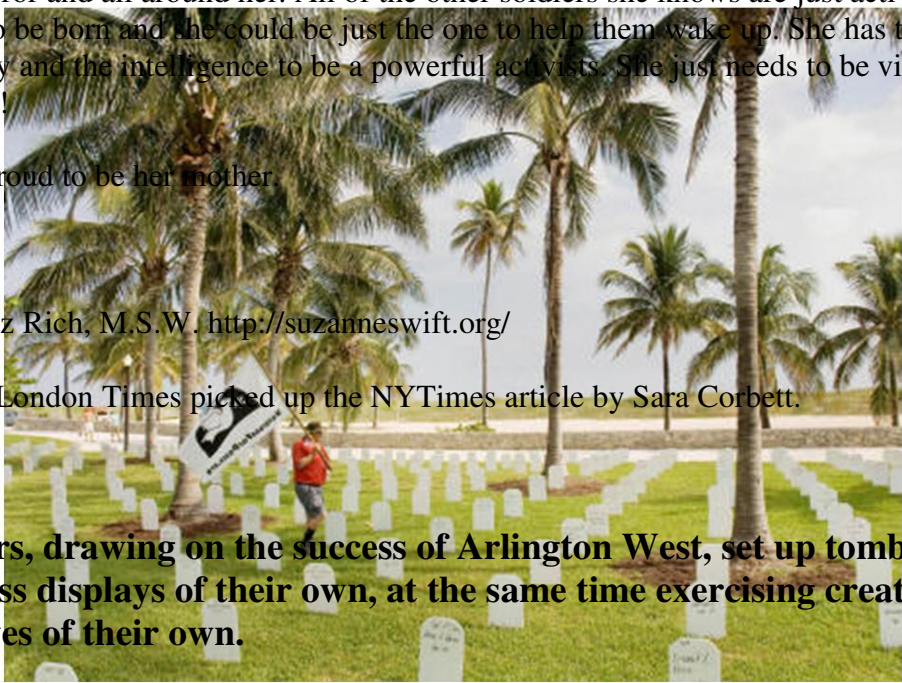
I am so proud to be her mother

Peace~

Sara Lantz Rich, M.S.W. <http://suzanneswift.org/>

P.S. The London Times picked up the NYTimes article by Sara Corbett.

ARLINGTON SOUTH BEACH



Chapters, drawing on the success of Arlington West, set up tombstone and cross displays of their own, at the same time exercising creative initiatives of their own.

Miami Chapter Brief for War Reminders to the Soldiers

February 2, 2007 Instead of traveling to Washington DC for the big march and rally, Miami VFP, Chapter 32, chose to work within their own community of Miami, Florida and bring war reminders to the hundreds of the 70,000 Super Bowl fans of the Super Bowl, Ocean Drive is closed for 4 days and Arlington South Beach is being set up right smack in the middle of all the party events. Hundreds of thousands of people passing by will be reminded of a war that has cost 3,000 lives, 60,000 soldiers, sons and daughters in a needless occupation. Even more exciting than that, however, is that a small group of members of VFP and [DFAM](http://DFAM.com) took up a collection for two days raised over a thousand dollars to hire a company to fly a plane with a banner saying "Bring the troops home now" for two hours right before the Super Bowl. We are hitting them on the ground and we are hitting them from the air.

Memorial for the American Soldiers lost in Iraq since 2003

Jan Friday Feb 2 to 7pm Sunday Feb 4

Ocean Drive between 8th & 10th Streets

Memorial Service 5pm Sunday Feb 4 2007

DFAM



DFAMiami.com VeteransForPeace.org

Just Another Day at the Beach

Written by:
Robert Norton

Two large American flags flanking an antique 48 star Stars & Stripes covered coffin. Row after row of white crosses joined by sporadic bouquets of silk flowers and smaller American flags all planted neatly in the sand. What was this mock cemetery doing here on Miami Beach, in the midst of sunbathers, swimmers, and joggers? Arlington South was a single day memorial to remind those seeking sun, sand, and surf that America is still at war in Iraq, and that a day at the beach has a cost.



Getting people thinking about the costs of war is the mission of John Riccio, a Vietnam era veteran who served as a paratrooper with the 101st Airborne, and who now puts his energies into the volunteer organization Veterans for Peace (www.veteransforpeace.org). It was through the web-site of a Californian chapter of this group that John got the concept for Arlington South.

Transforming an idea into a living exhibit took serious commitment and effort. John began by canvassing local construction sites asking for donations of scrap wood that he & several volunteers then cut to size, assembled, and hand painted. Although John would like to have an individual cross to represent each soldier who has perished in Iraq, storage and transportation challenges have caused him to limit the memorial to 711 white crosses and 21 red crosses. Each Arlington South red cross represents 100 soldiers killed in the line of duty. John sets up the exhibit three times per year on Veterans Day, Memorial Day, and March 19th to mark Iraq's initial invasion.

The juxtaposition of a memorial to lives lost at war exhibited in the shadow of million dollar oceanfront condominiums has a sobering effect; some will die so that others may live well... very, very well. The emotional impact of Arlington South is most strongly felt at the sight of the name & age of individual soldiers displayed on each of the white crosses. John explained that the names & ages serve to humanize the exhibit. "I feel it allows a person to connect in a deeper way to the tragedy & loss this conflict in Iraq has produced, and that can get them thinking & hopefully lead them to action" says John. All this human potential, so untapped at only 19, 21, 24 years old, so much potential that is now lost forever. This is the true cost of war. The immediate cost of lives prematurely ended & the resulting impact on families & loved ones, as well as the long-term cost of society's being denied those young men & women's future creativity & contributions.

How does a former soldier become a peace activist? Ironically it was not his own military experience that changed his perceptions about war. For John the change came about during the first Gulf war when he began to notice inconsistencies between the US Government's words and its actions. Now, as the current conflict drags on it's deja vu all over again and John feels, as do many Americans, that the Government has, and continues to manipulate intelligence and withhold facts with respect to the war in Iraq. John's moral & ethical qualms were exacerbated by the deployment of both of his sons to Iraq during both the 1st and 2nd Gulf wars. Fortunately for John & his family, both his sons have made it through tours of duty in Operation Desert Storm and Operation Iraqi Freedom unscathed.

As the war in Iraq drags on, what the future holds remains to be seen. With respect to America's continued military participation in this conflict John sums up the feelings of many with the simple question: "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" Getting more people thinking about the answer to that question is the point of Arlington South, and John Riccio vows to keep setting up his exhibit as his contribution towards the goal of Peace.

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Published on Friday, March 16, 2007 by TomPaine.com

Sitting in to Stop the War

by Michael T. McPhearson

My first open act of civil disobedience took place February 27 at the office of Rep. Russ Carnahan, D-Mo. I had gone with three veterans and other activists as part of the Occupation Project, to persuade Carnahan to vote against any bills that continue to provide funding for the war in Iraq. Jim Allen, a member of our entourage, and I, decided to sit in to protest Carnahan's refusal to pledge not to continue funding for the war. As a result, Jim and I were arrested.

Carnahan's basic rap is that he is against the escalation and believes the war must come to an end. He cannot promise to vote against a bill he has not seen. He thinks that Rep. John Murtha's, D-Penn., plan is promising: to restrict, through oversight, the ability of the president to continue the war and placing high standards on troop readiness before deployment. But, he said, he does not want to de-fund the troops. We explained that de-funding the war is not de-funding the troops; legislative restrictions on the executive branch will not end the war. Giving money to the president for the war will only prolong the war.

We also told him that Democrats should put the president on the defensive and make him explain why he continues to wage war when Congress has demanded a change of course based on the mandate from the American people. We emphasized that every day Congress spends looking for less direct ways to end the war, on average three U.S. service members die, as do many Iraqi children, women and men.

Unfortunately, we reached little agreement beyond the obvious—the war must end. It appears that most Democrats and Veterans For Peace are on a different timetable.

Our sit-in at Rep. Carnahan's office was part of weeks of outreach and meetings to change his mind. I decided that I was not leaving until I received a satisfactory answer. Thus I was willing to risk arrest.

There are many who ask, "Do you really think being arrested will make a difference?" No, I do not know if my refusal to leave and subsequent arrest will make a difference. However, I do know that inaction will change nothing.

My journey to civil disobedience has been one of reflection and hesitation. I did not come to this decision easily. As a black male in America who has been trained to be wary of the police, it has not been easy to decide to willingly put myself into their hands. I have spent most of my 42 years trying not to be arrested. I have plenty of examples of police misconduct against Black men. In the late 1990s the sodomizing of Abner Louima and the shooting death of Amadou Diallo by police officers in New York City heightened my fear of being pursued and in the custody of police. In November 2006, Sean Bell, a young and unarmed man leaving his bachelor party at a nightclub in Jamaica, Queens, died in a storm of 50 shots fired by five undercover police. The names of these three victims stay with me, and remind me of dangers I face.

So what motivates me? Why have I decided to move forward with this tactic? I am motivated by the death of tens of thousands—perhaps hundreds of thousands—of people in this war. I am most motivated by the life of my only son, who is a soldier in the 101st Airborne who has already participated in one tour in Iraq.

I am also motivated by the January 3 death of Jeremiah, my 7-month-old grandson, of a genetic disease. I am motivated by the fact that when I peer through the pain of his death in search of reasons and people to blame, I can only find the reality and cycle of life. It is natural for people to die from disease, and for the most part, not any one person is to blame. But where I must accept the reality of life, Gold Star parents must face the reality of war, a human activity caused by human actions. Where I can find no one to hold responsible for my anger and pain, an Iraqi can hold my nation, my son and me responsible for their pain. This is the sense of urgency I hope my small act of civil disobedience will help convey.

Lastly I ask myself, if not now when? After nearly four years of protest, over 3,100 dead U.S. service members, tens to hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqis who are guilty of nothing but living in Iraq, obvious lies by our leaders that took us to war, a possible war with Iran, an election for a change in direction, no change of direction by our President and an indecisive Congress who needs to be pushed in the right direction—when would be a better time to give civil disobedience a try?

We are at a critical moment. Congress will soon vote for a \$90 billion appropriation that could fund the war until the end of President Bush's term. After this vote, Congress will have little power to end the war. We need to flood Congress with letters, phone calls, emails and faxes demanding they end funding. We must show up at their door in force. If enough of us sit in, they will end the war. If we don't, they won't. Maintaining a majority and a gaining the presidency is the priority of the Democrats. Ours is ending the war.

Michael T. McPhearson is the executive director of [Veterans For Peace](#), which is supporting nonviolent civil disobedience in local cities across the United States March 16-19, 2007

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VFP leadership leads the way in D.C.

Stop the Madness of George Bush,' Say Anti-War Veterans

By Payton Hoegh
CNSNews.com Correspondent
January 26, 2007

(CNSNews.com) - Veterans opposed to the war in Iraq gathered near the Capitol Thursday protesting the administration's policies and calling for the president to be impeached, but a group that supports U.S. troops and their mission in Iraq slammed anti-war protestors for "undermin[ing] the war effort."

A small group of Veterans for Peace (VFP) activists urged Congress to begin impeachment investigations on the grounds of violations of the Constitution and the rights of Americans.

Protestor Mike Marceau, a Vietnam veteran, told **Cybercast News Service** that he intended to keep the oaths he took when he enlisted to protect the country from its enemies, adding: "Not all enemies are outside the boundaries of this country."

"We need to get our troops out no matter what happens [because] this war was based on lies and misrepresentation of intelligence," he said.

"The people on November 7 voted for change, and we're here to make sure that the new senators and representatives keep their promise."

"Stop the madness of George Bush" was the theme of the demonstration. Protestors' placards bore slogans including "Bush Lied about Everything" and "Real patriots defend the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic."

In an earlier statement announcing the event, VFP President David Cline accused President Bush of seeing the constitution as "no more than a piece of paper."

"It is obvious the Bush administration has no intention of following the will of the people. He has told us, over and over again, he will not stop the war."

Cline has been calling for the impeachment of President Bush since 2005, when he sent a

letter to Congress pressing for action.

"We have to curtail the power of the executive so that whoever is in office next knows that there are limitations to that power," VFP Executive Director Michael McPhearson told **Cybercast News Service** .

"We need to impeach this president so we can get back on track and grow this country the way it should be," McPhearson, who has served in Iraq and whose son is currently serving there, said in remarks at the event

Jeff Millard, also a veteran of the Iraq war, challenged Congress to take away funding for the war, impeach the president and put in place a comprehensive bill to support the troops when they return.

During the rally, protestors read sections of the Constitution which they claim are being ignored. They also accused Bush of ignoring the Nuremberg Tribunal Charter and the Geneva Convention.

Melanie Morgan, chairman of the conservative pro-troop organization Move America Forward, was critical of the protestors.

"The Islamic terrorist groups who have attacked America over and over again have made it clear that they view Iraq as the front lines in their war against the West, and they have pledged to defeat us there," she told **Cybercast News Service**.

"There is no alternative for us but to win the war against Islamic terrorists. When groups like Veterans for Peace and Code Pink undermine the war effort, then they are basically doing the work for the terrorists here in this country."

Morgan was also critical of press reporting that focuses on bad news in Iraq.

"When I speak to our troops, they tell me how annoyed they are at the negative media coverage that emphasizes the bad news but ignores the overwhelming good news of success that is occurring in Iraq," she said. "This constant drumbeat of distorted news has caused too many Americans to believe our efforts are futile."

"Our troops want and deserve the support of the American people. Organizing rallies where the important missions our troops are serving on are demeaned and denounced is not helpful," Morgan said.

Thursday's event was a precursor to a larger anti-war march planned for Saturday.

Lawmakers in both chambers are currently considering two bills that call for a cut in funding for the war and advise against the president's proposed troop "surge."

###

APPEAL FOR REDRESS

Soldiers bring petition campaign against war in Iraq to Capitol Hill

By Noam N. Levey, Los Angeles Times

WASHINGTON - President Bush's plan to send additional troops to Iraq faces public opposition from a slice of the American population that rarely speaks out: the military rank and file.



A group of service members came to Capitol Hill on Tuesday armed with signatures from more than 1,000 military personnel who oppose the war.

"We will not be silent while thousands die," said Sgt. Liam Madden, a 22-year-old active-duty Marine and Iraq war veteran who is helping lead the effort to organize resistance to the war from inside the military.

Madden and other service members leading the campaign, which they are calling Appeal for Redress, urged Congress to stop the troop escalation and find a way to begin bringing forces home from Iraq.

When the campaign began three months ago, White House spokesman Tony Snow dismissed the first signatories as "65 people who are going to be able to get more press than the hundreds of thousands who have come back and said they're proud of their service."

The 1,000 signatories still represent a tiny fraction of the military personnel who have served in and around Iraq since the 2003 invasion.

According to the group, those who have signed the appeal include about 100 officers. Approximately 70 percent of the signatories are on active duty, while the rest are Reservists or members of the National Guard, said Madden, who added that the group will not reveal the names of the signatories to protect them.

The Appeal for Redress reads simply: "As a patriotic American proud to serve the nation in uniform, I respectfully urge my political leaders in Congress to support the prompt withdrawal of all American military forces and bases from Iraq. Staying in Iraq will not work and is not worth the price. It is time for U.S. troops to come home."

Madden and other leaders of the campaign arrived on Capitol Hill as members of Congress moved closer to challenging Bush's plan to send 21,500 more troops to Baghdad and Anbar Province.

A spokesman for Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said senators plan to introduce a resolution opposing the plan today or Thursday, with a vote planned after the president's State of the Union address next Tuesday.

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., said a House vote on a resolution would follow soon afterward.

Democrats also announced Tuesday that newly elected Virginia Sen. Jim Webb, a pugnacious war critic whose son has served in Iraq, will deliver the party's response to the State of the Union.

Democrats' withdrawal plan

Today, a group of anti-war members of the House, led by Democratic California Reps. Lynn Woolsey, Maxine Waters and Barbara Lee, plans to introduce legislation outlining a detailed plan to withdraw U.S. forces from Iraq over the next six months.

The military servicemen who came to Capitol Hill were greeted Tuesday by other newly energized anti-war lawmakers, including Reps. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, and Jim McGovern, D-Mass.

They also were joined by an organization of anti-war families of military service members, Military Families Speak Out, which claims more than 3,200 members.

Drawing a deliberate link to another controversial war, a group of Vietnam veterans, several in jungle camouflage jackets, also stood up with the current soldiers outside the Cannon House Office Building across the street from the Capitol.

"The movement in the military is growing just as the movement grew in the military 30 years ago," said David Cline, president of Veterans for Peace, a St. Louis-based group founded more than 20 years ago.

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VFP CONVENTION - 2007, St. Louis, MO.

Held in St. Louis during some of the hottest days of summer, the 2007 VFP convention was conceded by all to be very successful in terms of speaker quality, workshop quality, a compact venue encouraging fellowship and dialogue, and for galvanizing new and renewed actions. What follows is a poem read by Woody Powell at the Saturday night banquet and a collection of impressions from some of the attendees:

OASIS

From a distance,
on the deep worn trail,
sun-baked and
thick-tongued with thirst,
I saw you by the waters cool,
in deep, protective shade.

Some of you were drinking,
soaking tired bones,
restoring energy.

Others, bellies full,
sat as if reflecting deeply,
on the journey behind
and the journey ahead.

Then I heard your voices,
eager in fellowship
rising, falling,
in cadenced, civil tones,
easy on ears still ringing
with the stridency of war.

I wanted to be with you.

So I came closer
and you saw me, drew me in,
embraced me with your talk
that sounded so much like
the thoughts locked in my head.

As I drank the cool waters
I heard stories;
how the soft bodies of our youth
were battered on the anvils of war
into mindless engines of survival;
how hardness became refuge
from guilt,
how despair fed rage,

how rage fed depression
how I came to be so alone
in the midst of so many
when I came home
and they made me a hero.

But then I saw you smiling,
and aloud I wondered why;

“First,” you said, “There are no heroes
here.”
-- and I felt the first knot go.

Then you told me,
“Don’t bother going home.
It isn’t there any more.”

I cried for that,
but you were right
and you helped me build
a new home,
from the supple strength
of a new understanding
of all I had feared and hated.

Finally,
you handed me a kit of tools;
knowledge, insight, hope,
patient persistence - and
faith in the goodness remaining
at the core of our lives.

With these, you said
I could re-build a neighborhood,
if I wanted,
perhaps renew a world,

-- now that I am not alone.

Woody Powell
Veterans For Peace Convention 2007

Former enemies find new way forward

By Mike Ferner

Online Journal Contributing Writer (-- and VFP Director)



Aug 23, 2007, 01:05

ST. LOUIS -- A young man from Palestine and another from Israel riveted 400 U.S. military veterans to their seats last week in this city on the Mississippi River. What captivated the audience was their recent decision to put down the guns they'd pointed at each other for years.

The two members of Combatants For Peace addressed the mid-August national convention of Veterans For Peace, a 7,000-member organization dedicated to abolishing war.

Yonatan Gur, a 28 year-old Israeli journalist and Tel Aviv University student spoke first.

“My grandfather commanded the Israeli Navy during the 1967 war, my father was an officer in Israeli Army Intelligence, and I grew up on a kibbutz.” But, he explained, “I also grew up in the '90s, with a more peaceful perspective following the [1993] Oslo Accords.”

Gur served as a lieutenant in the Israeli Army’s armored corps and as a reservist in the occupied territories. “Many small stories make up the everyday life of an occupation,” he said, and something as mundane as a shirt pocket first caught his attention. “I never realized how important shirt pockets were, but when you’re an Arab in the occupied territories you have to reach into that pocket many times a day, at any moment, to produce your ID for Israeli authorities at checkpoints.”

His duty in the occupied territories eventually convinced the former reservist that the occupation was wrong. “We would be on patrol and stop simple farmers, making them wait a half hour or more while we called back to the base to check on



Yonatan Gur, Camilo Mejia, Ra'ed Haddqd

them. I tried to be as human as possible, with my best attitude. That felt good at first but the fact that I was doing it at all was the main issue. It didn't matter if I was being nice about it."

The moral dilemma he found himself in eventually forced him to quit the reserves. "You can't on the one hand be against the occupation and yet still be part of the military." Gur's decision placed him "against most of my people and my family tradition. But once I resigned, I knew I had to do more, so I joined [Combatants for Peace](#)."

That group was formed in early 2005 by Palestinian and Israeli fighters tired of violence, who decided to try a different way. Their web site succinctly states this revolutionary idea: "After brandishing weapons for so many years, and having seen one another only through weapon sights, we have decided to put down our guns, and to fight for peace."

Raed Al-Haddar, who holds a Bachelor's in Sociology from Bir Zeit University in Ramallah, is Gur's Palestinian partner in CFP. Today he shares a stage instead of the killing grounds with his former enemy. Married, with two daughters, the 28 year-old calls his own story "part of the whole Palestinian story."

Not even 10 years old at the start of the first intifada in 1987, he "faced the occupier on the way to school every day" and saw people gunned down by Israeli forces. It became the norm for boys to try and provoke an incident with troops "sometimes to prove our manhood, and sometimes just for shits and giggles," Al-Haddar said through a bemused interpreter.

On one occasion he and a young friend were throwing rocks at an Israeli Army jeep. "The soldiers fired at us and my friend was killed on the spot. I couldn't believe it. I was in shock. It made me angry so that only black revenge stayed in my mind. I revolted any way I could. I even joined the radical group, Fatah. I used guns and threw Molotov cocktails. I was arrested before finishing high school."

Israeli security forces put Al-Haddar in a small, dark cell under solitary confinement for 45 days of interrogation. "I was petrified of death. During that time I learned about other revolutions, like the ones in Algeria, Cuba and Vietnam. That knowledge gave me the push to continue."

Released at the age of 17, he "kept the same attitude -- to fight and use violence." When the second intifada began in 2000, Israelis placed a curfew on his village as the killings and bloodshed resumed. When his cousin was killed it changed his life, Al-Haddar recalled.

“A sniper killed him with one head shot. The killing of my friend during the first intifada made me violent, but for some reason the killing of my cousin made me think. I retraced my thoughts about the struggles between Palestinians and Israelis and thought of how to end it.”

He met an Israeli family and learned to his surprise that “they supported the existence of Palestine, even though I thought no one in Israel supported having two states.”

His thinking continued to change until eventually he was ready to attend a meeting of Combatants For Peace. “I was hesitant. Psychologically, I wasn’t ready to accept that I would actually meet one of the Israeli soldiers who had caused the struggle of the Palestinian people. Our first meeting was in secret with lookouts posted. I was so afraid. I asked myself ‘what the hell am I doing meeting with an Israeli soldier? Just yesterday we were fighting!’”

Both parties to the meeting suspected an ambush and only after a while did the suspicion between Al-Haddar and his Israeli brothers-in-arms begin to lift. “Eventually I realized the Israeli was intelligent. We began by taking it a step at a time. Trust started. Now we have a very strong relationship.”

“I know many people have lost hope in this life,” the former fighter said, citing Palestinian unemployment of 70 percent and 12,000 Palestinians imprisoned. “But me and Combatants For Peace have not lost hope. I will never lose hope.”

To a prolonged standing ovation the former fighter pleaded, “Do not leave me alone. We need your help. Stand by our side so the struggle will be against war and we will have security, peace and justice.”

Mike Ferner, a former Navy Corpsman and author of "Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran For Peace Reports from Iraq," attended the 22nd annual convention of VFP.

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###

Anti-war veterans protest at Black Expo

By [Aisha Sultan](#)

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

08/19/2007



About 90 Iraq war veterans, dressed in black shirts, stood in formation Saturday afternoon in front of military recruiters at America's Center and shouted their protest message three times: "War is not a game!"

They were referring to the large military simulation game set up by Army recruiters at the Missouri Black Expo. The group of veterans, known as Iraq Veterans Against the War, were in St. Louis for their annual meeting this weekend when they decided to stage a brief demonstration at the Expo.

Kelly Dougherty, 29, is executive director and served in the Army National Guard as a medic and military police officer in Iraq in 2003 to 2004. She said recruiters often stress the opportunities the military offers to low-income and minority groups.

"We want people to know the truth about military service and that it's not always what they say," she said.

Dougherty said many potential recruits may not realize the consequences the prolonged war in Iraq may have on their service — increased chances of repeated deployment, extended tours of duty, a call back into war even after a contract expires and difficulty accessing benefits upon return.

"People who are considering joining the military should know the truth so they can make an informed decision," she said.

Military recruiters at the Expo refused to comment.

While the demonstration only took a few minutes, it sparked reaction from several people.

One onlooker told the protesters they should support their country. Another passer-by snapped back at him: "That's exactly what she's doing."

###

The Boots.

by [Justin C. Cliburn](#)

It was near the end of the day, most of the booths and conference rooms were empty as I made my way back into the heart of the convention to look for a friend. Only a few people remained in the cluttered hallway: some were talking amongst themselves; others

were packing up books, fliers, and packets. One man was alone in the middle of the hallway and I immediately saw that I would most likely have to walk around him. He was a tall man, taller than me at least, with curly black hair and an anguished smile on his face. A pair of desert boots dangled from his right hand. That's odd, I thought. Many of us wore our desert boonie cap or DCU cut off shorts, but this was the first man I had seen carrying around his boots.

Our eyes met and I knew that I wouldn't be able to ignore him. I was in a hurry, but I wasn't going to ignore the man. I took a couple more steps in his direction before he grabbed me and pulled me close in his arms. He was hugging me like he never wanted to let go; I could feel the boots bouncing on my back as he pat my back and repeated the words "Thank you" it seemed like a hundred times. The whole thing was overwhelming. The musk of his cologne was almost as strong as his embrace; his strong embrace contrasted with the weakness in his breathless, sad, Latino voice. He pulled away and told me how happy he was that I was alive. I can't even tell you how I replied; I don't know. I just remember looking at those boots, and then it hit me . . .

. . . the boots weren't his.

Alexander Arredondo, 25, was killed by enemy fire three years ago today, August 25, 2004. The man that still had one hand on my shoulder was Carlos Arredondo, Alexander's still-grieving father. Suddenly, it all seemed so obvious to me; I mean, a tribute to Alexander adorned Carlos' shirt, but in my haste, I had overlooked it when I first saw the man with the curly hair and desert boots.

The next time I saw Carlos, he was giving a speech to the hundreds of people gathered at the Gateway Arch. He was still carrying his son's boots, the same boots that I felt on my back, the same boots that his son wore the day he died. A great sadness came over me as I thought about how poor Carlos must have reacted when he learned of his son's death. I made a mental note to Google Mr. Arredondo when I returned to Oklahoma; perhaps he had a website. Maybe I could find his email and shoot him an encouraging word or two about the power of our first meeting.

When I got home, I did Google Carlos Arredondo. I didn't find an email address or a website, but what I did find was amazing. I don't know what it is like to have children, and I of course don't know what it's like to lose a child. After reading this article (<http://www.cnn.com/2004/US/South/08/25/father.ablaze/>) I think I may have a small idea. I hope that you find some peace in this world, Mr. Arredondo; I hope you know how much you touched the people at the Veterans for Peace Convention, and I hope that I never feel the pain you did that fateful day three years ago.

Rest in Peace, Alexander.

###

Over 400 veterans gather in St. Louis to plot end of war

Jeff Paterson, Courage to Resist. August 21, 2007

Courage to Resist joined over 400 members of Veterans for Peace (VFP) and Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) in St. Louis, Missouri last week August 15-19 for the 22nd annual national VFP convention.

Highlights for us included: The Courage to Resist and IVAW workshop entitled, "Supporting GI Resistance;" Army Spc. Agustin Aguayo's presentation at the Centenary Methodist Church; IVAW's "War is Not a Game" counter-recruiting action at the Missouri Black Expo job fair; The election of Iraq War resister Camilo Mejia to the chair of the IVAW board of directors; A information picket at the St. Louis military induction center about sexual abuse in the services; And a spirited march through downtown St. Louis ending at the arch.

Over sixty people jammed into a small, sweltering conference room for our "Supporting GI Resistance" workshop featuring Iraq War veterans turned resisters Agustin Aguayo and Mark Wilkerson. Agustin and Mark each gave compelling personal accounts of resisting redeployment to Iraq, and serving over six months each in military brigades for their resistance. Tom Mortillo of IVAW and myself on behalf of Courage to Resist presented overviews of current resisters and coming efforts to launch nationwide campaigns to better "support GI resistance."

Agustin Aguayo joined Dennis Kucinich, Elaine Johnson, Phyllis Bennis, Tina Richards, Sara Rich, Fernando De Solar Suarez, and Dr. Dahlia Wasfi as notable speakers at St. Louis' historic Centenary Methodist Church for a public speak out to end the war now. Visibly taken aback by the overwhelming show of support by hundreds of veterans and supporters, Agustin finished his presentation amidst chants of "Their our brothers, their our sisters-we support war resisters!"

During a lunchtime break, nearly 90 members of IVAW lined up in formation inside the Missouri Black Expo job fair in front of a large military simulation game. The job fair was taking place down the street from the VFP convention. While military recruiters frantically made calls and huddled with expo security, IVAW members chanted "War is not a game!" three times before dispersing. According to the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the brief action sparked heated debate among onlookers.

IVAW formally voted this weekend to launch a campaign this Fall in support of the GI resistance, in effect, encouraging troops to refuse to fight. To underscore the point, IVAW elected Staff Sergeant Camilo Mejia chair of its board of directors. In



the winter of 2003, Camilo was the first soldier to refuse to return to fight in Iraq after an initial tour in the war zone. "There's a sort of revolution taking place in the streets. It's not being reported by the mainstream media, but we in the antiwar movement know what's going on. There is a rebellion going on in the ranks of the military that is not being reported," Camilo noted to reporter Aaron Glantz.

Ret. Army Colonel Ann Wright emceed a noontime picket line and speak out at the St. Louis military induction center and federal building. Three dozen conventioners marched with signs that read, "Stop rape in the military!", "Males are raped too", and "Mothers beware: Rapists go free in the military." Speak out participants Suzanne Swift's mother Sara Rich and Dr. John Johnson whose daughter PFC LaVena Johnson died under mysterious, non-combat circumstances in Iraq.

To close out the convention, about 500 veterans and supporters-with CodePink being well represented-marched from the convention site to the St. Louis arch on the banks of the Mississippi River. The "Yellow Rose of Texas" bus led the way proclaiming "Don't Attack Iran!" in large print. Leading the march were IVAW members, war resisters, Gold Star and other military family members, and veterans of every major war the U.S. has played a part in since the Spanish Civil War.

###

DEATH OF DAVID CLINE

It happened the day 100,000 or more people, led by Veterans For Peace and Iraq Veterans Against The War gathered in Washington, D.C., protesting the continuation of the war in Iraq. Not only was this a demonstration against another war, but a demonstration of the momentum David Cline did so much to build in his long career of anti-war activism.

Memorials poured in, statements from hundreds of people who knew and worked closely with David – or knew him by reputation and owed their activist awakenings to his statements and leadership in Vietnam Veterans Against the War and VFP. A few are posted below. I included my own, mainly because I can and because my tenure as Executive Director was deeply and positively influenced by the guidance of this remarkable man.

Woody Powell

DAVID CLINE WE SALUTE YOU *SEPTEMBER 15, 2007*

Michael McPhearson – Executive director, Veterans For Peace

David Cline passed away early September 15, 2007. Most of you know that David was a giant in the Veteran's anti-war and peace movements. A national coordinator and long time member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War as well as former President of Veterans For Peace, David was a crucial part of the explosion in VFP's growth and led us in our planning and actions as we have resisted the invasion and occupation of Iraq. David was a giant among people who motivated all of us to action by modeling leadership and providing inspiration. David was my boss, mentor, friend and I loved him. He recruited me into VFP by simply being the person he was, a veteran working for peace. There are few people outside of my family whose death means such a loss to me personally. There are few in our nation whose loss means so much to our movement.



A quote David loved so much guided his thoughts and actions. He carried it in his wallet so that he could whip it out to motivate us at any time. Of course he also had it memorized.

"If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom, and yet depreciate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters. This struggle may be a moral one; or it may be a physical one; or it may be both moral and physical; but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what a people will submit to, and you have found out the exact amount of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them; and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blows, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress."
Frederick Douglass

David Cline We Salute You.

THE JERSEY JOURNAL OBITUARY

David Cline, 60; veteran led antiwar, vets rights efforts Tuesday, September 18, 2007 By KEENAN STEINER JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

"The guys who made it back from the war have a responsibility of remembering those who didn't," David Cline, then president of the Jersey City Vietnam Veterans Committee, told The Jersey Journal in 2001.

Many will remember Cline's legacy as a Vietnam veteran who fought for veterans rights but against war. The national antiwar activist died at his Jersey City home Saturday. He was 60.

Cline fought with the Army in Vietnam in 1967 and 1968, receiving three Purple Hearts and a Bronze Star for valor. He was permanently disabled. He had trouble walking; a bullet had entered his back and exited his knee during combat.

"He went there believing in (the war)," said longtime friend Ron King, but "after fighting it he realized it was an unjust war."

So Cline came back to Fort Hood, Texas, and opened a coffee shop where veterans could freely question the war at a time when doing so was not widely embraced. He also produced an underground one-page paper for GIs about politics and psychological and medical issues faced by veterans.

In 1970, he joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War and was one of its early leaders, tirelessly organizing protests to help end the war.

He was also an initial leader of the Agent Orange Campaign, and he created pressure to improve medical care for veterans exposed to the agent, and get them compensation.

"He did whatever was called upon him to help people, mostly veterans. If somebody came back and couldn't get adequate treatment at the VA Hospital, he would put pressure on the VA," King said.

A Jersey City resident since 1973, he advocated for Vietnam veterans in the community. In 1996, he noticed the Heights Vietnam Veterans Memorial Community Center in Pershing Field, but it was little known and it needed a makeover. Cline pressured the mayor to upgrade the memorial and a new, black granite memorial was unveiled in 2001.

The pacifist led a delegation of veterans to the island of Vieques, Puerto Rico to pressure the Navy to withdraw from the island, which the Navy had been using for bombing. The Navy left in 2004.

Cline was president of Veterans for Peace, an umbrella group of antiwar veterans from all eras, at the time of the Sept. 11 attacks, and worked to bring American troops home from Iraq.

In 2006, in a speech at the International Agent Orange Conference in Vietnam, after citing all the progress to improve health care for those affected, Cline emphasized that more work was still needed.

"So many veterans are still not being treated with any fairness. And how does someone give justice to all those who have died? The hidden casualties of the Vietnam War continue to grow, but the struggle continues as well," he said.

Cline was a former employee of the U.S. Postal Service in Jersey City, where he was a post office union representative. He was a past vice president of Transportation Workers Union Local 600.

Born in Buffalo, N.Y., he loved gardening and was a talented guitarist.

Surviving are his wife, Gladys; a son, Daniel; two daughters, Ellen and Sabrina; his parents, Donald and Ruth Cline; two brothers, Steven and Bruce; a sister, Linda; and a grandson, Jacob.

Services for Cline will be tomorrow from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at McLaughlin Funeral Home, Jersey City.

REFLECTION BY DAVID ZIEGLER, Director of "SIR! NO SIR!"

I would like to add some personal reflections on the part of Dave's life with which I was deeply connected—the GI Movement against the Vietnam War. I hope you will indulge some nostalgic reminiscing here—there really is a point to it.

Let me say up front that without Dave Cline, Sir! No Sir! would not have been made.

I met Dave in the Spring of 1970, when I joined the staff of the Oleo Strut Coffeehouse outside Ft. Hood in Killeen, Texas. My introduction to him and the GI Movement was riding in a broken down Chevy with Dave driving 120 mph through central Texas and me

convinced I would never get out of there alive. I'm not sure anything defines Dave Cline better than that wild ride.

Dave and I were from different worlds. I was a middle class kid who came to my opposition to the war and growing radicalism intellectually. Dave, a working class kid from Buffalo, had joined the army and been wounded three times in Vietnam. It was his last wound, from an NLF soldier at point blank range, that changed everything. The soldier shattered Dave's knee, and Dave killed him with a bullet in the chest. His first realization was it was "pure luck" that he was alive and the other guy was dead. Then it hit him that there was no real difference between the two of them. Finally, the epiphany: It was the NLF soldier who was fighting for a just cause, while Dave and his comrades were fighting for a lie. In typical Dave Cline fashion he concluded in 1970, "I had to kill a revolutionary to become a revolutionary."

And revolutionaries we were. Right there in Killeen fucking Texas. In 1971—with literally thousands of GIs rebelling against the war and joining groups like the Black Panther Party—planning demonstrations by day and hotly debating the writings of Marx, Lenin and Mao by night was a very practical thing to do. And boy could Dave debate. Even in his sleep. It wasn't uncommon for him to jolt up from his bed at 2 am to continue a discussion from earlier that day, only to have no memory of it the next morning (Dave claimed he had even slept through a mortar attack in Vietnam).

And it was in that cauldron that we grew up. We were part of an unprecedented political upheaval, and we were alive in a way that is very rare—even though we could barely afford to eat two skimpy meals a day. Terry Davis, Dave's wife at the time, reminded me recently that one of her happiest moments was when Mark Lane donated a sack of potatoes to the staff.

Dave was intense, determined, and maddeningly stubborn. In 1970, the last thing a GI wanted to do after getting out of the army was live in a military town—even if he had been active in the movement. But here was Dave, during high points and low (which were most of the time), refusing to let go or give up. His connection with the GIs, whether they agreed with us or not, was deep and seamless—and it made the Oleo Strut something special. I can't begin to quantify what I learned from Dave those two years.

Then the war ended, and we all moved into other arenas, believing deeply in the possibility of revolution right here in the United States. For a while we stayed close, but through the years political disagreements developed, and in those heady times that meant a lot. By the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s we weren't in contact any more. Those were very difficult times. In one of the last conversations I had with Dave back then he told me that every morning he woke up thinking "Oh fuck, another day!"

So when I started to make Sir! No Sir! Dave was the first person I wanted to talk to, but I had no idea what or whom I would find. What I found was the person so many have been writing about these last few days. Wracked by illness, he was extraordinarily energetic and eager to tell his story. The day of our interview, he had just come home from a grueling three-day VFP convention and was worried he wouldn't have much energy. We talked for four hours.

And here's the most important part. After decades of both political and personal conflicts, there are still some out there who would say "Don't talk to so-and-so, 'cause he's a yada-yada." Not only would Dave have none of that, he actively spoke against it. Dave knew the tremendous importance of telling the story of the GI Movement today, in this world and with this war. Because of him, several people are in the film alongside others they wouldn't have been in the same room with a few years ago. And he carried that spirit into the dozens of screenings and Q&As he participated in these past couple of years. He has played a tremendous role in making Sir! No Sir! the spark for today's GI Movement that it has been. And that's on top of his superhuman energy in building the work of Veterans for Peace.

In these last years of his life, I don't think Dave was saying "Oh fuck, another day!" anymore.

This has been a tough year. Along with Dave, two other veterans of the GI Movement who were integral parts of the film have also died—Oliver Hirsch of the Nine for Peace, and Terry Whitmore, who deserted to Sweden after watching federal troops invade his home town of Memphis as he lay wounded in a hospital bed in Japan. Along with Dave, their lives had deep historic meaning.

David Zeiger Displaced Films, Director of "Sir! No Sir!" www.displacedfilms.com

DAVID CLINE FRIEND OF PEACE, RIP -- Cindy Sheehan

"We are not the first group to call for impeachment. We have decided to add our voice to the call. All the reasons given for the invasion have shown themselves to be half-truths or misleading. The conflict continues to drag on taking the lives of our soldiers and innocent Iraqis. It is clear that George Bush does not intend to change course in an effort to right this great wrong. He has had enough time in his second term to begin a shift and he has

not. It is time to remove him from office." David Cline, then President of the VFP, March '05

I met Dave Cline on August 4th, 2005, just two days before myself and about 40 members of the Veterans for Peace (and about 2 dozen others ranging from Military Families Speak Out, Iraq Vets Against the War, Vietnam Vets Against the War, and my group, Gold Star Families for Peace and Texas peace activists) made our historic walk down Prairie Chapel Road on August 6th.

I regret that I made Dave's life a wee bit harder those few days during that August. Being one of the main speakers at the VFP National Convention that year was just incidental to my determination to ask George "what noble cause" did he kill my son Casey for and what noble cause was keeping our troops in Iraq, dying and killing innocent Iraqis.

Dave got a hold of me that first night at the Bar-be-que and he told me that I was causing a division at the Convention because most of the Vets wanted to go with me and their very important annual business meeting was happening the same day I had decided to confront George in Crawford. I had already told the world I was going on August 6th, so Dave and I reached an agreement that a "platoon" of Vets would go with me (some defied "orders" and followed us to Crawford, anyway) and the rest would stay at the Convention. In fact, I rode from Dallas to Crawford (the first of what would become many such trips) on the Veterans for Peace Impeachment Bus.

The VFP and Dave turned out to be huge supporters of Camp Casey that year and throughout these past years, as they had supported me and Gold Star Families for Peace when I first learned of them at the Arlington West display in Santa Barbara. Dave spent a lot of time in Crawford that summer and his experience in the peace movement and beyond have always been a touchstone in my life as a budding activist.

Each time I have seen Dave since then, I have been troubled at the seeming deteriorating condition of his health, and amazed and inspired by his energy and resolve to see the end of the Iraq occupation. The last time I saw him a few months ago, I hugged him and was shocked at how thin he was and how tenuous his connection to life was. I am deeply saddened by his passing, honored by our friendship. Our country has sadly lost a true warrior for peace.

Many of you know already that Dave was wounded three times in Vietnam and was a major leader in the GI resistance to that horribly messy lie. I would recommend watching the film *Sir, No Sir!* to get a great historical perspective on that important movement which had a great impact on ending the war and which Dave Cline had an enormous impact on.

I have been contemplating how to honor Dave and his lifelong sacrifice for peace.

For myself, I will be making donations to two organizations: Courage to Resist (for Iraq war resisters) and Veterans for Peace to help continue their very important truth in recruitment work. I am continually puzzled that after 4 ½ years of a proven illegal and immoral war that our dreadfully abused troops are repeatedly allowing themselves to be misused and sent into a situation that is inherently evil. With over one million Iraqis dead and millions wounded, or displaced, our troops must have the courage to resist being used as pawns in a deadly game of genocide and destabilization of an entire region. A growing GI resistance movement would honor Dave's memory. Preventing our young people from enlisting in the imperial forces of the USA is imperative for reining in a destructively out of control war machine which Dave fought against so courageously.

Dave's death is also a wake-up call for how our veterans from Vietnam are still dying from war related causes (either directly, or indirectly). A friend of mine from Houston who is in MFSO just lost her Vietnam veteran husband this past week, too. It is abominable that a country which sends its young people to die for lies and does not care for them when they come home broken in body and spirit.

It will be so hard to go to peace events and not see my friend Dave there. He worked so tirelessly to end the imperialistic occupation of Vietnam and prevent the corporate/military invasion of Iraq and I hope he passed knowing he did everything humanly possible and his life had high value, deep meaning, and his work honored the memory of Casey, almost 4,000 Americans killed in Iraq and almost 60,000 needlessly KIA in Vietnam. His work and inspiration has helped thousands of other veterans channel their anger and PTSD into positive activities for peace.

I also believe a way to honor Dave's life would be for the present peace movement to recommit itself to this immensely important work and find peace within our ranks and put aside egos and personal agendas to achieve that for which Dave sacrificed so much:

True and lasting peace.

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REMEMBERING DAVID CLINE Woody Powell

“That’s no good. This is what I think.”

-- and a strategy would appear
tailored perfectly, fitting the problem
grounded solidly
in the years-deep experience

of this remarkable man
who refused ever
to accept an injustice
-- or a half-baked idea
of how to confront it.

“That’s no good. This is what I think.”
-- words that would have raised my hackles
if I hadn’t respected
the thoughtful objectivity
that characterized, more than anything,
the man, David Cline;
if I hadn’t respected
the humanity of suffering shared
that drove him to labor
in this difficult vineyard
where the most abundant crop
is weariness.

David listened, watching closely
wary of bullshit,
challenging us all to think;
to really know our minds
before forging a message for the masses.

“Yeah. That’ll work” Even, “Good idea.”
-- and the clouds of doubt would part,
actions would form and
our struggles would be elevated
to new heights of significance.

David lead the unleadable;
the authority-phobes,
the misfits the military couldn’t tame
the malcontents, if you will,
unwilling to listen to lies
and empty promises of glory
and gain.

He led us well,
with heart, with humor,
with wit and wisdom

and, most all, with a keen awareness
of the faults we all live to overcome.

Thank you, David Cline.

September 17, 2007

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NO ONE IS LISTENING

October 27, 2007

Several stories chronicle the events of this date – when a vast, coordinated demonstration covering a dozen cities took place – and the mainstream media virtually ignored it.

Veterans For Peace played a significant role in the planning; our Executive director, Michael McPhearson was a member of the United For Peace and Justice steering committee and VFP chapter members secured point positions in most of the demonstrations. UFPJ and A.N.S.W.E.R. teamed to bring together over a thousand grass roots peace and justice organizations to participate in marches, rallies, displays, vigils.

Bill Moyers' TV journal of the weekend following commented on the woefully sparse coverage by the media controlled by six large corporations in a piece about the Federal Communications Commission and its subversion away from serving the interests of the public by those companies.

Below is some of the internet coverage:

Thousands March Against the War in San Francisco, Across the Country

By Jim Doyle and Susan Sward

The San Francisco Chronicle

Saturday 27 October 2007

San Francisco - On cue from a bullhorn's blast, thousands of protesters fell to the pavement on Market Street in a symbolic "die- in" Saturday as part of a coordinated protest staged in cities across the country against the war in Iraq.

For three minutes the demonstrators lay on the pavement, representing what organizers said were more than 1 million Iraqis killed since the war began in 2003. The protesters then resumed their march from San Francisco's Civic Center to Dolores Park.

March organizers put their number at 30,000 - old, young, workers, students, religious leaders. Police declined to give a formal estimate, but onlookers said the demonstrators definitely numbered more than 10,000. They filled up Market Street for several blocks, shouting that U.S. troops should be brought home and carrying banners decrying the war.

At the head of the marchers was a band of Native American drummers who pounded a steady beat as protesters chanted, "No more war!"

Before the march began, demonstrators gathered in front of City Hall to hear speakers berate the Bush administration and call on Americans to stand up against the war. Organizers said part of the reason for staging this protest was to mark that it is now five years since Congress voted to authorize the use of U.S. force in Iraq.

"Silence shows compliance," Nicole Davis, a leader of the Campus Anti- War Network group, told the crowd at the San Francisco event, which was organized by the Oct. 27th Coalition of several groups, including ANSWER - Act Now To Stop War and End Racism. "If you disagree with this war," she added, "it is your duty to stand up and let the world know."

Sarah Sloan, an ANSWER spokeswoman, said her group estimated the size of the crowd "based on the number of blocks - about seven - that the march takes up and the density of the crowd."

In New York, thousands demonstrated in the rain, marching to Foley Square. In Chicago, thousands of protesters gathered at Union Park and marched to the Federal Plaza. Organizers said anti-war rallies, sponsored nationally by a coalition of groups headed by United for Peace & Justice, also took place in Seattle, Salt Lake City, Jonesborough, Tenn., Philadelphia, Orlando, Los Angeles, New Orleans, Boston and other cities around the country.

"It would be one thing if it were just San Francisco, but it's not," Jim Haber, a Bay Area chapter representative of United for Peace & Justice, told The Chronicle.

"We've helped organizers mobilize their communities in places like Jonesborough, Tenn., and Salt Lake City, which you don't typically associate with anti-war demonstrations. This underscores the broad opposition to the war in Iraq."

At Dolores Park, hundreds of black boots were placed in rows on a hillside in memory of the U.S. soldiers who died in Iraq. A tag bearing the name of a dead soldier was attached to each pair of boots, and many of the boots had daisies and other flowers placed in them.

At the park, demonstrators listened to an array of speakers, including American Indian Movement leader Dennis Banks and anti-war activist and congressional candidate Cindy Sheehan. She asked people to vote for her instead of her opponent, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, in 2008.

Banks told his audience: "As I look out over this crowd, I see many young people. That gives me great hope." He recalled that it was the young - many of them students - during the Vietnam War in the late 1960s who took to the streets to pressure the United States to end that war.

Anne Roesler, of the group Military Families Speak Out, said her son was a U.S. soldier who had been deployed to Iraq three times and returned with post-traumatic stress disorder. "This is Congress' war," she said. "They have the blood of this war on their hands - they are building their political careers with the blood of our loved ones and Iraqis."

Clarence Thomas, past secretary-treasurer of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 10, said, "We have to take a lesson from the civil rights movement. We have to wake up and understand we are all in this together."

In the throng of San Francisco demonstrators was a trio of Code Pink members, including one attired as the Statue of Liberty, who belted out, "I am going to sing until the world is free, down by the riverside." One group, the Raging Grannies, entertained the crowd with protest lyrics sung to classic songs such as "Anchors Away."

Labor groups made a special effort to get their members to turn out, with hundreds of workers showing up - among them sign installers, teachers, roofers, nurses, security guards and communication workers.

Sharon Cornu, secretary-treasurer Central Labor Council of Alameda County, said it would be the first time that seven Bay Area labor councils - San Francisco, Monterey Bay, North Bay, South Bay, San Mateo, Contra Costa and Alameda - worked together to urge members to attend the protest.

Although Bay Area labor groups have been involved in earlier protests against the war, Cornu said, this was the biggest effort yet. "More and more union members are seeing the war's impact on our schools, transportation and health care systems because money is being spent abroad that could be spent at home," Cornu added.

"We are working people - we make things in this country, and we want to be heard," said Oakland roofer Leroy Cisneros, echoing Cornu's words about the pressing need for expenditures on education and health care.

Wendy Bloom, a nurse from Children's Hospital in Oakland, said, "Our priorities are distorted. We are spending billions on an unnecessary war instead of health care."

In the days before the protest, organizers used anti-war videos on the Internet to encourage participation in the rallies across the country. One video was a two-minute short by the Brave New Foundation in Culver City that invited viewers to be part of something "huge and meaningful."

Another two-minute video, "Confront the War President," featured a series of wrenching images of the Iraq war's dead and dying, grieving relatives and the wounded. It included film clips of President Bush in interviews - one in 2006 saying, "To assume I wanted war is just flat wrong," and another in 2004 stating: "I am a war president. I make policy decisions here in the Oval Office on foreign policy matters with war on my mind."

Protesters in U.S. cities call for end to Iraq war

By Chris Michaud

NEW YORK, Oct 27 (Reuters) - Anti-war demonstrators marched in a dozen U.S. cities on Saturday to call for an immediate end to the war in Iraq and a cut-off of funding by Congress.

The "national day of action," sponsored by the United for Peace and Justice coalition, attracted throngs of protesters in cities from Boston and New Orleans to Chicago and Los Angeles on the fifth anniversary of the U.S. Senate's vote authorizing the invasion of Iraq.

Wet weather dampened the turnout in New York, but thousands braved the rain for the anti-war event in Manhattan, where protesters carried signs reading "End the war now," demanding a cutoff of its funding; "Healthcare, not warfare;" and calling for the impeachment of President Bush for "war crimes."

One contingent began its trek in New Jersey, marching across the George Washington Bridge en route to a rally in Manhattan's Union Square, where speakers included anti-war veterans and families of servicemen in Iraq.

Leslie Kielsen, a local UPAJ organizer, said the "half a trillion" dollars spent on the war was money that could have been used for education, housing and to feed the hungry.

The demonstrators, who included labor unions activists, also spoke out on issues including nuclear weapons and what some see as the increasing likelihood of U.S. military intervention in Iran over its escalating nuclear program.

They then marched peacefully to Foley Square near some of New York's largest courthouses and federal office buildings for another rally. En route, they observed a two minute period of silence to honor the war dead.

In Chicago, an estimated 10,000 people gathered at Union Park for the march to Federal Plaza. Democratic Reps. Danny Davis and Rep. Jan Schakowsky both told a rally before the march they would oppose any further funding for the war in Iraq without a formal withdrawal date.

"Do not let the political leaders divide us," Veterans for Peace National Executive Director Michael McPherson, a Gulf War veteran, told the crowd.

"Figure out ways to work together even though we might have some differences. We must stand together on these issues."

Mike Carano, 53, the Ohio co-coordinator for the Progressive Democrats of America, said "This isn't just a thing where a number of people come to (Washington) D.C.

"This is across-the-country sentiment about ending the occupation, redirecting funds for needs in this country, our attempt to get Congress to stand up and have its prerogative to cut funding, to take charge. That's our hope."

A second rally was slated to follow the march, while a group of mothers of active U.S. soldiers planned to hold a counter-demonstration, local media reported.

Organizers said demonstrators in San Francisco were expected to number as many as 100,000.

Protests were also slated for Seattle, Salt Lake City, Orlando, Philadelphia and even Jonesborough, Tennessee, home to a company that is the largest producer of weapons that use depleted uranium. (Additional reporting by Benjamin Klayman in Chicago)

A group with varied interests stands united against a war

By [Sylvester Brown Jr.](#)

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

10/30/2007

Amtrak train No. 302 glided like a gray bullet Saturday morning toward Chicago. I was among the 175 or so people from the region riding the "Peace Train." We would meet with demonstrators from other parts of the Midwest for an anti-war rally, one of 11 planned across the country that day.

Film director John Ford couldn't have captured a better moment of classic Americana.

The train's "woo-woo" added nostalgic emphasis to flickering images outside the train's window — smoke-spewing factories, acres and acres of brown and green farmland, run-down trailer parks, backyards with plastic pools and dozens of small-town restaurants, boutiques and old-time taverns. It was a snapshot of everyday life along America's railroad tracks.



Inside the train, Jan Marra, a St. Louis entertainer and activist, sang lyrics that added to the ambience: "This land is your land, this land is my land ... This land was made for you and me."

It was no surprise to see the familiar faces with the St. Louis Instead of War Coalition, the group that organized the trip. But there were also fresh, energetic young people aboard, like the group from Villa Duchesne High School.

"We want to expose these young people to ways that they can change society. Social justice isn't just about charity," said John Powell, a teacher who was chaperoning the group along with other faculty members and parents.

I was captivated by the group, from all sorts of backgrounds and varying interests, who found common ground in an unjust war.

I sat next to Dave Warnock, 18, a Washington University student and professed conservative. He was pro-war after the September 2001 terrorists attacks, but no more: "This war is reckless, counterproductive and utterly stupid," Warnock said. "I may not identify with the philosophy of granola liberals, but we have the same goal — we're against this war."

Ridgley Brown, a resident of Maryville and a member of the organization Military Families Speak Out, told me he felt a little out of place with some of those attending the rally.

"There are members of the Communist and Socialist parties and other viewpoints," said Brown, whose 21-year-old son is stationed in Iraq. "I'm pro-military. I don't agree with all these people. But if everybody comes together on this one issue, getting our troops out of that hellhole in Iraq, that's fine by me."

After arriving in Chicago, I set off with a group walking to the El train to ride to the rally. I chatted with Jeff Raymond, a local architect who brought along his two young sons. Raymond offered an intriguing reason for his participation: "I'm pro-life. That doesn't just apply to kids in the womb. Killing is wrong, and this is my contribution to ending it."

We joined a sea of sign-toting demonstrators at Chicago's Union Park. Speakers encouraged the crowd to convince the "quiet 70 percent of Americans who oppose the war but are doing nothing to end it."

"You don't have to change everybody," said Michael McPhearson, director of the local Veterans for Peace organization. "You just have to plant seeds."

According to the event's organizers, 30,000 demonstrators marched through Chicago's streets. They were confronted by counter protesters along the way: "You make me want to get into the war," shouted an elderly woman, waving a yellow "God bless America" ribbon.

I noticed a man, dressed in a yellow chicken suit, heading for the crowd. When I asked why he opposed the protest, he shook his head vigorously, silently pointing to a "No War" button on his

suit and a sign at his side reading "Drop eggs, not bombs."

The police presence was enormous, but the demonstration ended peacefully. Nikhil Kothegal, 23, a local educator, thought it was a success, noting the diverse group who stood united.

"To see so many people with different interests come together for this cause riles me to become even more active, even more involved," he said.

The train ride home was the direct opposite of the boisterous trip to Chicago. Participants snoozed, shared notes or quietly discussed ways to keep the anti-war momentum going.

The worn-out group stepped off the train, giving each other hugs and quiet "goodbyes." As they were leaving the dark train yard, a conductor seeing the demonstrators off offered a final word:

"I want to thank you all for what you did today ... for what you did for our country."

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CRACKDOWN ON DISSENT

****Banned From Canada for a Year for War Protest****

By Ann Wright t r u t h o u t | Perspective Tuesday 30 October 2007

The invitation said six members of the Canadian Parliament were to speak October 25 on Canada's Parliament Hill as members of a panel called "Peacebuilders Without Borders: Challenging the Post-9/11 Canada-US Security Agenda." I arrived at the Ottawa airport on the morning of October 25 expecting to be met by three members of Parliament and to hold a press conference at the airport. Medea Benjamin, co-founder of Codepink Women for Peace and Global Exchange, was also invited by the Parliamentarians, but had been arrested the previous day for holding up two fingers in the form of a peace sign during the US House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs hearing in which Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice testified on Iraq, Iran and Israel-Palestinian issues. The October 24 committee hearing began with Codepink peace activist Desiree Fairouz holding up her red, paint-stained hands to Rice and shouting, "The blood of millions of Iraqis is on your hands." As Capitol Hill police took her out of the House hearing, Fairouz yelled over her shoulder, "War criminal, take her to the Hague." Shortly thereafter, two Codepinkers were arrested for just being in the room, and brutally hauled out of the hearing by Capitol police. An hour later, Medea and a male Codepink were arrested for no reason. Four of the five had to stay overnight in the District of Columbia jail; Medea was one of those and missed the trip to Ottawa. I presented immigration officials our letter of invitation from the Parliamentarians that explained Medea and I had been denied entry to Canada at the Niagara Falls border crossing on October 3, 2007,

because we had been convicted in the United States of peaceful, non-violent protests against the war on Iraq, including sitting on the sidewalk in front of the White House with 400 others, speaking out against torture during Congressional hearings, and other misdemeanors. The Canadian government knew of these offenses as they now have access to the FBI's National Crime Information database on which we are listed. The database was created to identify members of violent gangs and terrorist organizations, foreign fugitives, patrol violators and sex offenders - not for peace activists peacefully protesting illegal actions of their government. The immigration officer directed me to a secondary screening, where my request to call the members of Parliament waiting outside the customs' doors was denied. My suggestion that the letter of invitation from the Parliamentarians might be valuable in accessing the need for me to be in Canada was dismissed with the comment that members of Parliament do not have a role in determining who enters Canada. I suggested the laws enacted by the Parliament were the basis of that determination. I added that the reason I had been invited to Ottawa by Parliamentarian was to be an example of how current laws may exclude those whom Canadians may wish to allow to enter. I also mentioned Parliament might decide to change the laws immigration officials implement. I also suggested, since the Parliament provides the budget to the Immigration Services, they might notify the Parliamentarians awaiting my arrival that I had been detained. The officers declined to do so citing my privacy, which I immediately waived. The Parliamentarians were never notified by immigration I had arrived and was being detained. Only when my cell phone was returned to me by immigration officers four hours later was I able to make contact with the Parliamentarians. After nearly four hours of interrogation, I was told by the senior immigration officer I was banned from Canada for one year for failure to provide appropriate documents that would overcome the exclusion order I had been given in early October because of conviction of misdemeanors

(all payable by fines) in the United States. The officer said that to apply for a Temporary Resident Permit (TRP) for entry for a specific event on a specific date, I must provide to a Canadian Embassy or consulate the arresting officer's report, court transcripts and court documents for each of the convictions, an official document describing the termination of sentences, a police certificate issued within the last three months by the FBI, police certificates from places I have lived in the past ten years (that includes Sierra Leone, Micronesia, Afghanistan and Mongolia), a letter acknowledging my convictions from three respected members of the community (the respected members that I will ask to write a letter all been convicted of similar "offenses") and a completed 18 page "criminal rehabilitation" packet. Additionally, besides obtaining the TRP, since I was being banned for a year from Canada, I would have to obtain a "Canadian Government Minister's consent." The officer said the TRP and the Minister's consent normally took from 8-10 months to obtain. In the distant future, to be able to enter Canada without a TRP, I would have to be "criminally rehabilitated" and be free for five years of conviction of any offense, including for peaceful protest. The senior immigration officer took my fingerprints for Canadian records, escorted me to the airport departures area and placed

me on the first plane departing for Washington, DC. In the meantime, the members of Parliament conducted the press conference and the panel without my presence, but certainly using the example of what had happened to me, and previously to Medea Benjamin, as incidents that the Parliamentarians are very concerned about, specifically their government's wholesale acceptance of information on the FBI's database, information that appears to have been placed there for political intimidation. A participant on the Parliamentary panel I was unable to attend was Monia Mazigh, the wife of Canadian citizen Maher Arar, who, when he transited New York's JFK airport, was sent by US authorities to Syria where he was imprisoned and tortured for 10 months. The day before I arrived at the Ottawa airport, Rice acknowledged the United States had "not handled his case properly." But Rice did not apologize to Arar on behalf of the Bush administration during testimony to the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. The previous week during a video conference, both Republican and Democrat members of Congress offered apologies to Arar. Arar, an Ottawa telecommunications engineer, still has a lawsuit pending against American officials. Arguments are scheduled for November 9 in New York. Many countries have succumbed to the behind-the-scenes, 9/11 pressure of the Bush administration to enact extensive and expansive anti-terrorism laws to increase "harmonization" and integration of security measures among countries. Unfortunately, the Canadian government is mirroring the Bush administration's use of security measures to increase control over dissent in their country - and in other countries. Most of the new security measures are done through administrative agreements, international joint working groups, regulations and the use of international organizations such as the G-8 and the International Civil Aviation Organization. By using administrative regulations, the US and Canadian governments avoid opening up the proposed restrictions of personal privacy to public scrutiny and debate by preventing such regulations from being enacted in the Congress or Parliament. Through these agreements with Canada and other G-8 countries, the Bush administration is setting up a global infrastructure for the registration and surveillance of populations worldwide, looking at every person as a suspect and a risk, whom must, in their opinion, as a precaution, be identified and tracked. Ordinary legal protections fundamental to democratic societies such as the presumption of innocence, rights against unreasonable search and seizure and rights against arbitrary detention and punishment are greatly threatened by these precautionary measures. Countries are accepting the "precautionary principle" and are gathering and sharing information not only to track suspected "terrorists," but to stop dissidents from flying and/or entering other countries, to stop activists and intellectuals at borders, - the Bush administration has refused visas for numerous academics from all over the world who have been invited to teach at American universities, but whom have spoken and written against the Bush war in Iraq, torture. and other violations of international law - to detain persons without reasonable grounds and to send persons to third world countries and prisons operated by the US government, where they are detained indefinitely without charge, tortured and sometimes murdered. The Canada-US Smart Border Agreement and Action Plan, an administrative agreement

signed in December 2001, is the master document for security integration between Canada and the United States. The agreement calls for biometric standards for identity cards, coordinated visa and refugee policy, coordinated risk assessment of travelers, integrated border and marine enforcement teams, integrated national security intelligence teams, coordinated terrorist lists, increased intelligence sharing and joint efforts to promote the Canada-US model internationally. After 9/11, the Bush administration, under the National Security Entry-exit Registration System (NSEERS), registered and took biometric identifiers (fingerprints) of all males age 16-45 with links to Muslim and Arab countries visiting or traveling through the United States. Next, persons applying for visas to visit the United States had to submit biometric data (fingerprints) that will be stored in a US database for

100 years through the new US Visitor and Immigrant Status Indication Technology (US-VISIT) program. The Bush administration expanded its biometric round-up on a global scale in 2002 by requiring all countries that want to retain their visa waiver status with the US to require, by 2004, biometric passports through the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act of 2002. In 2004, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) set a face recognition standard with fingerprint and iris scans as optional standards. Beginning in 2005, the United States and Canada have biometric passports with facial recognition. We all want our countries to be safe from criminal actions. However, the unnecessary curtailment of civil liberties and purposeful targeting of those who disagree with government policies must end. I call on the US Congress to conduct hearings to determine who ordered the FBI to place peaceful, non-violence protest convictions on the international data base, and for what purpose. It feels to me like purposeful intimidation to stop dissent - but I can guarantee you, it won't work! To all those concerned about free speech, freedom to travel, ending an illegal war, stopping torture, and other violations of domestic and international law, come to Washington and help us!!!

(For more extensive information on security agreements that unnecessarily jeopardize our civil liberties, please see "Americanizing the Restriction of Canadians' Rights - Security Overtaking Trade as a Driver of 'Deep Integration'," by Maureen Webb, Canadian centre for Policy Alternatives

<<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/MonitorIssues/2006/04/MonitorIssue1356/>>.)

/Ann Wright is a 29-year US Army veteran who retired as a Colonel, and a former US diplomat who resigned in March, 2003, in opposition to the war on Iraq. She served in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia and Mongolia. In December, 2001, she was on the small team that reopened the US Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. The US Department of State has delayed publication of her new book, "/Dissent: Voices of Conscience/", for over three months. It will be published whenever the State Department finishes its search for classified materials./

WRAPPING UP 2007

Michael McPhearson summarized the progress and actions of 2007 in a slide show presentation to the Board. Excerpts below.

Membership

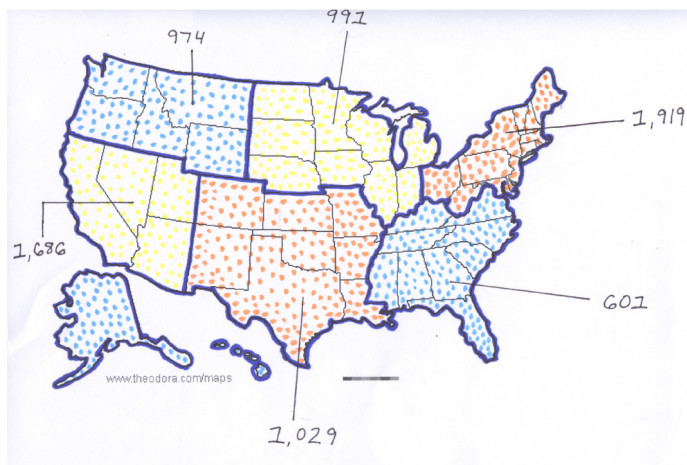
Veteran Members – 5445
Associate Members – 1851
Total ----- 7295

Membership Comparison

2006/2007

- Total membership increase: 18%
- Veteran membership increase: 19%
- Veterans undocumented decrease: 3%
- Associate member increase: 15.4%
- Active duty increase: 275%
- Lifetime member increase: 16.5%

Regional State Breakdown



- VFP Northeast Admin Region 1: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Penn., Maryland, Delaware, D.C., Ohio, W. Virginia
- VFP Southeast Admin Region 2: Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, N. Carolina, Georgia, S. Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida
- VFP Northern Midwest Admin Region 3: N. Dakota, S. Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois
- VFP Southern Midwest Admin Region 4: Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, Louisiana
- VFP Northwest Admin Region 5: Wash., Oregon, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, Alaska
- VFP Southwest Admin Region 6: California, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, Hawaii

Activities:

- marches (i.e. Veterans Day/ Memorial Day)
- demonstrations
- vigils
- tabling at various events
- counter recruiting
- showing of relative films
- actions w/ other peace groups
- members get together for potluck dinners

Associations: (other groups with which our chapters collaborate)

- VVAW
- Gold Star Families for Peace
- Military Families Speak Out
- IVAW
- Women Against War
- Global Network
- American Friends Service Committee
- Code Pink
- Students United for Peace & Justice
- Grandmothers For Peace
- Peace Action

Also: It should be noted that many of the chapters have reported working with many local organizations such as the following:

- Dallas Peace Center
- Pittsburgh Anti-War Committee
- Long Beach Area Peace Network
- North shore Coalition for Peace and Justice (Massachusetts)
- Idaho Progressive Student Alliance

VFP goals and what chapters do to help promote these goals:

I. Toward increasing public awareness of the cost of war

- marches
- tabling at events
- speaking at rallies, schools & churches, etc.
- weekly vigils
- information handouts
- publishing the cost of war and # of casualties on our website
- presentation to Rotary Club, Elks Club, etc.
- movie nights

II. To restrain our government from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations

- letters to the editor
- legislative office sit-ins
- demonstrations and protests @ military bases in the area
- press conferences

III. To end the arms race and to reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons

- same answers to the previous questions with the addition of:
- some chapters working with anti-nuclear groups
- participation in Hiroshima Day activities
- presentations on Depleted Uranium

IV. To seek justice for veterans and victims of war

- same answers to questions I & II with the addition of:
- making public the G.I. Rights hotline on the website along with other literature
- supporting war resisters

- Depleted Uranium legislation
- Agent Orange awareness
- actively working to prevent the close of VA hospitals
- PTSD assistance for returning vets

VFP Newsletter

- Circulation July 2007: 10,400
- Chapter reports are significant element
- The National Office mails newsletters for tabling to all chapters who place a request

Projects Completed

- Gulf Coast Convoy and Rebuilding
- SWARM on Congress
- Support and Defend the Constitution
- VFP Delegation to Korea
- The Occupation Project



VFP Actions 2006/2007

Camp Democracy

From September 5th - 21st, 2006, we held a non-partisan camp for peace, democracy, and the restoration of the rule of law.



UFPJ March on Washington to End the Iraq War, Jan. 27, 2007



SOA Watch, Fort Benning, GA

Appeal For Redress



- January 16, 2007, Washington D.C.: First delivery of signatures to members of Congress.***
- The Appeal for Redress will continue to collect signatures until all active duty, Guard, and active reserve soldiers are out of Iraq.***



Veterans' Convoy Defund the War – Rebuild the Coast



Agent Orange Victims Lawsuit Against Manufacturers

Congressional visit in Washington D.C.

***March on the Pentagon
March 17, 2007***



ENTERING THE FIFTH YEAR OF WAR IN IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN

The year 2008 began with two major actions; Sandy Kelson's "Troop Engagement Project" at Ft. Lewis, Georgia in February and the VFP-supported IVAW "Winter Soldier" testimonies on the eve of the 5th anniversary of the Iraq War in Washington D.C.

After Winter Soldier (There is much more work to do.)

Michael T. McPhearson
March 24, 2008

*As a member of Veterans For Peace you should be proud of your participation in helping make **Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan (Eyewitness Accounts Of The Occupation)** a great success. Your support of Iraq Veterans Against the War from its inception to this incredible event will lead directly to ending the occupation of Iraq, bringing our troops home, taking care of them when they return and ensuring justice for the Iraqi people. Thank you for all your labor.*

With that said, there is tremendous work to do. To end the war, Winter Soldier: Iraq and Afghanistan cannot be a one time happening. Veterans For Peace must now take this new tool to educate and organize. We must amplify IVAW's voice so that it can be heard clearly and without filters. Their voice is the most effective tool to tell the truth and give a full picture about the occupation and U.S. policy in Iraq.

IVAW is working hard to reach the active military and post 9/11 veterans. They will be visiting military towns and bases, reaching out to their peers. VFP must support them in this effort. We also have a mission to reach out to the military. Military members are our brothers and sisters. We were once them and they will one day be us. We are forever connected and we must strengthen those bonds by supporting them as they find their voice to express their demand to end the occupation.

A stronger civilian movement means a stronger G.I. movement. VFP must also help to activate, organize and encourage the greater civilian anti-war and peace movements. As a major part of this effort, we must find and organize the older veterans to help in this endeavor.

However, our greatest test as Veterans For Peace is to develop a strategic long term national vision to transform our country. We must create long term initiatives that

challenge our government's approach to the world, addresses people's needs and builds structures of peace to end all wars. We must leverage our position as veterans to stir our fellow citizens. We must do all simultaneously, support IVAW and embark on a more focused effort building VFP. We have our own role to play to end this war and to end all wars. We must be smart, innovative and audacious in meeting this challenge.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED ANNIVERSARY

The 2008 anniversary of the infamous moment when President Bush landed on the carrier Lincoln under the banner MISSION ACCOMPLISHED, was commemorated around the country at military bases. For the most part, they were quiet, respectful statements of support for the troops and introductions to IVAW and VFP. See accounts of four actions in the MAJOR PROJECTS AND ACTIONS section.

IVAW WINTER SOLDIERS TESTIFY TO IN CONGRESS

On May 15, a contingent of Iraq veterans gave testimony at a convening of the Progressive Caucus in the U.S, Congress. Marine veteran Adam Kokesh gave the opening statement:

Winter Soldiers, On the Hill



Sgt Kelly Dougherty, Executive Director of ***Iraq Veterans Against the War***, delivers the opening statements of **Winter Soldier on the Hill**, in the Rayburn House Office Building, Thursday, May 15th.

To Sgt Dougherty's right are Army Cavalry Scout, Scott Ewing, Sgt Geoffrey Millard, and Sgt Kristofer Goldsmith. All these Iraq Veterans testified to various failures propagated by our Department of Defense, incl. Army & Marine TOP-DOWN International War Crimes.

Sgt Vince Emmanuel and Scott Ewing witnessed killing civilians, unbridled racism, destruction of property, and the use of **"drop weapons"**, that are placed next to summarily executed non-combatants, to "justify" killing them.

Captain Luis Montalvan testified on fraud, waste, and abuse, as well as negligence and dereliction of duty. Marine Sergio Kochergin witnessed the killings of civilians, dehumanization, and the use of "drop weapons". Marine Sgt Adam Kokesh described Fallujah's Internally Displaced Refugees, war trophy photos, and abuse of detainees.



Immediately after this morning's hearings, IVAW member Sgt. Matthis Chiroux held a press conference where he publicly refused his deployment to Iraq. Sgt. Chiroux had been honorably discharged last summer after four years of service, and had been scheduled to deploy to Iraq in June.

TESTIMONY OF ADAM KOKESH

Good morning. My name is Adam Kokesh and I served as a Sergeant on a Marine Corps Civil Affairs team in the Fallujah area. I now serve as a member of the Board of Directors of Iraq Veterans Against the War. Since our founding in the fall of 2004, IVAW has called for three things: the immediate withdrawal of all occupying forces from Iraq, full benefits for returning veterans, and reparations for the Iraqi people. We have over a thousand members, in 43 chapters, in 48 states, in Germany, in Canada, and in Iraq. We have members on active duty, in the Reserves, in the Guard, and in every branch of service. We are the only organization of veterans of the Global War On Terror that requires proof of service for membership. We take it as our duty to speak out, and to cut through the lies, spin, and propaganda that are being used to manipulate society into supporting a war that is not in our best interest as a nation. If America could see what the boots on the ground really thought of this occupation, it would not continue for another day. We are an organization of whistleblowers.

And like the other whistleblowers you will hear from today, we face many of the same challenges, but also a set of challenges that are unique to the military, because the military has a distinct power over service members. I joined the Marines for the challenges, so harassment was

part of the bargain for me, but I never expected it to come for political reasons. When service members are in a combat environment, risking our lives on a regular basis becomes part of the bargain as well. The possibility of harassment becoming a matter of life or death, has always been very effective in silencing dissent.

Some military whistleblowers are trying to get accountability for a specific incident or to correct a particular injustice. Some of us are simply trying to tell our stories and portray things that to us are all too commonplace. The only people that do not support whistleblowers are the ones who are up to something. That we have faced the challenges we have, is a testament to the fact that someone is up to something in Iraq. Not only is the occupation immoral, illegal, and bad for America, it is fundamentally corrupt, and those that are benefiting from it do not want Americans to understand that reality.

While some service members who come to this conclusion, face legal consequences for resisting their direct participation in the occupation, some of us have faced unjust consequences for exercising the rights that are supposed to be guaranteed to us not just in the First Amendment of the Constitution, but under military law as well. Today you will hear from four members of Iraq Veterans Against the War who have experienced retaliatory harassment for exercising their rights in keeping with their consciences, and while honoring their oaths to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

Geoff Millard served with the New York Army National Guard for nine years including a year in Tikrit. After coming home from Iraq and attending an anti-war event, he was made to fear for his life from his command. Mark Wilkerson served in Tikrit and Samarra with the 401st Military Police Company. When he came home, he decided to apply for Conscientious Objector status, but was threatened and harassed in such a way that he had no choice but to go AWOL when his application was denied. Thomas J. Buonomo graduated from the U.S. Air Force Academy with a degree in Political Science and Middle East Studies and a minor in Arabic, then volunteered to cross-commission into the Army in order to support our ground forces. Shortly after qualifying as a Military Intelligence Officer, his security clearance was suspended, and he was involuntarily discharged for expressing views contrary to the administration. We will also be joined by attorney Mike Lebowitz, who served in Iraq as a paratrooper with the elite Pathfinder Company of the 101st Airborne Division, and is currently a JAG captain with the Virginia Army National Guard where he serves as a defense counsel for the 29th Infantry Division, providing legal assistance to troops subject to adverse action. In his civilian practice, he specializes in military free speech issues. Together, our testimony will make it clear that it is essential the No Fear Act II includes language that truly holds military retaliators accountable and serves as a deterrent for harassment. In addition to our oral statements, we will be submitting substantiating legal documents for the tribunal's records.

In my case, I was a member of the inactive reserves when I joined Iraq Veterans Against the War and participated in a guerrilla street theater action called Operation First Casualty. It was called that because it has long been said that the first casualty of war is the truth, and we wanted to bring some of the truth of what was going on in Iraq home to the American people in the form of a mock combat patrol through the streets of Washington, DC. Knowing that the Uniform Code of Military Justice does not apply to members of the inactive reserves, I knew that I was within my

rights to wear certain uniform items in the execution of this street theater, because I was not representing myself as a member of the military. In addition to removing rank insignia and name tapes, our squad was surrounded by volunteers distributing fliers that described exactly who we were, and what we were doing.

My picture and name appeared in the Washington Post's coverage of the event, and I soon received an email of warning from Major John R Whyte of the Marine Corps Mobilization Command, who identified himself as my Investigating Officer and said, "As a member of the Reserve Component, until 18 JUN 2007, the law restricts your wearing of the uniform at certain events. Please call me or reply to this e-mail acknowledging your understanding of your obligations and responsibilities." I replied by saying that he was wrong to investigate the political activities of an inactive reservist when as an active duty Major, he could be doing something to bring our fellow Marines home alive from Iraq, and used an expletive to express my displeasure with his waste of military resources. The next communication that I received from the Marines was a letter explaining their intent to charge me under the Uniform Code of Military Justice and separate me with an Other Than Honorable discharge, which theoretically would have disqualified me from any benefits that I had earned through my service. After a significant legal battle and extreme pressure brought to bear on the Marines as a result of the negative media attention, I was separated with a General Discharge, which theoretically would disqualify me from any education benefits, and theoretically make me liable for the money that I had previously received through the GI bill. Around the same time, Marines serving at the Marine Corps Mobilization Command called Cloy Richards, a two combat tour veteran in the inactive reserves who has an 80% disability rating, is using the GI bill to help get through college, and is dependent on the VA for treatment. They threatened to take all of that away if he did not stop protesting. They also tried to prosecute Liam Madden, another former Marine and member of the inactive reserves for making "disloyal statements."

The way that the Marine Corps Mobilization Command came after me was illegal, the decision of the separation board was legally faulty, and it was a clear-cut case of political harassment. Although we were able to achieve what seemed like wrestling things to a tie, the Marine Corps was able to send two very strong messages: We don't want you speaking out against the occupation or even portraying the reality of the every day in Iraq, and even if you're in the inactive reserves, we can still control your fate. I spoke out within my rights, and was punished. To my knowledge, none of the officers responsible for this unnecessary waste of military resources, or for any other cases of retaliatory harassment against IVAW members have ever been held accountable.

VFP AND IMPEACHMENT

On July 25, 2008, following an earlier hearing before congressman John Conyer's House Judiciary committee, VFP President Elliott Adams gave this summary presentation.

Statement of Elliott Adams
President of the Board, Veterans For Peace

House Judiciary Committee hearing

"Executive Power and Its Constitutional Limitations"

source: www.afterdowningstreet.org/node/35032

July 25, 2008

Upon leaving the Constitutional Convention of 1787 ?

Ben Franklin was asked: "Well, Doctor, what have we got? a Republic or a Monarchy?"

Dr. Franklin replied: "A Republic, if you can keep it."

Honorable Representatives, in that single sentence is the essence of what this hearing is about today ? "if you can keep it." Right now hanging in the balance, in one pan is our republic and all the principles that made the United States a shining beacon of freedom around the world and in the other pan is a totalitarian state and all the despotism that it brings.

In the armed forces we took an oath, the same oath congressmen take, "to support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic." Now as veterans we still take oath very seriously. Which is why we are here on the Hill some of us gray haired and getting long in the tooth, but still defending the Constitution.

Veterans For Peace has members from every war our country has fought back to and including World War II. VFP is 23 years old, has over 120 chapters spread around the country, has an NGO seat in the UN, and a small share in the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize. Our members help 85,000 Iraqis get safe drinking water, gave 54,000 free phone cards to patients in 148 VA hospitals, help Agent Orange victims both US soldiers and Vietnamese civilians, aided Hurricane Katrina victims, supports schools and orphanages in Afghanistan & Vietnam, have worked extensively in Central America for freedom and fair elections, and bought appropriate body armor for soldiers in Iraq when the government could not supply it.

But many of our members have set aside all these other important works to defend our democracy by calling for impeachment.

There can be no question about whether criminal offenses have been committed by officials of this administration. The only question now is, what, if anything, each member of Congress is going to do about it.

There are those who say, "oh heck, there are only a few months left, just let them finish their terms, and then we can get on with our lives like waking from a bad dream." But we cannot afford that luxury. This is not about impeaching a few administration officials. This is about maintaining the structure of our government. This is about protecting the Geneva Conventions, the Nuremberg Principles, and the Law of Land Warfare. This is about defending the rights and freedoms of the US citizens.

This brings to mind the words of Ben Franklin "Any society that would give up a little liberty to gain a little security will deserve neither and lose both."

The officials of this administration have usurped power from congress, stolen the rights of the people, and by ignoring it Congress reinforces it and joins it. All future presidents of both parties will start where this presidency leaves off. For Congress to continue to allow the usurpation of power and the flagrant violations of the Constitution to go unanswered would, in itself, be a violation of the law.

While there is no need for re-enumerating the long lists of impeachable offenses committed by officials of this administration, I can not escape the visceral pain and indignation that we, who served our country in combat, feel when we find our own government condoning and/or committing war crimes and/or crimes against humanity.

I cannot believe that members of our government are trying to obscure and distort what is torture and what is not torture. What is human has not changed in the past 8 years. What is torture has not changed in the past 8 year. The saddest thing to me about the torture discussion is that it has obscured the central point that, except in the movies, torture does not work. We were taught, in the Army, do not torture, not only because it is illegal, but especially because it ruins the integrity of the information you gather. Simply put, any victim of torture will eventually just try to say what ever the torturer wants them to say. Put another way it is the very power of torture that keeps it from giving us the truth.

As Congressmen you have available to you some of the greatest constitutional minds. But I learned in war that sometimes too much information can make it hard to see the essence. With your permission I will highlight a few salient points.

Without impeachment, requests and subpoenas and contempt citations are ignored (Congress has been mocked by an administration that has repeatedly ignored its subpoenas with impunity).

With impeachment, witnesses are freer to speak, "executive privilege" is gone, and subpoenas must be complied with.

The Constitution discusses impeachment in six places and never once mentions other remedies like censure, criminal referrals, legislative "solutions", or even prosecution (except to indicate it can occur separate from impeachment). The drafters of the constitution incorporated impeachment as the simple and proper process for dealing with all high crimes and even misdemeanors.

Without impeachment there looms the specter of an audacious broad sweeping self-serving pardon, even one that includes, a constitutionally dubious, but not explicitly forbidden, self-pardon! Which would further erode Congress' place in the balance of power rendering it virtually irrelevant. The only thing a president cannot pardon is an impeachment and a conviction in the Senate. But once removed from office, he can

pardon nobody of anything.

For us veterans, when our time came, we volunteered our very lives for this republic; for the principle of freedom for all, for equal opportunity for all, to defend the Constitution and the principles embodied in the Declaration of Independence, and to guarantee the opportunity for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Now, Congressmen, it is your time, and I hear there is not enough time! Now is your time, and I hear it will not be good for one party or the other party! Now is your time, and I hear there is not enough political will around you!

When our founding fathers signed the Declaration of Independence they were not worried about political will, or how much time there was, or about any parties' political future, they were just worried they were going to be hanged by the neck. But they did what was right. Now it is your time to standup.

Einstein said ? "The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing."

VFP CONVENTION - 2008, St. Paul, MN

As usual, it was packed with extremely interesting workshops, produced a set of very cogent resolutions, and re-vitalized all of the attendees to go back to their chapters and carry on the effort to abolish war. But first:

Many stayed behind to participate in actions leading up to the Republican National Convention. Jeremy Scahill, independent correspondent, spoke at the VFP banquet on Saturday night. He spoke of the takeover of security functions in Iraq and at home here in the U.S.A. by Eric Prince's Blackwater outfit and others. He painted a dire portrait of an America being turned over to private interests for the basic functions of law enforcement, without the accountability guaranteed in the Constitution. It was chilling, in that it confirmed all of our worst fears.

He had just come from covering some of the pre-emptive actions taken by the hugely inflated police presence in the Twin Cities area, where he reported warrantless searches and detentions in private homes. Afterwards, he covered the actions involving Veterans For Peace and filed a report through Amy Goodman, herself present, and arrested, during the brutal police pre-emptive response to groups there to protest and to influence the body politic.

AMY GOODMAN: Despite the serious questions surrounding the uncertain fate of this week's convention, protests are continuing. Today, Iraq Veterans Against the War march on the Xcel Center in an attempt to raise awareness about what they characterize as Senator John McCain's anti-veteran voting record and his continued support for the occupation of Iraq and the war in Afghanistan.

On Sunday, there was another veteran-led protest, this one organized by Vets for Peace, a large national organization made up of veterans of every war, from Korea and Vietnam and Iraq. Vets for Peace held its national convention here in the Twin Cities over the weekend, drawing hundreds of veterans, and many of its members are staying on to participate in anti-RNC demonstrations. Among the members of Vets For Peace, there's a sizeable contingent of Vietnam War vets. So, too, is the man they are demonstrating against: the presumptive presidential nominee John McCain.

Democracy Now! correspondent Jeremy Scahill filed this report from the streets of the Twin Cities.

BRUCE BERRY: My name is Bruce Berry, and I am from Minneapolis. I'm a member of Vets for Peace and a veteran of Vietnam, in 1968, [inaudible]. Here, we're at the Vietnam Memorial here in Minnesota at the State Capitol. I was here for the dedication, and Westmoreland was here, and I believe it was in 1982. And there's somewhere in the range of 1,200 that were killed in Vietnam from Minnesota. I come here two, three times a year to just pay homage to and respect for those that were killed, and it could have been me. And my heart kind of sinks sometimes when I am here. It depends on the day.

JEREMY SCAHILL: Bruce Berry has been joined in his hometown this week by 400 friends. They're all veterans who have come to Minneapolis, St. Paul, to protest the Republican National Convention. Many of them are Vietnam War vets, just like John McCain.

INTERVIEWER: What is your rank?

JOHN McCAIN: Lieutenant commander in the Navy.

INTERVIEWER: And your official number?

JOHN McCAIN: 624787.

McCAIN AD NARRATOR: John McCain, the American president Americans have been waiting for.

SEN. JOHN McCAIN: I'm John McCain. And I approve this message.

JEREMY SCAHILL: McCain has put his record as a fighter bomber in Vietnam front and center in this campaign, particularly his five years spent as a prisoner of war in Hanoi. On October 26, 1967, John McCain's plane was shot down over Vietnam. McCain was captured and held for five years in a POW camp.

SEN. JOHN McCAIN: I was on a flight over the city of Hanoi. And I was bombing.

JEREMY SCAHILL: In some ways, this is a story of two kinds of veterans: John McCain, who's running on his record in Vietnam, calling for an escalation of US wars; those members of Vets for Peace who have gathered here in the Twin Cities are trying to use their experiences in Vietnam to prevent war.

WARD REILLY: My name is Ward Reilly. I'm with Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Veterans for Peace, and I'm also associated with Iraq Veterans Against the War. I'm here to try to save the Constitution.

JEREMY SCAHILL: And what exactly was the action today?

WARD REILLY: Well, we just want to peaceably assemble and try to draw attention to the fact that we're still occupying two completely innocent nations and that we're living in a police state.

JEREMY SCAHILL: While much of the focus of the anti-RNC protest centers around the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the McCain camp's promotion of their candidate as a war hero has once again made the Vietnam War and McCain's role in it an issue.

WARD REILLY: Well, I respect John McCain's having served his country, but, by nature, dropping bombs on innocent villages in Vietnam does not make you a war hero. I appreciate that he was a prisoner of war, and I respect him for that. And he has post-traumatic stress, and I don't think a man with post-traumatic stress is a good man to have his finger on the red button.

STEVE McEWEN: My name is Steve McEwen. I served in Vietnam from '66 to '67. If anything, he should be using his experience to try and prevent war, instead of trying to do the things that he's doing right now to heat it up.

MIKE CASEY: My name is Mike Casey. I was a medic in Vietnam. I served in Vietnam from 1970, '71. I was getting—I got there toward the end of the war, so I was seeing the homicides, the suicides, the rampant drug addiction, heroin addiction, shootouts. We had assault helicopters. We had Cobra gunships. We had APCs. We had dusters. We had 155-millimeter howitzers. We had 175-millimeter howitzers. And we were killing people.

JEREMY SCAHILL: John McCain, of course, is also a Vietnam vet and is running in part on his war record. Your response?

MIKE CASEY: You know, he had twenty-three combat missions over Hanoi. I know what those airplanes hit. I have many friends that have walked into villages that had been bombed by napalm, that have killed hundreds and thousands of innocent civilians. He bombed civilian targets, because civilian targets *are* military targets. You have to remember that. It's the most important thing that you

can remember. We kill innocent civilians on purpose. They are military targets. This Geneva Convention stuff is bull [blank]! And that's what we're doing in Iraq. That's what we're doing in Afghanistan. It's what we did in Vietnam. It's what we did in Laos, Cambodia, Panama. You name it.

JEREMY SCAHILL: Both the Republicans and the Democrats refer to John McCain as a war hero.

MIKE CASEY: Bull [blank].

JEREMY SCAHILL: Why?

MIKE CASEY: I got a Bronze Star in Vietnam. Am I a hero? No! I did—I made a difference in Vietnam, and I'm proud—to a large degree, I'm proud of my service, because I think it made the difference between helping a lot of people in Vietnam with their injuries, because, like I say, I saw injuries. I saw dead American soldiers taken off of helicopters. And, you know, gentleman, there is nothing worse than to see an American soldier take his last breath. And there's nothing worse than seeing a dead Vietnamese civilian that was killed irresponsibly by an American GI.

I get so tired of this hero stuff. I was not a hero in Vietnam, end of story, Bronze Star or not, Combat Medical Badge or not. I did my duty in Vietnam. But John McCain riding on a hero status? Give me a break! You know, I get so tired of John McCain thinking he's the only one that was damaged in Vietnam with his post-traumatic stress disorder. It's funny that when he came back as a POW, they never interview the enlisted men that were in those camps. And I know some of those people that were in those camps.

HAL MUSKAT: My name is Hal Muskat. I am with Veterans for Peace, San Francisco Bay Area. I was in the US Army from 1965 to 1970.

SEN. JOHN McCAIN: Keep that faith. Keep your courage. Stick together. Stay strong. Do not yield. Stand up. We're Americans. And we will never surrender.

HAL MUSKAT: I don't trust him. I don't like him. I don't think he speaks for veterans. I think he speaks for a very small, very—too vocal minority of right-wing veterans that would just as soon McCain said, "Vietnam wasn't fought right. We're going back."

JEREMY SCAHILL: Vietnam War vet Ward Reilly has a message for today's generation of veterans.

WARD RIELLY: I say they should be out here on the streets with me protecting the Bill of Rights, which is what we swore to uphold. We swore to defend the

Constitution, not blind obedience to the commander-in-chief. And the oath we took was to defend this nation against all enemies, both foreign and domestic. And right now, the domestic enemy is in the White House.

JEREMY SCAHILL: For *Democracy Now!*, this is Jeremy Scahill, with Rick Rowley of Big Noise Films, in the Twin Cities.

VFP LIGHTS THE WAY

by [Mike Ferner](#) Sunday, 07 September 2008

Pacific Free Press

Veterans For Peace: Resolving to Find the Truth

Minneapolis – With the Republican Convention following hard on their annual meeting in this city, Veterans For Peace adopted two resolutions last week effectively firing signal flares into the path of whoever wins this November’s election, regardless of party.

The first was a resolution on Afghanistan, submitted by VFP president, Elliott Adams, which is likely to become a guidepost for a peace movement now almost exclusively concentrating on Iraq.

Some 400 members and supporters from every part of the country unanimously endorsed a statement recognizing that when the U.S. invaded Afghanistan;

“...the only threats to our nation existing there were non-indigenous groups whom we ourselves had fostered and fed,” and that “our wanton use of force and violence against the people of Afghanistan has inflamed world opinion against the United States and has diminished our nation’s ability to work toward world peace and our own security by non-violent means.”

The resolution called for the immediate withdrawal of all military and intelligence forces, similar to what most of the peace movement demands in Iraq. More significantly, however, VFP “renounces the claim that the war in Afghanistan is somehow the ‘right’ war and reaffirms our position that war must be abolished.”

A second resolution put VFP squarely in the front rank of a burgeoning movement to prosecute Bush, Cheney and other administration officials for committing crimes against peace, crimes against humanity, and war crimes related to the invasion and occupation of Iraq. The statement was particularly timely, coming two weeks before a conference convenes in Andover, Massachusetts to examine that very question.

The resolution calling for the prosecution of Bush et al, with references, is reproduced

below.

Resolution on Prosecuting George W. Bush, Dick Cheney and other Bush Administration Officials for War Crimes, Crimes Against Peace and Crimes Against Humanity



Whereas, the March 2003 invasion of Iraq was not only immoral but illegal, violating numerous U.S. and international laws, including but not limited to USC 2441 (War Crimes Act of 1996), the Geneva Conventions, the Nuremberg Tribunal Charter, the U.N. Charter and Resolutions, the Laws and Customs of War on Land and;

Whereas, the Veterans For Peace “Case for Impeachment” details six pages of violations of the above laws and is still but a partial listing, and;

Whereas, the spineless dereliction of duty of the U.S. Congress may well allow Bush, Cheney and other administration officials to avoid impeachment before they leave office in January of 2009, and;

Whereas, U.S. Supreme Court Justice, Robert Jackson, appointed by President Truman to be the Chief Prosecutor at the Nuremberg Tribunals following World War II, stated so prophetically, “...let me make clear that while this law is first applied against German aggressors, the law includes, and if it is to serve a useful purpose it must condemn aggression by any other nations, including those which sit here now in judgment.” and;

Whereas, the anguished cry of a village sheik in Iraq must be answered when he implored, “You say you live in a democracy. How can this be happening to us?” and;

Whereas, as citizens of the United States we are complicit in the crimes of the Bush administration in Iraq because we cannot claim ignorance of these crimes, and;

Whereas, for the sake of humanity, for the sake of history, and to absolve even a small measure of the complicity we each share as U.S. citizens, we must do everything in our power to hold our leaders accountable and bring them to justice;

Therefore be it resolved that Veterans For Peace will take every appropriate measure on our own and in coalition with others to insure that George W. Bush, Dick Cheney, and responsible members of their administration are prosecuted for war crimes, crimes against peace and crimes against humanity before any court claiming jurisdiction in this country or abroad, for as long as they shall live.

The Veterans For Peace convention concluded in Minneapolis the day before the Republicans' began. Many VFP members extended their stay to participate in protests.

Mike Ferner is the author of "Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran For Peace Reports from Iraq," Greenwood 2006. Contact him at mike.ferner@sbcglobal.net

VFP – IVAW AND THE ELECTIONS of 2008

At Least Nine Demonstrators Arrested as Iraq Vets Try to Enter Final Presidential Debate

By Alex Kane

October 16, 2008 | Posted in IndyBlog | Email this article

As millions of Americans were readying their television sets to tune into the final presidential debate between John McCain and Barack Obama, a much different scene was unfolding outside of Hofstra University in Hempstead, NY where the debate took place.

At least five members of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW), a group of military veterans who are calling for immediate withdrawal from Iraq, were arrested, as well as at least four civilians, according to National Lawyers Guild observers. Nassau County police on horses trampled one member of IVAW, Nick Morgan, a veteran who served in Iraq for about a year. Morgan was knocked to the ground, and according to witnesses, the horse hooves slammed down on his face. A gash was visible on the side of his head as blood dripped down onto the pavement.

**** 12 members of ivaw were arrested - see more at www.ivaw.org ****

Protesters in the crowd said that Morgan was taken to a local hospital.

"The horses were pushing, like really pushing, against [members of IVAW], and physically touching their bodies," says Erika Ward, an NYU student and intern at Democracy Now! "To see people laying on the ground...was crazy. For me, it was really emotional, [and] I saw people crying," she continued.

AT THE HEMPSTEAD STATION

The protest began slowly, with about 70 anti-war activists rallying at a parking lot nearby the Hempstead train station. Speakers included a member of the New York Civil Liberties Union, a local civil rights advocate, a Military Families Speak Out activist and a member of the May 1st Coalition for Immigrant and Worker Rights. As more activists from the NYC area poured in, the march to the campus of Hofstra started, with defiant

chants of “Stop the torture, stop the war, this is what we’re fighting for,” and “They’re our brothers, they’re our sisters, we support war resisters!” filling the streets of Hempstead.

With IVAW members at the front, the crowd swelled to around 400 demonstrators. Members of the local Planned Parenthood joined in along the way. At one point, as the antiwar march neared the campus, a group of ten members of the Gathering of Eagles, a conservative pro-war organization, heckled the demonstrators. They shouted epithets like “traitor” and “treasonous” at the Iraq veterans.

The troops have “been promised so much...it’s important for IVAW to have a voice,” says Chelsea Florio, a freshman at Fordham University and a member of the Fordham Anti-War Coalition.

The members of IVAW, backed by a crowd of anti-war protesters, were allowed to pass through one line of police before they were met with lines of Nassau County riot police and cops on horses who would not allow the veterans to enter the Hofstra campus. IVAW members Matthis Chiroux and Kris Goldsmith, who organized the protest, went first and were promptly arrested. At least three other veterans and four civilians followed and were arrested as well.

The arrests seemed to energize the crowd, and as they chanted, “Let them in,” it looked as if things could easily get out of hand.

The police on horses pushed back against the crowd, which was fronted by a group of about 15 Iraq veterans, until the demonstrators had been moved onto a nearby sidewalk. After a tense standoff for five minutes, it looked like the police in riot gear shoved veterans and demonstrators to push them even further back, and around four people were knocked over by riot police and horses. It was during this fracas that Morgan was injured. After the police assault, a standoff between the cops and demonstrators occurred for over an hour.

A COUPLE OF QUESTIONS

A week ago, Chiroux, who this past May publicly declared his intent to refuse to deploy to Iraq, sent a letter to CBS debate moderator Bob Schieffer spelling out the demands of IVAW. Chiroux’s letter demanded that two members of IVAW, himself and Goldsmith, be allowed entry into the debate to ask Senators Obama and McCain one question each. CBS or Schieffer did not respond to the letter from Chiroux.

“What yourself and the candidates must decide now, Mr. Schieffer, is what the legacy of this debate will be. Will this be remembered as an event where both sides of the [aisle] and the media came together to hear from our nation’s heroes...or will the words and promises of both candidates be forever shrouded in the image of a host of uniformed

veterans and their supporters going to jail because these campaigns cared too little to hear from them?” Chiroux’s letter read.

“Our goal is to make Iraq and veterans the forefront of the debate,” said Goldsmith. Chiroux planned on asking Obama a pointed question: “My question is, as President of the United States of America, are you prepared to back up your own words [about the illegality of the Iraq War] and the U.S. Constitution by supporting service members refusing to participate in what you describe as an illegal occupation?”

Goldsmith wanted to ask McCain a question about his lack of support for veterans. “What promises are you willing to make, as a veteran, as a senator, as a presidential candidate, to the veterans of the United States, to prove that you will ensure the V.A. is fully funded, staffed and capable of preventing troops from suffering as they are now?” he says.

With the crowd emotionally exhausted and worn down, the protest started to taper off at about 8:30 PM.

“We have a blind media [and] deaf candidates, but [IVAW] has a voice that will be heard,” James Gilligan, a member of IVAW said earlier in the day.

CHAPTER 9

PICKING UP WHERE WE LEFT OFF - 2009

Eight years have passed since this history was last up-dated. Executive Directors and come and gone and come again; a boat named the Golden Rule has been launched; actions and sustaining projects have been carried on overseas; education projects and protests have dominated the home front.

I will try to select events and projects that best typify the general thrust of VFP activity in each year from 2009 to 2016. The histories of each chapter are chronicled in the VFP newsletter, but the history of VFP itself has to be pinned to a collective of events that characterize each period.

FACING OFF MILITARISM AND HEALING

The prolific John Grant wrote two pieces for the June Newsletter. One was an Op-Ed appearing in the Philadelphia Enquirer:

Confronting Army's Philadelphia experiment At Franklin Mills recruiting station, war is just a violent video game

John Grant

Op-ed, Philadelphia Inquirer, May 14, 2009

The Pentagon has launched a \$13 million marketing experiment at the Franklin Mills Mall in Northeast Philadelphia. It's an effort to sell the Army as a brand, like Disney, and it could one day be replicated in malls all over America. It's called the Army Experience Center, and it was recently confronted by 200 angry citizens from around the mid-Atlantic region, seven of whom were arrested. Their beef was the center's use of tax dollars to assemble what amounts to a sophisticated trap. The center's violent video games and simulations of shooting human targets seduce vulnerable teenagers into an "us-versus-them" mindset. The goal is recruitment.



The Center takes up 14,000 square feet of mall space next to the Dave & Buster's game emporium. Dozens of video stations are available for adolescents as young as 13 to play a host of violent video games, such as "America's Army," which is designed around a mission involving simulated shooting at human targets with an automatic weapon. Kids can strap into three large simulators and shoot human targets on huge, wraparound screens.

There's an Apache attack helicopter, a Humvee with seven mounted machine-gun turrets, and a Black Hawk helicopter with four door-gunner positions. This gets excitable boys to bond with the military mission. Questions about the history and context of conflicts are leapfrogged over, and kids get an adrenaline high linked directly to the Army and its mission in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The Army Experience Center is lulling these vulnerable young minds into an acceptance of the killing of others in far-flung places. The retired and active-duty military staff at the Army Experience Center have claimed on NBC News and elsewhere that they don't employ a "hard sell." And, to their credit, the staff is always cool, professional, and "soft" on the sales pitch. But that's the point: Instead of a used-car-salesman approach, they rely on the electronic dazzle to entice kids already immersed in video-game culture.

here's an insidious, direct link between **Visitors experience the Humvee simulator at the Army Experience Center at the Franklin Mills Mall in Northeast Philadelphia** luring children of the video-game generation into such a facility and the rapidly expanding reality of soldiers virtually piloting armed drones against targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan. For the properly desensitized individual, it's a small leap from playing video games to shooting real people via a video monitor.

In March, members of Veterans For Peace asked to set up a modest table near the center to pass out materials and talk with kids. We have not heard back. The taxes that support the Army Experience Center come from a variety of Americans, many of whom - like me - are troubled by this means of recruiting young people. Society agrees that many of them are not developed enough even to drink a beer or drive a car.

This is not an argument against defending ourselves, or against employing violence when it's necessary. This is an argument for giving kids the information they need to make the best decisions for themselves. One thing we can do is instill in them a much more rich, complex, and cooperative view of human life on

the planet - not the good-guys- blasting-bad-guys dichotomy drilled into them by the Army Experience Center.

That was just the opening gun. In a later article, John Grant chronicled a noisy protest by the Philadelphia chapter at the same mall on September 12 of 2009. The result; seven demonstrators were arrested and the rest kicked out, but not until there were a few meaningful exchanges with the “Gathering of Eagles” military veterans group supporting this abominable recruiting tool.

WOMEN IN ACTION - 2009

Ellen Barfield Found Guilty and Sentenced to 25 DAYS in JAIL

From Adopt Resistance - December 18, 2009

I met Ellen down in Georgia last month. She was at a Veterans for Peace meeting during the SOAW gathering outside of Fort Benning. She was concerned about the sentencing. If she was in jail she wouldn't be able to go to the [Gaza Freedom March](#) at the end of December. Here is a woman whose entire life is dedicated to peacemaking. Although she doesn't belong in prison, I know she'll will be an inspiration to others while she is there.

Three capital-area peace proponents interrupted a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on U.S. Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy last May 21, calling out “No more blood money for wars!” and “End the wars now.” To scattered applause from spectators, Ellen Barfield of Baltimore and Peter Perry and Eve Tetaz, both of Washington, dropped blood-stained dollar bills on the hearing room floor until they were removed by guards.

On December 14, citing the “biohazard” created by the blood-stained money, Judge Lynne Leibovitz of Washington’s Superior Court sentenced Barfield to 25 days in jail for the action. She sentenced Perry to four days and postponed Tetaz’s sentencing for health reasons.

VFP: Ellen was sentenced to 18 months of probation, 75 days in jail, all but 25 suspended. This means she began serving her 25 days today. Should she be arrested within the next 18 months, or violate terms of her probation (which includes a stay away from the entire Capitol complex), she will be hauled before Judge Liebovitz who pledged to give her the other 50 days. > Read the original action story

Ellen's statement to Judge Liebovitz:

Good morning, your Honor.

It is a part of nonviolence training to calmly face whatever the system feels it needs to do to the nonviolent activist who has challenged injustice.

Nonviolence training is an important part of being a peace and justice activist, and in my over 20 years of activism I have participated in many trainings and

group discussions on how to resist violence, both in society and in oneself. I do not believe in violence of any kind, a conviction, ironically enough, I began forming when I was serving as an armed potential purveyor of violence as a soldier in the Army.

The subject of the hearing where my colleagues and I briefly spoke out was the possible diversion of just a little bit of the enormous sums being spent on killing and destruction to the human needs of the Afghan people. We doubted that would happen, and we are now saddened to hear about nothing but troop escalation and drone bombings killing Afghan and Pakistani families. Just a few days ago the director of Care International's Afghan effort decried the militarization of the small amount of humanitarian aid available, less than 10% of that spent on the military. Aid is being distributed for military counterinsurgency purposes. When soldiers and aid workers together visit a village, the aid workers are distrusted and the village becomes less safe because soldiers were seen there.

I have loved ones caught up in combat overseas right now. I must speak out in opposition to the immoral, unjust, anti-social wars our nation has been waging for so many years. I must urge my loved ones and my neighbors to refuse the command to hate and kill Afghans and Iraqis. I refuse to hate the enemies our government has designated, and I refuse to hate people with whom I disagree. But silence is the voice of complicity, and I cannot be complicit with our government's warmaking.

24th National Convention held in College Park, Maryland.

VFP WOMEN TALK at 2009 Convention

by Georgia Wever

A lively Women's Caucus at the 2009 Convention came up with ideas and concerns enough for a caucus of many times its size.

Building VFP

Upon learning that nearing 1/3 of VFP members are non-veterans, participants volunteered to write an outreach flyer directed specifically to women veterans. There were a few proposals for chapters:

- Post and distribute the women's flyer at battered women's and homeless shelters, since many residents are veterans.
- Visit the women's coordinator at the VA and try to get the flyer posted.
- Post the flyer in the women's room at the VA, Social Security offices and welfare centers, and distribute it at entrances.

- Ask local peace and justice groups to ask on their membership forms, “Have you ever served in the military?” Collect the names periodically and invite them to chapter meetings.
- Make friends with the aide in your elected officials’ offices. They receive calls and letters from veterans requesting assistance and, with encouragement, may keep a list and forward names to local chapters.

Attention to anti-recruitment

The discussion reflected special concern about the recruitment of young women in the military. The group applauded the new VFP bumper sticker “Warning: 1 in 3 Women RAPED in Military” and designation of October 12 - 16, 2009, as Military Rape Awareness Week (MRAW). A link to MRAW will be on the VFP web site, to promote ideas for the campaign. The sticker can be used creatively--not only on car bumpers but in toilet stalls in schools where recruitment is active and anywhere young women congregate.

It was pointed out that military recruiters recognize that victims of incest may seek out the military in an attempt to find safety from a violent home life. Anti-recruitment efforts must emphasize that the military is not a safe haven for women. Commanding officers do not know how to address charges of assaults against women; several participants related personal experiences of poorly handled issues regarding women or minorities.

The Miles Foundation was mentioned as an information clearinghouse for victims of sexual violence in the military, as was Servicewomen’s Action Network (SWAN). (The speakers for the Military Sexual Assault workshop at the convention provided good sources too; Pack Parachute Charity and MilitarySexualAssault.com.)

Building Visibility

Caucus participants will advertise the Women’s Listserv in the VFP newsletter and on flyers. They suggested improving the visibility of women in the newsletter by re-establishing a permanent women’s column (or column about women with both men and women contributors). Also, a periodic conference call would enable those without computers to participate in discussion. There is hope for a film version of the book, *The Woman Soldier*. Two books were recommended: *The Lonely Soldier* by Helen Benedict (Beacon Press) and *Bringing Vincent Home* by Madeline Mysko (Plainviewpress.net). Many would like a magnetic (removable) auto sticker or license plate holder that reads “Woman Veteran” with the VFP web address on it. Statistics on women veterans in prisons may be useful. What organizations keep such information?

How can veteran’s organizations use it to reach out to women vets in prison and upon release? Does VFP have prison chapters or homeless chapters? How do they work? There was understanding of the situation of military wives who also “serve” by living overseas with husbands. One participant described her loneliness at leaving her family at 16 years of age to accompany her husband overseas. Because she “had two tours” she identifies with veteran’s issues. Is there a place for the voices of military wives to be heard in VFP?

WAR CRIMES TIMES INNAUGURATED

In September, 2009, Chapter 99 introduced the first issue of War Crimes Times at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. The story as it appeared in WCT that year:



Vets Demonstrate at Archives

A group of veterans calling for the arrest of George W. Bush and Richard Cheney as war criminals occupied the ledge over the visitors' entrance to the National Archives in Washington, DC on September 23. Spokesman Tarak Kauff told reporters, "People say Bush and Cheney will be gone soon so what's the point? The point is, there is no statute of limitations on war crimes, and if not held accountable, criminality will continue regardless of who is in office. We either are or we are not a nation of law."

The veterans fasted during the occupation "in remembrance of those who have perished and those still suffering from the crimes of the Bush administration," according to their written statement. In November, the group occupied the National Archives for two days.

At the Whitehouse

Hundreds of people gathered outside the White House for the National Campaign for Non-Violent Resistance. Over 80 were arrested, including eight VFP members: Ward Reilly, Leah Bolger, Tarak Kauff, Mike Hearington, Mike Ferner, Ken Mayers, Jim Goodnow, and Hans Michael Bermeersch. Those protesting were calling for the withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan, ending the illegal bombing with U.S. drones, closing the Bagram prison, and ending indefinite detention and torture.

At Times Square

VFP held a major action outside recruiting center in Times Square, NY to expose the issue of Military Sexual Trauma (MST) which is an epidemic in the military but not treated as one. VFP is contributing to changing this through events like Military Rape Awareness Week, declared by the VFP board to be October 12-16, 2009. Members of VFP, Iraq Veterans against the War, Granny Peace Brigade, Codepink: Women for Peace, World Can't Wait, Artists Response Team and We Will Not Be Silent, stood outside the recruiting center in Times Square NYC to warn women recruits about the alarming rates of sexual assault and rape of women in the military.

Sandra Lee, a survivor of military rape and Eve Ensler, internationally known playwright both spoke to the crowd and led the march to the recruiting station. read press release.

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FIRST INTERNATIONAL CHAPTER CHARTERED;; VFP 160 in VIETNAM

The article below gives insight into the genesis and the activities of the chapter:

The Greatest Danger in the World

By Dana Visalli

I am on a journey through Vietnam with a group of American Vietnam War veterans who now live in Vietnam and work to address some of the profound human problems still caused by a war that ended 50 years ago. Known as VFP Hoa Binh Chapter 160, these men work to help people still being maimed by the estimated one and a half billion pounds of bombs ("ordnance") dropped by the United States on Vietnam during the war that did not explode at the time they were released (7 million tons, or 14 billion pounds of bombs were dropped on Vietnam and an estimated 10% of them failed to detonate). In addition these American veterans work to help some of the approximately 1 million people (a Red Cross of Vietnam estimate) people born with genetic defects or otherwise disabled or in poor health due to exposure to the 20 million gallons of toxic herbicides sprayed on South Vietnam's tropical rainforests food and crops. The primary herbicide used was Agent Orange, which contains the known carcinogen dioxin.

While the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency denies that dioxin is a mutagen (causing mutant genes), the rate of birth defects in Vietnam as quadrupled since the war.

We visited a number of the victims of unexploded ordnance and toxic herbicides, which brings home the human dimensions of suffering, misery and death that are the inevitable legacy of war. The primary causes of exploding war-era ordnance today are farmers working in their fields and scrap metal collectors. Scrap metal can earn a villager as much as \$75 a year—a meaningful sum of money to the impoverished and one of the only sources of income available to them. Nguyen Xuan Thiet in Quang Tri Province made part of his annual income to support his family by collecting and selling scrap metal. In 2005 he found a mortar, and while moving it it exploded, blowing off both of his legs and one of his hands. For two years after coming home from the hospital he was completely incapacitated.

The VFP-sponsored Project RENEW has now supplied him with prosthesis that allow him to walk. His family is so poor that they continue to collect scrap metal for income in spite of the tragedy that befell the father.

Friendship Village just outside of Hanoi is a facility for victims of Agent Orange that was initiated by an American Vietnam War veteran, George Mizo, who later died his own exposure to Agent Orange. The village currently cares for 150 people, many of them children severely disabled with genetic birth defects assumed to be from Agent Orange. Education begins at the most basic level, teaching the physically and/or mentally impaired children how to use the toilet and otherwise keep themselves clean. More advanced students might learn to cook and how to engage in a trade that will offer them some income.

There are currently about 125,000 children in Vietnam with birth defects thought to be related to Agent Orange, so the work of Friendship Village barely scratches the surface of the depths of need. This is the third generation of such children; the dioxin--induced deformities are expected to last for several more generations before the chemical breaks down adequately to no longer be a threat to human well-being.

Dana Visalli is a biologist living in Washington State; email dana@methownet.com, web page www.methownaturalist.com,

ANOTHER LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT

President Obama had been in office a scant year and already severe disappointment was setting in.

CONVENTION 2010 : - Portland Maine

Two important announcements were made at the 25th Anniversary Convention in Portland, ME. After 25 years the Membership voted to increase basic membership to \$40

annually (a VFP Assisted rate of \$25 will remain available). Also, Veterans For Peace announced the Howard Zinn Fund for Peace and Justice as an endowment that will help National better serve the Chapters.

Back to the Origins

By John Grant

The 25th annual convention of Veterans For Peace took place August 25 to 29 in Portland, Maine, where the organization began in 1985. More than 360 members were in attendance.

Chapter 1 organized the convention, which was held at the Holiday Inn By The Bay – as in Casco Bay. As usual, it was an opportunity for veteran friends to get together to discuss politics, attend the 36 workshops and experience the good fellowship that is the glue in an organization like VFP.

Chapter 1 put together such a fat convention booklet, it made a \$6500 profit for the national organization; Chapter 1 also gave \$3000 in scholarships to attendees from the chapter's Tom Sturtevant Fund.

As in past conventions, some members of the Iraq Veterans Against The War and Military Families Speak Out also attended and had their own meetings during the convention. It all began on Wednesday with a day-long Board Meeting. Thursday and Friday were taken up by workshops covering many of the issues VFP members are concerned about. Saturday was the annual Business Meeting, which included the usual period of wrangling over a host of resolutions. Veteran poets Jan Barry, David Connolly, Bill Ehrhart, Doug Rawlings, and Michael Uhl read poems Wednesday night; the reading was followed by an open mike.

The official opening of the convention was on Thursday morning and featured Chief Kirk Francis of the Penobscot Nation, who welcomed VFP members to Maine. Charlie Clemens, an Air Force pilot in Vietnam who distinguished himself during the war in El Salvador as a doctor working in the war zone, also spoke. He was joined by Maja Kazazic, a young Bosnian woman who lost both her legs below the knees as a child. She was brought to the United States for medical care under the auspices of VFP's Children Of War Rescue Project.



Current President Mike Ferner (left) with founding President Jerry Genesio.

VFP founder Jerry Genesio spoke and recalled those days. Thursday night there was a Public Meeting at a nearby church that featured writer Terry Tempest Williams; California congressman Bob Filner, Chair of the House Veterans Affairs Committee; and Maine Rep. Chellie Pingree, a member of the House Armed Services Committee.

Friday evening was taken up with a ferry trip and lobster bake on Peaks Island, all of which was great fun, good fellowship and lots of laughs. The Saturday night banquet is the convention climax.



Ann Wright describing the attack on the humanitarian flotilla bringing supplies to blockaded Gaza.

Former Army Colonel and VFP leader Ann Wright spoke movingly of her experiences with the tragic Gaza Flotilla shot up by Israelis. Noel Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul and Mary sang some great songs. Ben Cohen, co-founder of the ice cream company Ben & Jerry's, gave a great presentation using piled up Oreo cookies to show the absurdities of the defense budget.

Then former war correspondent Chris Hedges unleashed one of the most scorching VFP convention speeches in memory, a jeremiad warning us all of what the future could look like if we don't figure out how to organize alternatives to where things are going. The speech disturbed some, due to its sense of dread, as it inspired others to do more.

Jerry Genesio, one of VFP's founders in 1985, was recognized at the dinner for his important contributions. The dinner wrapped up with Doug Zachary tapping into his Texas Bible-belt background to inspire 23 attendees to come forward to purchase \$1000 life memberships. and Justice.

The convention was an opportunity to meet new Executive Director Dennis Lane, who announced the formation, in conjunction with the family of Howard Zinn, of the Howard Zinn Fund for Peace and Justice. Zinn, who died this year, was a proud member of VFP.

After breakfast on Sunday morning, a closing march through Portland began to form outside the hotel with banners and signs and the beating of a huge Native American drum. The spirited march passed under a banner dropped over a building by VFP members that said: How Is The War Economy Working For You?

The march ended with speeches from a number of attendees, summing up many of the themes of the convention.

VFP President Mike Ferner, who MCed much of the convention, summed it up: "Through dramatic bursts of all-out all-nighters and the more typical periods of slogging, slogging, slogging — we've been through it all. But what the hell else can you do after you've seen up close and personal what lies in Empire's wake? "There could be no better work, and we could find no better family in which to do it."

One of the endearing, yet most frustrating aspects of an organization made up of a wide-ranging demographic is perpetual disagreement as to what we should be doing to bring about peace:

PRESIDENT ELLIOTT ADAMS ADDRESSES THE ISSUE

We sometimes lose sight of the beauty of our mission statement. The part I am thinking of now is “all members are trusted to act in the best interests of the group for the larger purpose of world peace.” In this time of ideologues and polarization, this statement stands out and makes us different from the current culture. It acknowledges that we are not a monolithic group, but that we are bound together by our dedication to create peace through our veteran’s voice. I have heard people say they must leave VFP because of what someone else did; I have heard people say good riddance to those who talk of leaving. I disagree with both. We all, including both sides of every argument, need everyone. The group of people, and vets in particular, who are dedicated to ending war is small. We cannot afford to casually let anyone go over some small frustrations or differences. As our statement of purpose says, we can each work on campaigns that we believe will end war, knowing full well others in the organization believe different campaigns will end war. And we, as a group, have more strength because of the diversity of our approaches to creating peace and abolishing war. We waste critical energy in arguments, criticisms, bullying, and even threats over different ways to abolish war. Sharing ideas is critical for our growth.

But sometimes in our dedication we lose sight of the line between sharing ideas and attacking each other verbally. Stop and think for a moment, who does it serve to have us put our energy into fighting among ourselves about the best strategy to abolish war? Who wants us to do that instead of working to abolish war? The very warmongers who profit from having \$10 billion a month for war extracted from the working people.

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

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

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

Elliott Adams

Never-the-Less, the chapters continue to distinguish themselves.

2011 – Washington D. C. Sees a Lot of VFP

- March 19: Over 200 people, at the gates of the White House, in an action led by VFP, chant, “Stop the Wars. Expose the Lies. Free Bradley Manning,” to mark the anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. Some chain themselves to the fence and

- eventually 124 are arrested, the largest number of people arrested in peaceful protest in Washington in a long time. VFP participates in other rallies including San Francisco and Chicago.
- March 20: Over 400 people rally at the main gate of Marine Corps headquarters in Quantico, VA, demanding Bradley Manning be released from solitary confinement and freed. Several dozen, mostly VFP and IVAW members are arrested.
 - March: Following these two days of protest, VFP members begin planning for a fall occupation of Washington, D.C. Planning committee rapidly grows beyond VFP and chooses date of October 6, to mark 10th anniversary of the invasion of Afghanistan.
 - October 6: A well-planned occupation of Freedom Plaza in Washington, D.C. begins, which by this time is one of a few dozen that have popped up around the country, following examples set in Tunisia and Egypt.

As Does Boston and Oakland, CA

- October: Police in Boston meet a line of VFP members nonviolently protecting Occupy activists in a city park. Police push through VFP ranks, knocking several to the ground.
- November, Police in Oakland violently clear Occupy activists from a city park. Scott Olsen, Iraq vet and VFP member, is struck in the head with a tear gas canister and critically injured. His VFP t-shirt stands out clearly in wire service photos of him laying on the ground, sparking outrage and large support for VFP.

Mike Ferner takes over as interim Executive Director

Dennis Lane did what he deemed best for VFP, but came up against too much resistance within the ranks. Upon his resignation, Mike Ferner, then president, took over the office in St. Louis on an interim basis.

2012 - Mike Reid Selected to Serve as Executive Director

During his one-year term he oversaw the following developments as reported in the 2012 Newsletter:

- ◆ - Formation of 6 new chapters
- ◆ - Increased in Membership Renewals
- ◆ - Improved and Increased Membership Communications
- ◆ - Very Successful 2012 Convention
- ◆ - Increased prominence in the Media
- ◆ - Hiring of a Chapter Coordinator and Fund Development Director
- ◆ - Development of a National Print Shop

2013 - Welcome Back Michael McPhearson

The man who relieved Woody Powell in 2005 returned to take over from Mike Reid who left to engage issues local to St. Louis. One of the year's major issues

had become the militarization of police forces, brought into sharp focus with the events in Ferguson, Missouri.

MILITARIZATION OF POLICE IS A VFP ISSUE

Casey Stinemetz

The New York Times

December 2, 2011



The VFP national office staff began to examine the militarization of the police early this year. Executive Director Michael McPhearson addressed the issue on a local panel hosted by Drone Free Saint Louis, as part of organizing efforts to stop police from acquiring drones. In August, after unarmed teen-ager Michael Brown was killed by a Ferguson, Missouri, police officer, people across the country turned to newscasts, social media, and live feeds to attempt to make sense of what was happening. Haunting images of local police officers using military equipment on protesters in Ferguson emerged, making it impossible to deny that militarization of police is a real issue in our own streets. In St. Louis, many of us witnessed firsthand the escalation of violence over the following weeks, at the hands of local police.

At our 2014 National Convention, we discussed the concepts and theories of building peace at home and peace abroad. Now is the time to put those ideas into action. People across the country are now ready for change: to reform the policies and the system that has allowed oppression and police brutality to haunt our streets. This system is one that is supported by the U.S. war machine. As Veterans For Peace, we can lead the discussion about the militarization of our communities, and about the Pentagon's program to equip local and state police departments with military surplus weaponry.

How Did We Get Here?

When comparing today's police officer with those of the past, it is easy to see the differences from the equipment to the mentality. Over the past several decades while many of us weren't paying attention, the U.S. government has been quietly arming our local police with military weaponry.

This shift was initiated by the Nixon administration's declaration of the war on drugs in the early 1970s. Then, in the 1980s, as result of President Reagan's escalation, millions of federal dollars were poured into the drug war, pivoting the focus of local law enforcement away from violent and property crimes to mostly small-time drug offenders.

In recent years, the U.S government has initiated a program that funnels to local police equipment that was designed and intended for use in a war zone. Congress in 1990 enacted the National Defense Authorization Act. Section 1208 of the NDAA allowed the Secretary of Defense to "transfer to Federal and State agencies personal property of the Department of Defense, including small arms and ammunition, to be used by the agencies in "counter-drug programs." It was called the 1208 Program. In 1996, Congress replaced Section 1208 with Section 1033. The 1033 Program authorized the Pentagon to transfer military equipment to local law enforcement free of charge, without established standards. The only requirement is that equipment be used within one year, which gives officers a high incentive to use their new weapons and establishes a "use it or lose it" mentality among local agencies. In addition, there are no training guide-lines or requirements enforced by the federal government. Since the program began in 1990, more than \$4.3 billion in equipment and weapons has been transferred to more than 8,000 participating police departments, according to the Pentagon.

war on terror, and the incentives from the federal government have pushed local law enforcement to slowly shift their role from community peace officers to armed crime enforcers, looking for an enemy.

Military Mentality In Local Police

What happens when cops armed with the weapons and tactics of war? Everything looks like a war zone. This creates more tension in local communities and brings animosity from the residents. In a war zone, the mission is to confront and kill a defined enemy. The peace officer has no enemies. His or her mission is to protect the community and every person within it. No matter what crime they may have committed, all U.S citizens are entitled to the protections of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights and due process. Many police officers fail to make and keep that distinction in mind, especially as weapons and battle gear have poured into their agencies.



VFP at Justice for Mike Brown March in Ferguson, MO

What Happens When Weapons Go Missing?

With all of this military equipment being funneled to our local communities via the 1033 program, many citizens are demanding that this equipment be tracked and made public knowledge. However, finding this equipment has proven to be very challenging for investigators. The decentralized structure of the program makes it difficult for the federal government to keep tabs on the standing of participating police departments, so it becomes increasingly challenging to monitor the actual equipment transfers. 184 state and local police departments have been suspended from the Pentagon's "1033 program" for missing weapons or failure to comply with other guidelines.

PEACE AT HOME – PEACE ABROAD - The events in Ferguson and the subsequent awakening of much of the country to endemic injustices show a new path for Veterans For Peace.

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Patrick McCann

Our 29th annual convention in July 2014 in Asheville, NC may have been our best ever. Why? 50 of the almost 350 attendees at the convention were post-9/11 veterans, signaling a potentially transforming phenomena for VFP. We put our money where our mouth is, investing thousands of dollars to bring young veterans, women veterans, and veterans of color to the convention. We must now ensure that this infusion becomes part of VFP's permanent landscape.

Another important advance was the unveiling of VFP's new orientation to build "Peace at Home, Peace Abroad." Members of our Board of Directors have eloquently argued that VFP should focus energy toward achieving peace at home to help achieve peace abroad. Directing nonviolent actions, projects, and campaigns toward ending

injustice and violence in our communities will build credibility for VFP, attracting new members and financial support. Communities appreciate and support organizations who help to make their community safer and more peaceful. VFP's organizing work around Ferguson, Missouri, demanding justice for Michael Brown reflects our commitment to that effort.

In the Fall of 2015 newsletter, Michael McPhearson wrote:

“Veterans For Peace is at its heart an anti-war organization. Our Statement of Purpose calls on us to abolish war. Confronting war and militarism in all its forms must remain our primary focus. Yet, we are more. We are not Veterans Against War. We advocate for justice for veterans and victims of war and our Statement calls on us to serve the cause of world peace. Because it is clear that the absence of war is not peace, we must work for world peace by taking part in the global struggle for justice both at home and abroad. To do this we must be leaders in opposing war and militarism and an co-conspirator in the struggle for justice. This is the formula for struggling for peace.”

MORAL DILEMMAS

We are inserting two representative arguments by two highly-credible veterans of Vietnam War on an issue that has confounded people of good will within the organization. We believe it is representative of the diversity of opinion and moral certainty that is inevitable in an organization as diverse as VFP.

Diverse Voices: VFP, Project Renew & US AID

Many times over the years of our existence, VFP members have gone toe-to-toe over issues of great concern to all of us.. And now we are somewhat consumed by the USAID question -- should VFP act as the fiscal spon-sor of grant monies, through Project Renew, that comes from USAID? At our last convention in San Diego, this issue was the most contentious under consideration at our business meeting and both sides presented impassioned and oftentimes eloquent statements in support of their viewpoints.

To some members this debate is disconcerting. It indicates to them that we are an organization that is fracturing apart. Au contraire. I think it represents further evidence that we are capable of operating under a large tent. We are a "tribe" of malcontents, for sure -- many of us dyed-in-the-wool "non-joiners", so of course we fight like cats and dogs. We care. We are activists. We refuse to stand aside when we perceive injustice taking hold, especially when it is the U.S. military doing the dirty work.

Early on in the debate, I foolishly represented my stance as "taking the moral high ground," implying that those who disagreed with me were somehow morally inferior. I

apologize for such foolishness. Really, what we are talking about here is a strategic dilemma -- should we or should we not step into this arena? I think the best way to decide for ourselves is to listen to two of our most esteemed members, Brian and Chuck, both of whom are American War in Vietnam veterans. They disagree. Here is what they have written. *Doug Rawlings*

BRIAN WILLSON:

Background: The Board of Veterans For Peace, by a majority vote, has agreed to serve as fiscal sponsor for Project RENEW in Viet Nam in order to receive government grant monies to be funneled through the US Agency for International Development (USAID). This new role for VFP has been very contentious among members, including members of the Board.

VFP Ballot: VFP members will receive a mailed ballot in late October/early November that includes Resolution 2015-08, Veterans For Peace Should Have No Relationship with USAID. I urge a vote FOR this Resolution which would prohibit VFP from having a relationship with USAID for any purpose.

Facts: 1. Despite USAID (1961-present) representing itself as “the lead US Government agency that works to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies”, its dark history discloses in fact its role as an intrinsic component of US policy of “full spectrum dominance” overseeing “humanitarian” projects, often in shadowy affiliations with agencies such as the CIA. During the U.S. War against Viet Nam, AID’s “humanitarian” efforts included being CIA cover in such functions as operating prisons, including secret, brutal “tiger cages”, and training police and jailers leading to torture and murder of countless Vietnamese.

2. The US owes billions of reparations dollars to the Vietnamese for unspeakable damage criminally inflicted during the war. Reparations should be appropriated directly by the US to the Vietnamese government.

3. Project RENEW is an exemplary 15-year old project in Quang Tri Province run by highly competent Vietnamese leading to dramatic reduction in annual deaths from Unexploded Ordnance (UXO). It currently enjoys substantial financial partner/donor relationships with the Vietnamese government, US State Department, Norwegian People’s Aid, and a variety of international corporate and private contributors.

4. Viet Nam and the United States are two of twelve members of the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP), ironically are now allies in US policy to contain China. The US is providing funds for various Vietnamese projects, while enjoying joint military exchanges at the port of Danang. Viet Nam is now seeking fighter jets and drones from US contractors as part of the US “Pivot” to Asia. US companies such as Monsanto (remember Agent Orange?) are now promoting GMO and herbicide-based agribusiness in Viet Nam.

5. The VFP board decision to serve as a fiscal sponsor for USAID funds is understandably a contentious and divisive issue within the VFP membership.

The ISSUE: Is Veterans For Peace an appropriate organization to seek, accept or sponsor US government funds, including from AID? I argue that such decision threatens VFP's impeccable credibility while seriously weakening its position as one of the fiercest, independent activist critics of US domestic and foreign policies.

Discussion:

1. It is noteworthy that some organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders, absolutely prohibit seeking or accepting funds from governments or their granting agencies. This is to assure that there is no appearance of being beholden or subject to any political pressure to unfairly serve some recipients while ignoring others. Grantors historically tend to use their power to manipulate original intentions due to "political" agendas.

2. Since the national VFP board does not operate by consensus, there appears to be no process by which to resolve contentious issues except to choose a policy that pleases some members, perhaps a majority, while leaving a substantial minority, displeased and alienated. In so doing, the solidarity of the group is weakened, while preventing the likelihood finding more creative solutions that almost always emerge when a consensus process is diligently followed to a resolution satisfactory to all.

3. The rhetorical communications between and among participants in the discussion of whether VFP should pursue, or refuse, fiscal sponsorship of USAID funds, has revealed numerous examples of a culture of war, not one of peace, severely breaching a spirit of non-violence. This acrimony suggests that VFP ignores fundamental principles necessary for a peace culture to thrive. Conflicts inevitably arise and they require practicing mutual respect, careful listening, while patiently clarifying summaries of respective positions.

4. It is not apparent that proponents of VFP who seek fiscal sponsorship for AID funds have displayed good faith efforts to search for other appropriate fiscal sponsors whose constituent membership would steadfastly support sponsoring AID funds to Project RENEW. A number of sponsors already fund Project RE-NEW. In the unlikely prospect that other fiscal sponsors cannot be found, it would nonetheless not justify VFP seeking sponsorship if an earnest minority of its membership articulate reasons for opposition.

5. VFP possesses a reputation for being brutally honest in its critique of US patterns of unjust and diabolical domestic and foreign policies, while presenting alternative perspectives. Having any funding connection whatsoever with the US government or its agencies such as USAID, places VFP below reproach, severely limiting its fierce independence as a voice for candor from inside the most violent empire.

6. VFP UK unanimously voted 170-0 to oppose any VFP USA association with AID, concluding that USAID's involvement with VFP USA is politically part of the dangerous US military "Pivot to Asia". This relationship compromises VFP's independent position

seriously undermining its credibility for reaching out to other global communities who clearly possess a critical perspective of the US government. VFP UK Chair, Ben Griffin, argues that a relationship with USAID contravenes one key principle of the Statement of Purpose, “To restrain our government from intervening, overtly and covertly, in the internal affairs of other nations”. The embryonic Veterans For Peace Australia have indicated that such VFP USA position is also likely to be unacceptable to their becoming affiliated with the latter.

Conclusion: I remain stunned that the VFP board ever seriously considered serving as a fiscal sponsor for funds to be administered through USAID. The controversial decision is understandably divisive and contentious within national VFP membership, and a majority vote does not resolve this divisiveness. The lack of any earnest search for alternative fiscal sponsors is most troubling to me since that avenue, it seems, would enable a most reasonable and realistic resolution. The fact that the money may in fact be used for good purposes is *not* the issue. To repeat: The issue is whether VFP is an appropriate fiscal sponsor for USAID funds. By proceeding without a consensus, the solidarity of VFP is weakened, not strengthened. It will significantly disable VFP USA’s capacity to pro-mote anti-war/pro-peace veterans groups in other countries who may see more clearly the compromised integrity that choosing to operate in concert with monies from the US government or its agencies like USAID implies.

CHUCK SEARCY:

Since there will be a vote by the membership on the USAID grant application, it is clear that as much accurate and factual information as possible should be available to everyone.

The Project RENEW staff -- our Vietnamese colleagues with whom I have worked for 14 years -- and Chuck Palazzo and I, mainly, as VFP reps on the ground here, have kept the VFP Board of Directors informed of this USAID application process in some detail.

We have maintained regular contact with the VFP Board of Directors' implementation sub-group set up by President Barry Ladendorf to monitor this situation on behalf of the Board and raise any questions that ought to be asked. The members of that group are Mark Foreman, chair; Gerry Condon; Paul Cox; Ken Mayers; VFP Exec. Dir. Michael T. McPhearson; and Barry.

The Implementation Group has received copies of all relevant correspondence, consisting primarily of several draft versions and a final Concept Paper required by USAID as the first step in applying for funds; and an itemized 5-year budget plan with accompanying detailed budget narrative and explanations keyed to each line item expenditure. Those are still *draft* versions, which will be reviewed, tweaked, and finalized if we get the go-ahead to submit them formally.

At the Board meeting at the San Diego convention on the morning of August 5th, I was asked to provide an update, which I did. In essence, I reported that the "Concept Paper" we submitted was rejected by USAID because Quang Tri Province was not listed as "eligible" for funding under this grant. We expected that hurdle and planned to initiate a thorough discussion, as promised by USAID, about the reasons why Quang Tri *should have been eligible*, which the Vietnamese were prepared to argue quite persuasively. USAID demurred at that point and suggested that to reverse their restriction on Quang Tri would require considerably more discussion and review. It is not a simple matter to change parameters in a document that has been months in preparation, they hinted. However, the mission director and staff pointedly *encouraged* us to make the case to do that.

At that juncture I suggested that RENEW and VFP could use this rejection as a valid reason to simply walk away, turn our backs on the bureaucracy and the time spent and the additional headaches that would likely ensue. The Vietnamese, however, RENEW staff and provincial officials -- after discussing the question at length -- made the decision to go forward with the application at least until there is a clear, firm refusal from USAID. The Board endorsed that approach, and the members who attended a plenary session and voted on the question supported the Board's decision by a small but clear majority.

Here, let me note that amid all the talk about policy, politics, bureaucratic ineptitude, and sinister motives, the Vietnamese continue to come back to a fundamental point: the 15,000 victims of Agent Orange in Quang Tri and their families who would be targeted for help and support in their homes, primarily, where their needs are greatest, simply have nowhere else to turn beyond existing services, which are inadequate. The Vietnamese staff at RENEW have long felt a responsibility to use the skills and expertise they have developed over 14 years in helping UXO victims, and to expand these efforts to serve this population of Agent Orange victims. The AO victims have suffered for too long, with little or no help. USAID happens to be the only conduit through which U.S. government assistance will come, a decision that is out of our hands. There is no other way, or in sight down the road. Some of us continue to feel strongly that the U.S. government has an ethical and moral obligation to provide funds for this purpose. Call it reparations or not -- it's 40 years late and four generations overdue.

Following that decision by the Vietnamese to go forward, the Chair-man of the Provincial government sent a letter dated July 31, 2015 to USAID and one to the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, Invalids, and Social Affairs which is USAID's primary governmental link here. The letters formally requested reconsideration of the denial of Quang Tri's eligibility for these funds, and suggested that a meeting of all the parties be arranged to discuss the matter. The Chairman is still awaiting a response from MOLISA and USAID.

Nothing more has happened since then. I have suggested to the Chairman's staff that they've waited politely long enough, they should follow up and ask for a timely response.

RENEW staff have not spent any more time tweaking the budget plan and budget narrative. There's no reason to. We won't do so until there is a clear signal to go forward with an official submission.

I believe we have provided all the documentation requested by the Implementation Group on behalf of the Board. We've tried to keep the Board informed of any developments that are noteworthy, although there have not been many, and certainly none of late.

Final point, regarding so many valid examples and arguments about the U.S. role around the world and our improprieties and crimes and disasters that have been thrown into this discussion. Hardly a charge has been made that I don't agree with. In Vietnam we spend an inordinate amount of time arguing with our Vietnamese friends about the TPP and why they should be cautious about this deceptive deal; about the "Asia pivot" and the grave diplomatic and security imbalances that may result for Vietnam; the effort to open U.S. arms sales to Vietnam and the critical dangers that new policy may portend. Our Vietnamese friends view those issues seriously as well. But on the "threat" from USAID, as one official told me some months ago, "We know all about USAID. We have watched them carefully for years. Don't worry about us. Go ahead and take the money. Our people need your help."

MAJOR PROJECTS & ACTIONS

While VFP has avoided so-called "National" projects as a matter of policy, certain projects have been successful enough, gained wide enough publicity, to reflect favorably upon VFP as a whole and earn the support of large segments of the membership. This phenomena bears out the wisdom, in this writer's opinion, of not imposing projects from the central administration of VFP but supporting and allowing projects enough room to breathe and earn support on their demonstrated merit. Among such projects is the ...

VETERANS - VIET NAM RESTORATION PROJECT - 1989 --

New VVRP Team Being Organized

Fredy Champagne

Have you ever wanted to return to Viet Nam, to see the country and people in all its beauty, without the horror of the war memo-ries? Perhaps you have wondered what happened to the people in that village, and would like to walk through that place again

with the children hanging off your arms, all running laughing and screaming in delight. Perhaps you have never been to Viet Nam, but wish to see what all the fuss was all about 30 years ago.

I write to you today to remind you of one of the many fine veterans organizations working in Viet Nam. Since Sherry Champagne and I led the first team into Vung Tau in early 1989, the Veterans - Viet Nam Restoration Project, (VVRP) has worked toward reconciliation with Viet Nam. The VVRP was a part of the movement to stop the trade embargo against Viet Nam, which was finally lifted in January of 1994. Many members of VFP have traveled to Viet Nam and worked for a few weeks with the Veterans - Viet Nam Restoration Project, headquartered in Garberville, CA. This small grass roots organization has been sending groups of veterans back to Viet Nam in small work teams since 1988. Indeed, seventeen teams have worked in Viet Nam since it's inception.

Dedicated to healing the wounds of the war, and leading to reconciliation among the many participants on both sides, these teams have completed humanitarian aid construction projects in all areas of Viet Nam, from Hanoi to Ho Chi Minh City, and all points in between.

Typically, a team consists of 5 to 8 persons, who will train for three days in Northern California before leaving for a 3 to 5 week work program. Teams may work every morning for a few hours along side the Vietnamese workers toward the completion of a particular project. Some projects have been repair or construction of medical clinics. Other projects have included work on schools, orphanages, or housing for disabled war veterans or orphans.

After a morning of hard work and satisfying construction, team members usually have an afternoon and evening of free time, and sometimes an official program or visit to neighboring villages and sites. Some time at the end of each project is allotted to traveling and seeing the country and people of Viet Nam.

Another new team (Team Eighteen) is gearing up for travel to Viet Nam in the next few months. I urge any of you that may be interested to call for information and sign up on our mailing list for future information. The phone/fax number is (707) 923-3357, and the website address is www.vvrp.org.

The VVRP was endorsed by Veterans For Peace, Inc. at the 1988 VFP Convention in Portland, Maine. Fredy Champagne is the founder of VVRP and a VFP Board member.

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THE MID-ATLANTIC VETERANS FOR PEACE DOLL PROJECT - June 6, 1997

Sandy Kelson, a member of the Pittsburgh Chapter of Veterans for Peace became fed-up with the mainstream commercial media lack of coverage concerning the dying and death of Iraqi children due to the war and continued economic sanctions imposed by the authority of the United States. He decided to make a statement as the economic sanctions continued their brutal devastation. The last straw was the worldwide resounding comment concerning the death of Iraqi children made by the U.N. Ambassador Madeleine Albright in May 1996.

Leslie Stahl: 60 minutes

“We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean that’s more children than died in Hiroshima. And-and you know, is the price worth it?”

Madeleine Albright:

“I think this is a very hard choice, but the price -- we think the price is worth it.”

Sandy had already played an essential role in bringing children with severe war wounds from Bosnia to get special treatment in the U.S. He also serves families and children through the Vietnam Friendship Village Project and has assisted in promoting “Friedensdorf,” a center helping war-wounded and scarred children caught in the worlds conflicts.

It came to him that dolls could stand in as a remembrance of the children wrought by the mental and physical wounds of military force. Next would be the more formidable task of breaking into the public sphere of consciousness.

Dolls and war have long been brought together in combination. During the America Revolution, dolls were given to occupy children in church as their parents prayed long hours for safety and peace. The practice was revived during the U.S. Civil War. After World War I, the horrors encouraged people to try to get to know other cultures. Twelve thousand “Ambassador” dolls were collected and sent to Japan in a symbolic gesture for friendship. The Japanese military nationalists later sought them out for destruction as the second war approached. Le Ly Haslip in her book “Where Heaven and Earth Meet,” remembers seeing dolls strewn on the paths followed during the forced evacuations of villages.

Through telephone calls, letters and email, Sandy made the appeal for dolls. His goal was 5000 dolls to reflect the stated number of children reported to be dying each month due to sanctions. Secretary of State Albright’s revelation to intentionally let children die, as part of military policy was a powerful motivation. He wanted to get her attention. His intentions were made in the communications soliciting dolls. Soon, children sent letters

along with their dolls. Some churches made dolls collections. Veterans for Peace members started sending them to his house. Money came in recommending he purchase dolls at thrift stores and suddenly his house began to fill with dolls from across the country and other parts of the world.

It was time for action. The “Metro-DC” action and “Albright” Neighborhood Alert and delivery are the first major actions:

Madeleine Albright Neighborhood “Alert” And “Reminder” Dolls

“We must be the authors of the history of our age, “ insisted nominee for Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in her appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. A horrific chapter continues to drone on in Iraq with the unintelligible U.S. commitment to sanctions. The Secretary of State’s statements reveal her intentional use of deprivation and degradation to twist a death grip on an entire civilian population. A statement in response to Leslie Stahl’s question to then U.N. Ambassador Albright during an interview on 60 minutes in 1996 raises to the surface the danger she imposes to humanity. “I think this is a very hard choice, but the price - we think the price is worth it.’ was Madeleine Albright’s reply to Leslie Stahl’s questioning the fact that a half million children have died because of sanctions - more children than died in the A-bombing in Japan. This commentary not only played out her callousness, but also attempted, in typical blind righteousness, to make us collective collaborators in this destructive ordeal.

To demonstrate that we are not part of her “we” and to show our opposition to the unprincipled policy against the civilian population of Iraq, especially the children, Greater Mid-Atlantic Veterans for Peace has collected thousand of dolls that symbolize the dead children. On the morning of June 6, 1997, a trailer filled with thousands of dolls, given by children and families from across the country and overseas, pulled up to Madeleine Albright’s house in an attempt to deliver the dolls to the author of U.S. policy. The effort was a dramatic reminder of her policy decisions. Outside of her house was a group of protesters loudly begging the questions of consciousness due such tragedies. Her attendants refused acceptance.

Our members believed it our duty to also warn neighbors in the vicinity of her residence about the record and character of Madeleine Albright. Five hundred (500) neighborhood “Alert” flyers were delivered door-to-door to neighbors, retail stores and restaurants and handed to people walking in the area. Our designated veteran alert flyer carrier was given permission to ring Secretary Albright’s doorbell, however he was not permitted on the

steps to reach it. We were steps away from personally presenting one of the world's master power policymakers with our written condemnation of her out of step deeds in consciously sending compliant young people to kill others.

Unfortunately such an alert was not forthcoming before her government appointments. A sequel chapter involving war upon the civilian population of Serbia is in production. Greater Mid-Atlantic Veterans for Peace will continue the warnings and go on with collecting thousands of dolls, which sadly takes longer to accomplish in numbers than the United States "sanctioned" killing of children in Iraq.

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EL SALVADOR ELECTIONS - 1999

Goodman & Hart Report on El Salvador Elections

By Sissy Goodman

Wayne Wittman and David Silk organized and coordinated the VFP El Salvador election delegation in March, 1999. VFP was joined by delegations from the Sister Cities and CISPES. We were trained in the electoral process and given an overview of the various political parties.

The VFP delegation was fortunate in that we were sent to different parts of the country. At those respective locations we visited with the local dignitaries and political party officials.

I observed in the community of Usulután. The area is in the southern low lands of El Salvador, the areas most affected by Hurricane Mitch. Numerous bridges and roads were washed out during the storm, but remarkably no lives were lost in this area. We traveled to a number of collective farms on the Rio Lempa river valley. Although it was the end of the dry season crops were flourishing as a result of the soil moisture left by the flooding. We ate corn that was planted just ten weeks previous and had grown to a height of over eight feet. The farms in this region are collectives that have been developed as a consequence of the land reforms. Two local fincas have been bought by the government and sold to the local population. It was impressive to see the success of the cooperatives. Although reconstruction from the Hurricane seems to be progressing satisfactorily the root problems of that tragedy are not being addressed. For instance the huge hydroelectric dam on the upper Rio Lempa is silted in due to the deforestation above. As a consequence when heavy rains do arrive and flood the lower areas, the dam compounds the problem by having to dump the reservoir of water due to the lack of storage capacity.

Also the irrigation system that was in place down river before the war is not being rebuilt.

The elections themselves went well and there was a definite maturation process from my observations of two years ago. Unfortunately the FMLN lost the Presidency by a margin of about 20%. Before their nationally broadcast political convention the FMLN was running equally with the ruling ARENA party. of precinct voting are still a huge disincentive for the rural poor to participate in the elections. ARENA is slow to rectify these obvious problems because the FMLN would seem to be the beneficiary of these reforms.

Here is another view from Ed Hart:

It was my first Salvadoran election, but others who had attended previous ones said it exceeded them in corruption and the use of naked power by ARENA.

All that didn't seem to upset the Embassy folks we talked with, however. They recognized that there were a few problems getting folks to voting sites from the campo and that the turnout was disappointingly low, but said there were no reports of fraud or other overt violations.

That's not the way we saw it. Both the national election supervisors and the civil police seemed to me to be open, honest and cordial -- sometimes enthusiastically honest. In a couple of cases it was they who first mentioned some violations to us.

In San Vicente ARENA set up an operation a block and a half from the polling place where they issued white slips of paper to voters to be validated by an ARENA vigilante. When taken back to the house they'd be turned in for cash payment.

The thing that troubled me most (because my poor Spanish made it impossible for me to understand anything more subtle) was the overpowering presence of ARENA and their successful conversion of election day into a political rally. Each party was authorized one vigilante at each table and each vigilante had a colorful vest with his or her party name and logo. However, there were from three to five ARENA folks per table, including the supervisors and representatives-without-portfolio. Some parties had none at most tables. Besides that, ARENA logisticos kept coming in all day long with food which they distributed to their workers, including the folks manning the tables. They worked the fool out of us delegates and themselves even harder. When we went out for papusas and beer they supplemented the serving staff, running from kitchen to tables with food and drinks. It was my first experience with them, and I was impressed.

TEN YEARS LATER – 2009

El Salvador – The Struggle Begins

By John Grant

The inauguration of Mauricio Funes as the FMLN President of El Salvador on June 1st was an emotional milestone for Salvadorans, as it was for many members of Veterans For Peace who, like me, felt they had participated in some small way to be part of the excitement. The North American media, typically, ignored the story. But for many Salvadorans the Funes inaugural meant the war was finally over. This was clearly the consensus of the 80,000 joyous Salvadorans crowded into the Cuzcatlan soccer stadium to celebrate the Funes inaugural with flag-waving and impromptu salsa dancing.

VFP members have been involved with El Salvador from the beginning of the war. Wayne Wittman along with a host of members including Will Sjoblom, David Silk, Larry Goodwin and Ernest Jenkins have been election monitors in numerous elections. A friend Francisco Acosta recalled the deceased Dave Silk warmly for the great work he had done; he also mention Brian Willson and Charley Liteky. Lane Anderson has been involved in El Salvador for years. In the late 1980s members like myself were involved in the repatriation movement as refugees returned from Honduras and resettled. VFP members, at home, took to the streets and wrote their Congress members to oppose the war.

It worked the other way as well. Salvadorans came north to speak and to meet with VFP. In 2005, for example, a delegation of FMLN combatants led by Victor Zuniga Rivera attended the VFP convention in Dallas.

In the jammed stadium on June 1st I ran into Zuniga, and we reminisced about Dave Cline who he remembered. In the inaugural celebratory mood, few were dwelling on the chronic economic justice issues facing Salvadorans. None of these problems were addressed after the 1992 peace treaty, which ushered in a climate of neo-liberal privatization and disempowered unions simpatico with an ARENA view of life. This is the harsh reality Funes and the FMLN will engage with in the years ahead.

Several years ago, the US dollar replaced the colon as the national currency, a move that hurt the poor and small business people. Glitzy malls with no customers have sprouted up in the capital, rumored to be funded by laundered drug money. Fast food franchises like Mister Donut are everywhere. Unemployment is at astronomical levels and violent crime is a problem. The rich live in gated communities, and everything is protected by security guards with pump shotguns. A third of the population live in a diaspora, much of it in the US, sending money home.

Looming over it all is a world economic crisis and ARENA elements that are not going anywhere and have lots of money. A big question is: Given a hostile history, how will the huge United States embassy relate with the FMLN regime? Will it be obstructionist or cooperative? What's clear is the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front — the guerrilla coalition that fought the Salvadoran military and the United States to a stalemate in 1992 — is now a national political power to be reckoned with. The struggle for economic justice has shifted from armed struggle to the political realm.

It also adds another nation to the gradual shift in Latin American politics to the left. Until this month, there were three distinct hold-outs to this trend: Colombia, Mexico and El Salvador. Now there are two. It's not certain where Mexico and Colombia will go in upcoming presidential elections. VFP member Joey King, a former Army Ranger with experience in Latin America, is researching Colombian politics and working to establish contacts for VFP presidential election monitoring there in May 2010.

One afternoon I met with veterans from the National Commission of Veterans of the FMLN. Currently about 6,000 strong, they hope to organize up to 40,000 veterans in the future. They see themselves as “the backbone” of the new administration, which they see as weak, given reports that ARENA stripped the national treasury as it left office and the FMLN is a 35 per cent minority in the National Assembly.

Due to economic realities, the organization has limited itself to political work representing FMLN veterans. A study is planned to assess the conditions of FMLN veterans across the nation; it will cost \$60,000, funds they are raising. The hope in the years ahead is to become more involved in helping veterans solve their economic, psychological and social problems. The most difficult problems are unemployment and shelter.

Chano Guevara, a *nom-de-guerre*, has been fighting since he was seventeen. He became a tough commander of troops in Guazapa and, today, is a respected leader of the Commission. He agrees the game has changed, but he fully intends to keep the pressure on the politician Funes and to work for FMLN control of the legislature and future FMLN presidents. He was wary when asked about linkages with government military veterans, though others in the group thought “conversations” with low-rank, *campesino* draftees might be fruitful.

At an FMLN veterans' reunion lunch in Suchitoto on the Guazapa volcano, certificates were given out honoring service. Charlie Clements, the Vietnam vet who worked as a doctor in Guazapa for a year was there, as was Don North, who made a film of the Guazapa struggle. One of the many moving moments came when *Commandante* Guevara hugged his tiny, aged mother as she received a service certificate. She is famous for transporting guns past army checkpoints, under bread in the basket on her head.

When I arrived in San Salvador airport this May for the first time in 15 years, I could tell something was different. On a wide screen TV over the baggage claim carousel, edited among the tourist shots of colorful markets, smiling kids and seaside cafes, there was a segment on the El Mozote massacre site. In November 1992, I had photographed the exhumation of mostly children's bones in a small convent in El Mozote in Morazon province. The grotesque atrocity was now official history.

In this new political climate, the facts of El Salvador's agonizing history vis-à-vis the United States don't seem to be in contention. The old ways of oligarchic oppression cannot work any more, and the charge of "communism" is a retrograde joke. The future is open. The current world economic crisis could be a synthesis moment for El Salvador. The peasant driven FMLN and its progressive brainpower know a lot about locally based agriculture and other sustainability technologies. Meld that with socially responsible cash-crop farming, throw in cell phone and internet connectivity ... and who knows? I visited a fledgling university in the Chalatenango guerrilla zone that could be a catalyst for this kind of progressive movement.

Former US Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White has said, given the chance, Salvadorans are among the most resourceful people in the world. El Salvador, he says, could become a regional engine for progressive growth and change. Veterans For Peace members have been, and will be, part of this new struggle.

John Grant is a Vietnam veteran and a photographer. He lives in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, and works with Chapter 31.

STONEWALK – 1999

Tom Gale, of the Smedly Butler Chapter in Boston, had the passion and resolve to get Veterans For Peace into the forefront of this remarkable project.

FAX MEMO

TO: ARNOLD PETERSON
1013
FROM: VFP HQ
DATE: 14 July 1999

FAX TO: ALLENTOWN PRESS (301)449-

TIME: 11:45am

RE: Cpt Lawrence Rockwood Proposal regarding Stonewalk

Just as soldier and civilian die together, a great nation such as the United States of America can recognize and honor them together.

An invitation to members of the military community of greater Washington DC is respectfully extended to join Congressional representatives and recent Soldier's medal recipients Hugh Thompson and Lawrence Colburn, in welcoming the Memorial Stone for UNKNOWN CIVILIANS KILLED IN WAR to our capital and Arlington National Cemetery. To increase awareness of the full, true cost of war at the close of a century of violence and wars that is unparalleled in the history of the world, thousands of people, through their affiliations with faith communities, veterans and scouting organizations, schools and other community groups, will take part in the challenging task of physically moving the 2000 pound granite memorial stone for UNKNOWN CIVILIANS KILLED IN WAR to our nation's capital. Five hundred miles and 32 days later, the cart carrying the stone will arrive at Arlington on August 6. To close this century of world wars by honoring the civilian fatalities of all conflicts since the founding of our nation, individual military and unit participation in the last stage on August 5-6 in Washington DC is desired.

GOALS:

1. The official acknowledgment of civilian victims of war;
2. The placement of the Memorial Stone for UNKNOWN CIVILIANS KILLED IN WAR on the lawn to the north of Arlington Memorial Amphitheater within view of the TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER;
3. The creation of an on-going vigil of sojourners at the Civilian Memorial Stone.

STONEWALK is a project of The Peace Abbey and The Life Experience School. The sponsors include American Friends Service Committee, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Veterans for Peace, and Women's Action for New Directions.

For further information contact : CPT Lawrence P. Rockwood, USA
Phone: (202) 882-8240
Email: soldier@igc.org

Stonewalk Website: <http://www.peaceabbey.org/stonewalk.htm>

Coordination between the US Congress and the US Army on the final status of the memorial is ongoing. For the most recent official standing on individual uniformed and unit participation, contact:

The Superintendent of Arlington National Cemetery
Mr. John Metzler, Jr
Arlington National Cemetery
Administrative Building

The Washington Post- Casting Their Stone for Peace

Walkers Hoping To Leave Token At Arlington

By Linda Wheeler Washington Post Staff Writer

Thursday, August 5, 1999

Up the steep hill on Route 1 near Waterloo, Md., they kept going. The men and women have been pulling and pushing the load, nearly two tons of it, all the way from Boston. Now, with cars and 18-wheelers passing them, they continued toward Washington in the name of peace.

The Stonewalkers, as they call themselves, should arrive here today with their memorial to civilian war victims. There on the hot pavement of Route 1, the crew of 11 pulling the stone were reminiscent of the demonstrators of the '60s, with their idealism and the absolute belief in the rightness of their cause. Passing motorists played their part by flashing the V-fingered peace sign, bringing cheers from the sweat-drenched demonstrators.

But this time, the participants are in their fifties, wearing sensible shoes and funding their effort through credit cards. The core group of a half-dozen, along with as many as 60 volunteers at one time who have joined in along the route, has been pulling the 6-by-4-foot slab of granite mounted on a 1,500-pound wooden caisson for more than 400 miles since July 4. Its destination, say organizers, is a prominent site in Arlington National Cemetery, preferably near the Tomb of the Unknowns. The lack of permits and permission is not, they say, a deterrent.

"Talking to folks in Washington, I tell you, it's easy to get cynical," said the project's co-director Lewis Randa as he leaned into a drawbar to get the caisson up a rise. He said that officials had told him again and again that they needed more time to consider whether the memorial should be placed in Arlington. "Then watch them when one Kennedy dies--the whole world stops!" he said. "Ten million innocent victims died and they don't have time

to consider that." He said they planned the trip for more than a year and felt they couldn't wait for bureaucrats in Washington to make decisions about where to place the stone.

They wanted this monument, inscribed with "Memorial to the Unknown Civilians Killed in Wars," to arrive in the Capital by Aug. 6, the 54th anniversary of the atomic bomb destruction of Hiroshima. A memorial stone was unveiled in 1994 in Sherborne, Mass., near Boston, at the Peace Abbey, an interfaith center that promotes world peace. The stone that's coming to Washington, however, is a duplicate because the organizers wanted to keep the original at the center, said Randa, who directs the Abbey with his wife, Meg. Five of the six core demonstrators--the ones who have been with the stone every step of the way--are connected with the Abbey.

Earl Standberry, a truck driver from Pecos, Tex., joined the group when he heard about the event. At 33, he is much younger than the others. "I'm a veteran of the [Persian] Gulf War and saw innocent people die there," Standberry said as he put his weight against the back of the caisson. "I'm here to push this stone. Whenever I get tired, I think of the people of Kosovo who are tired also but don't have the water and support we have." The walkers also have a steady diet of vintage rock and roll. Jackson Browne and the Rolling Stones are among the favorites. The procession resembles a multi-legged creature decorated with large American and United Nations flags. The group is vulnerable to the cars and trucks that must change lanes to pass it.

In Maryland, a state trooper was assigned to follow the caisson, lights flashing, to protect the walkers. Officer Derrick Benard has driven an average of 5 mph behind the caisson since the procession crossed into Maryland on July 31. When he and the demonstrators stopped for a break at the Waterloo Barracks yesterday, he said he was impressed by their enthusiasm even on very hot days. "I admire their physical and mental power, their ability to keep on going," Benard said. "I'd like to help them push that stone." In the '60s, Randa marched against the war in Vietnam and considered the police an enemy. Thirty years later, he sees the police differently.

He said that on several nights when the group was turned away from churches where they had planned to stay, officers took them to stations for showers, bought them dinner and found them shelter for the night. When the six set off from Boston, they had no permits. Last week, they received permission to display the memorial on the east plaza of the Capitol and then take it to the Lincoln Memorial for an overnight vigil. What they don't have is authorization to place the stone in Arlington Cemetery.

A cemetery spokesman, David Theall, said a joint resolution of Congress is needed before a memorial can be placed in the cemetery. "As of now, I am not aware of any sponsor to erect this stone in the cemetery," he said. The Stonewalkers are optimists. They believe that members of Congress who touch the memorial will be transformed by the experience. The stone will be on display at the Capitol from 1 to 6:30 p.m. today. "If they take a moment and touch the stone, they will understand," Randa said. "We are extending a caring symbol, a symbol of peace and reconciliation. This is a gift."

The Stonewalkers' permit for noon tomorrow allows them to cross Arlington Memorial Bridge and stage a concluding ceremony at Lady Bird Johnson Park on the Potomac River, about a mile from the cemetery. What will happen to the stone then? Randa will say only that they are not taking it back to Massachusetts.

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Tom then went to his old battlefields in Vietnam to plan the next Stonewalk. His story:

STONEWALK 2001

A Returning Veteran to Viet Nam Says "It Is Great To Be Alive."

The series of flights took 25 hours to reach Viet Nam versus the 33 days by US Navy flat bottom boat that it took me and my Marine missile battery, 35 years ago. This time it was for different humanitarian purposes that I returned to Viet Nam and the tour would be to see the entire country in 3 weeks and not a year in just one place. Now, it was to deliver medical supplies, work with the Vietnamese to improve the My Lai Clinic with money raised from people in America, meet with former Viet Cong, evaluate living conditions, the effects of Agent Orange and the status of land mines.

I went willingly to war in 1965, believing the lies that my country told me, that we were protecting the people in the Republic of South Viet Nam from communist aggression from North Viet Nam. We were told of atrocities by the Viet Cong (VC) to persuade the villagers of the south to overthrow their corrupt government. America to the rescue. This was to be a heroic adventure. What wasn't clear to me was how my government was involved in the assassination of the former President of South Viet Nam, why the French had been defeated with full US military support 11 years earlier and to understand the US's overall failure of diplomacy. My return trip was with reverence for all human life. It included a visit to one of the most terrible sites where US soldiers had committed atrocities, the massacre of 504 civilians at My Lai. More importantly, I was bringing medical supplies, funding and my labor to the My Lai Health Clinic to rehabilitate the 11-year-old facility built with donations by our sponsor, the International Mission of Hope (IMH) and its director, Cherie Clark.

I had not considered returning to Viet Nam until I met Cherie Clark in Iraq last October on a mission with the Veterans For Peace to rehabilitate a water treatment plant in Basra. It was in Iraq that I learned of the wonderful work that IMH does to connect unwanted children with families, providing them with health care until they are adopted. Cherie had been a long time friend of Fredy Champagne who has done restoration work in Viet

Nam since 1988. She convinced Fredy to bring a Veterans For Peace (VFP) team back one more time. This would be his 17th trip to Viet Nam in 13 years. A group of 13 veterans and peacemakers would meet in Quang Ngai on 14th June to work one week with the Vietnamese workers at the My Lai Clinic. The task was to build an addition of a kitchen and dining room, a septic system, rewiring, installing glass windows where there are now only shutters and fencing around the clinic. Our group, made up of IMH, VFP and the Medics of Illinois donated \$30,000 for this work. The Medics of Illinois provided all of the medical supplies that many of us carried with us into Viet Nam.

This trip through Viet Nam offered many opportunities to see the country and meet the people of Viet Nam, and the possibility of finding the site in Chu Lai where I had spent one year of duty. Chu Lai is only 25 miles north of My Lai, less than an hour by auto.

Only one major highway, the National Highway, Route 1, runs between Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon, as it is still called by Westerners) and Hanoi. I would call Hwy1 more appropriately, the 'highway of terror!' It's entire length is under construction, to widen it 2 to 3 meters to a full 2-lanes with safety areas on each side. Everyone uses it, competes for space on it, every step of the 1700 kilometers. We would use it from HCMC to Hue, halfway to Hanoi. And be alert watching the oncoming motorized vehicles, beeping horns as they try to pass the slower pedestrians, bicycles, scooters and motorbikes. The constant beeping starts at daylight, 5am, and continues until 9pm when everyone retires to their *homes where many drink themselves happily to sleep. You don't need a wake-up call, every imaginable sound can be heard on Hwy1 at 5AM. We also witnessed several accidents along the way, a reminder of how dangerous it is. However, that didn't seem to slow down our driver!

Members of the group arrived in Saigon to meet the vans that would take us to Nha Trang, Qui Nhon and Quang Ngai, spending an overnight at each city. The night before the trip, we all met for the first time on the roof of the Rex Hotel, where the US media reported the Vietnam War. The meeting was cut short as a thunderstorm crashed overhead with heavy rainfall. A little like Camelot, it lasted only 20 minutes.

It was an all day drive to Nha Trang. With just one flat tire, delaying us only 15 minutes. Houses, cafes and shops crowded Hwy1 all along the route, thinning out only as the coastline narrowed. Many houses plastered the year they were built over the doorway, most were post-1975. We could see how much a luxury air-conditioning is here. The cafes we stopped at had large fans blowing down on the customers. Hwy1 weaves along the coast of the South China Sea. Beautiful sandy beaches stretch for miles. Shrimp, oyster and fish farms are everywhere to be seen as well as rice paddies. The only one-track narrow-gauge railway runs alongside Hwy1, varying from one side to the other with occasional side tracks to allow opposite-bound trains to pass.

Nha Trang is definitely a resort city. Our hotel was a block from the beach. I want to come back here. I found an internet café close by to email friends that we were on schedule, and to tell them it seemed like a vacation so far. More beaches in Qui Nhon. It

was pointed out to me that on the south peninsula a clinic for leprosy victims was operating (another was pointed out later in Danang). The government is promoting the development of hotels and the tourist industry in these coastal cities.

When we arrived in Quang Ngai, we were immediately invited by the hospital and local officials to a Welcoming Dinner at our hotel. There we met the hospital and clinic staff and the head of the Communist Party. They made us feel at home and we toasted the success of the project. The next morning we drove 12 kilometers to the clinic where we delivered medical supplies, heard the outline of the construction project and told how the \$30,000 from US donors was distributed. After a tour of the 18-bed clinic, many of the group helped the workers lay the foundation for the new kitchen addition. We demonstrated our group's solidarity with the Vietnamese by everyone symbolically carrying a brick. We made clear our intention of working with the workers every morning.

Later that morning the group drove 200 meters to the Son My Memorial where Vietnam and US soldiers have preserved part of the hamlet where 504 Vietnamese women, children and old men were massacred by US soldiers. Several of the VFP have been here before. My friend Frank gave me some of his incense to show respect for the dead, placing it at each marker. Frank quietly shares his emotions with me as I follow him from marker to marker and to the ditch where 170 Vietnamese were murdered. Beside the ditch is a mural, 'The Wall of Tears' depicting the helicopters bringing the soldiers and the resulting terror. Large tears fall from the mural. During our visit we met 10 cadets from the US military academies. They were traveling through Viet Nam on an unstructured field trip. I was encouraged to see how open they were to hear our thoughts and concerns of our country's continued military solutions in resolving world conflicts. They seemed to understand that war makes victims of us all and there must never be another My Lai.

A week later I returned to the Son My memorial alone with another veteran, Billy. He asked me to videotape our visit. This is another opportunity to share feelings. While there, a class of young Vietnamese students arrived and were told the stories by a guide and led into the museum where pictures and graphics showed the terrible scenes. Also pictured there is Hugh Thompson, a hero of My Lai. A US Army pilot who stopped the killing when he landed between the soldiers and the villagers and rescued about 12 of them. He was brought back to Viet Nam in 1999 by '60Minutes' to meet the mother and daughter he saved. I spoke to him on the phone when I returned to Boston. He told me that when he was there this past March 16th, the anniversary, he met the one survivor in that ditch. I can't imagine the horror the boy felt, but I could hear the joy in Hugh's voice.

The week working at the My Lai Clinic went by quickly. We worked every morning in 90F heat-in-the-shade, oven-like conditions, literally melting, inviting dehydration. But enjoying the results of hard work with other hard workers. We proved ourselves to the

15 workers that we Americans aren't afraid of hard work nor of taking directions from them. We performed unskilled labor and let them do the skilled jobs of bricklaying, etc. We communicated with a few Vietnamese and English words and sign-language. We laughed and whistled and sang, the universal languages.

Lunch was had 5 Km down the road at another beautiful beach. Refreshing 85F water! Great surf, good food, ice and service. Ice is always a risk but here it is made from clean water. We invited the workers for one lunch. We invited college students we'd met for another lunch. They wanted to practice their English on us. They adopted us as uncles. It turned out that they all knew our in-country host/guide/translator Mr Tap, who is also the English teacher at the college! The afternoons were spent visiting hospitals, shops, internet cafes. Quang Ngai is the poorest of the provinces. Quang Ngai had the worst internet connections. The hotel did not have internet. The public was just becoming aware of the internet. The government has the only decent connection. The government recently designated an area north of the city an industrial zone. In 2 years they'll build an oil refinery with oil from offshore of the Mekong Delta.

One afternoon, Mr Tap offered to take me to find my duty-base in Chu Lai. It would be Mr Tap's persistence that made it happen. I had been told that there was a big Vietnamese army base there now and you couldn't get near it. The sun was high when we reached the end of the paved road along the Chu Lai beach. The road had been washed out. Mr Tap told the driver to backtrack and find a trail around the gully. He did and we got back onto the road that seemed to be heading toward the familiar peninsula. The road was in good condition, it had been built by the marines. At the end of the road I recognized the helicopter landing/parking area, and 't-bone' island in the distance. I now had my bearings – we had passed the side road to my site. The side road was paved for 200 meters, then bike paths. No one wanted to accompany me further, citing unexploded ordnance. I walked the bike trail several hundred meters, out of sight of the van. The earth had been moved to form walls for defensive positions. As I walked steadily further a familiar view opened up to me, one I had seen everyday for a year. It was the view of the entire Chu Lai basin. It was more beautiful than ever. It seemed unspoiled, no longer the curls of black smoke from marine outfits burning refuse. As I panned the slopes of the peninsula, I felt something wonderful. Nature had reclaimed it! There were no trees anywhere 35 yrs ago. Only the tall, sharp-tipped elephant grass. Now there were conifers everywhere. Not very tall, someone had purposely planted them here after the war. And there were no unexploded ordnance/landmines here. I found out a few days later that there hadn't been an incident in 2 years and a non-profit group, Mine Action Group, had recently confirmed there were no landmines in Quang Ngai Province.

After a Farewell Dinner by our hosts, we drove to Danang. There I toured the fantastic Marble Mountains and swam in China Beach. From Danang we drove north through the Hai Van Pass, 350 meters(1100-ft) road with fantastic views of more beaches. Two-hours later we reached Hue, the old capital of the emperors. Danang and Hue offered some real insight to the old culture of Vietnam, with Buddhist Pagodas and Sham shrines

and burial sites. CNN reported that a renowned archeologist was in Vietnam researching these ancient sites.

From Hue and the Perfume River we took the train to Hanoi, a 17-hr journey. Hanoi is a vibrant city, with a definite French influence. The Americans are new to the people of Hanoi. They have not been Americanized. Here I saw the International Mission of Hope in action. They were very busy holding receiving ceremonies for new parents here to pick up their Vietnamese babies. I met one couple from Loeminster, MA, cuddling their 5-month old boy, Tho, ready to go to Saigon with Frank to get their papers from the US Embassy there.

One historical site I saw that amazed me was the Temple of Literature, built in 1054CE. They gave college degrees here and have the tablets preserved for the graduates. Buddha had walked through here in 550BCE. Luckily, the US 1972 Christmas Bombing had not destroyed it.

Our goal in Hanoi was to get approval to hold Stonewalk Vietnam in 2002/2003 for the Peace Abbey in Sherborn, MA (This Stone dedicated to 'Unknown Civilians Killed in War' is currently in Liverpool, England to be walked to London on 15th July.) We went to the Vietnam Peace Committee and Fredy found that his old friend, Mr Nguyen Van Huynh was now in charge and had the authority to approve Stonewalk! It was like old-home week! Fredy and Mr Huynh had worked with each other since 1988. Mr Huynh gave us a 50-yr Anniversary booklet with pictures of he and Fredy walking in the 1993 Peace March. I gave Mr Huynh a copy of the 2001 North Shore Peace Poetry Contest Book. He said he would translate it into Vietnamese.

On our last day, Mr Huynh arranged for us to visit the Friendship Village, a project to help victims of Agent Orange. This project was initiated in 1988 by John Schuchardt of Ipswich and George Mizo, now of Germany, both VFP. The buildings were dedicated and became operational 3 years ago. They can now only help 'average' victims through standard operations and to learn skills and return to society. We met with about 100 children, joining them in daily exercise, and with 15 veterans. Through our translator, Mr Nghi, we asked them what they thought of US veterans returning and the US government. Several said they respected us, returning to their country to make peace, but were angry with the US Government for not keeping their promises of cleaning up the Agent Orange/dioxins nor land mines.

(Last week, CNN reported that Vietnam and the US had finally come to an agreement and an Agent Orange study will begin next Spring!)

This trip only made the US War in Viet Nam more confounding to me. I found Vietnam a country leaping into the world markets, open, friendly, with a great work ethic, looking ahead, rebuilding, construction everywhere preparing for foreigners and ex-patriots to help them engage the new world economy and technology. When I read of the Brockton HS Principal who chose fisticuffs over non-violent alternatives such as mediation or even competitive sports or Beverly HS choosing Jr ROTC over challenging, non-

military projects, or when Gloucester accepted the Pentagon's help in bringing in JrROTC because it had no money for a phys-ed program, I see the failure of our educational system and our culture. In Vietnam it was the failure of human rights and respect. The US culture teaches us to take action when they see trouble occur to an underdog. But that action always seems to be violent, so we are the same as those we accuse of being unjustly violent. And we don't care if innocent people are killed or harmed. We can always apologize. And how do our moral ethics shine bright when a Wellesley college professor asks us to overlook our soldiers criminal actions of murdering prisoners because they saw their atrocities first-hand in Dachau? When does righteous killing stop? Who says we are more right than they? When do we take responsibility for our actions? Will might always be right? Ask the Vietnamese. 25 years after the war, who has won? The 50 million Vietnamese who weren't born then, or the World Trade Organization and Globalization? Certainly not the 58,000 + Americans and the 3.5 million Vietnamese who died doing their job for freedom. When does the hate end and the forgiveness and moving on begin? As the United Nations song 'Let There Be Peace On Earth' promotes, let it begin with me.

I thank all of the courageous veterans who have returned to Vietnam to find peace and forgiveness and tried to make a positive difference in the lives of the Vietnamese there. They made it easy for me to return. We have all lost something to Vietnam and it is up to each of us to face it and take charge of our future.

**Vietnam is not behind me, it is in front of me, it has been and still remains, part of my life. The war disintegrated my soul, my integrity was compromised when what I had been brought-up believing that it was wrong to kill, 'first, do no harm,' and then placed in the dilemma of the strong using force to protect the weak by any means, using forceful action to save lives immediately. A concept that I now see as short-sighted and wrong.

The US-Vietnam War legacy to me is that one can make mistakes but it is what we do, our moral actions, when we realize that fact that tests our character, to be better than we are. I hope to do just that. I say it's great to be alive and to have a 2nd chance!

Thomas Gale, July 4, 2001

KOREA TRUTH COMMISSION – Spring 2001

NEWS RELEASE -- February 25, 2001

Wilson Powell, Manchester, MO, Korean War Veteran and a Veteran For Peace, has been named to a Korean Truth Commission delegation leaving for South Korea on March 5, to meet with members of the South Korean parliament and of the National Democratic Popular Movement. They will discuss ways of assisting North-South Korean reunification and build a case for removal of the 37,000 U.S. soldiers still present in that country.

They also plan to visit sites of massacres carried out by U.S. troops before and during the Korean Conflict in an effort to accurately document those fifty-year-old events and give the U. S. government opportunity to apologize and offer reparations.

Mr. Powell, is co-author, with Zhou Ming-fu, of the book “Two Walk the Golden Road”, the life stories of two men who fought each other in Korea, and are now the best of friends. He served with the U.S. Air Force in Korea from October 1952 to July 1953.

He believes that public policy in a democracy ought to be developed using the same principles of self-examination and amends-making that individuals employ to rectify their own lives: “We cannot build anything lasting upon old untruths, resentments and prejudices. The best foundation for peace is reconciliation based on humbly offered apology and amends. Cleaning up our own side of the street, if you will.” he said.

“I believe the soldier, who put up his life in a cause he believed in, is not to blame so much as falsely-presented policies, secret agendas and uncaring citizens comfortable in unquestioning ignorance. Thus, we citizens need to seek and accept truth, and insist our government act upon it.”

This is Mr. Powell’s second trip back to Korea, since shipping home in 1953. Last September he visited a massacre site near the village of Kokan Ri and interviewed the sole survivor of an attack that claimed 85 South Korean civilian lives in September of 1950.

“Holding both my hands, she told me the story. Then she showed me the scars of bullets that had penetrated that small body and the bullet holes still to be seen in the floor and the walls of the ancestral shrine. Her name was Hwang Jum Soon. I was the first GI to visit that site since the attack. I was able to say ‘I am sorry’. It was a moment of resolution for both of us.”

Mr. Powell, who is now 68, cites little-known facts, gathered by a fellow Veteran For Peace, **S. Brian Willson** of the Vietnam War, that have led him to believe that we, as a nation, have a responsibility toward the Korean people hitherto unrealized.

During the Korean "hot" war, General Douglas MacArthur ordered the U.S. Air Force to "destroy *every* means of communication, *every* installation, factory, *city*, and *village*"

south of the Yalu River boundary with China. Massive saturation bombings alone, especially with napalm and other incendiaries, murdered perhaps 2.5 million civilians. Major General William B. Kean of the 25th Infantry Division ordered "civilians in the combat zone" to be considered enemies.

*The famous July 25, 1950 Fifth Air Force memorandum to General Timberlake declared that adherence to Army orders to "strafe all civilian refugees [have been] complied with."
**

USA Today (Oct. 1, 1999) and the *New York Times* (Dec. 29, 1999) reported from declassified U.S. Air Force documents the "deliberate" strafings and bombings of Korean "civilians" and "people in white." In the August 21, 1950 issue of *Life*, John Osborne reported that U.S. officers ordered troops to fire into clusters of civilians.

In a recent statement, the Korea Truth Commission wrote:

The magnitude of the attacks on civilians is staggering, and there has been a conspiracy of silence for a half century. *The Washington Post* reported on June 13, 2000, that more than 2.5 million out of 5 million overall casualties during the three-year Korean War were civilians.

According to currently available materials, Koreans have identified more than 60 locations in the south and more than 100 locations in the north where massacres and wanton violence against innocent civilians were committed by U.S. soldiers, as well as south Korean army, police and paramilitary right wing youth squads under the U.S. military command.

The Korea Truth Commission has chapters in both Koreas and in the U.S., Canada (in formation), Japan, Europe (in formation), and China. Last June, the KTC opened its Office of Joint Secretariat in Washington, D.C.

Delegation Reference: Rev. Kiyul Chung Koreatruthcommission@yahoo.com

* **S. Brian Willson** writes: *The source for the General Kean quote "to consider civilians in the combat zone as the enemy" is: "Rethinking The Nogun-ri Massacre on the 50th Anniversary of the Outbreak of the Korean War," by Sung Yong Park, June 2000. Park is a minister in the Korean methodist Church, and a rep. of the Phila. Branch of Congress for Korean Reunification. He is a PhD. candidate at Temple Univ. in Phila. and has done a lot of research on the U.S. behavior, racism, and atrocities committed against Korean civilians during the War. He cites declassified documents from the U.S. National Archives as his source for Kean's comments. He can be reached at: sungyong@astro.ocis.temple.edu*

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If It Takes Lies To Start A War -- Only Truth Can End It

Wilson (Woody) Powell - March, 2001

After fifty-one years, a state of war still exists on the Korean peninsula, dividing a country that traces its history back over 5000 years; a country that prides itself on being the cultural seat of Asian civilization. There is a strong movement within that country to re-assert its independence from foreign domination and unite under its own terms.

The Korea Truth Commission is conducting a tribunal in New York City on the 23rd of June, 2001, wherein testimony will be heard that will expose the historical truth of the repressive and brutal origins of a wholly artificial state of separation under a tattered flag of truce.

This is a brief account of a mission to become familiar with the current situation in Korea, meet jurists and a few victims and survivors with the courage to testify; and see, for ourselves, evidence of human rights abuses past and present.



On the 5th of March, 2001, I arrived in Seoul South Korea. I was honored to be the Veterans For Peace representative to a delegation of the Korea Truth Commission (KTC). As a veteran of the Korean war, I had a special interest in doing what I could to help illuminate truths that could heal wounds still gaping after more than fifty years, and unite this sundered country. We were a small delegation, composed of Brian Becker, co-founder, with Former U. S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, of the International Action Center, Gloria La Riva, award-winning documentary producer and also a member of the IAC, and myself. We were led by Kiyul Chung, a U.S. citizen of Korean extraction and top organizer of the KTC.

The Korea Truth Commission was formed last May in Beijing, by social justice, human rights and peace organizations from both (north and south) Korea and representatives from overseas Korean communities throughout the world, to conduct a full, scientific and objective investigation of war crimes committed by the U.S. military and its client, the government of South Korea.

Student activists in Woolsan celebrate the coming reunification of Korea



Oh Jong-Ryul, NADRK Leader

It has chapters in both Korea and several overseas chapters in U.S., Canada, Japan, Europe, and China and maintains an office in Washington, D.C.

We Meet the Organizers

Several Korean political organizations are involved in the process of bringing to light the historical facts that have defined Korea as it is today. They are combined under an umbrella organization known as the **National Alliance for Democracy and Reunification of Korea (NADRK).**

NADRK National Chairman, Oh Jong-Ryul, retired teacher and former political prisoner, and his deputy, Ahn Seung Uhan, were the first to officially greet our delegation. From them we learned something of the scope of the movement and the dedication of the people involved.

We meet the Jurists

We met two of the eminently-qualified and distinguished people who will sit as jurists during the Tribunal to be held in New York City this coming June: Mr. Pyang, former Republic of Korea (ROK) Constitutional Court Justice (same as U.S. Supreme Court) and Mr. Kang Chul Sun, former Chief Prosecutor for the Republic of Korea (ROK) and a former legislator.

I was impressed, not only with their credentials, but with their courage to participate in a process that will illuminate the repressive roles played by their own government, and mine, since 1945. It takes courage, in Korea, to contradict official policies.



Testimony - Prisoners of Conscience

We met men and women who served long prison sentences, up to 33 years, mostly in solitary confinement, without heat in winter or cooling in summer, for holding beliefs contrary to those sanctioned by their government.

They spoke of the oppressive conditions imposed on free speech by the U.S. formulated National Security Act enacted by the ROK government in 1948. It appears to embrace all of the most egregiously-repressive elements of McCarthyism, making seditious acts of statements favorable



Kim Yong-Son & Lee Gong-Lin – demonstrate outside Myung Dong Cathedral Sanctuary for political fugitives in Seoul

to North Korea's government, or just the country itself. That such an anachronistic law could have survived to this day is additional testimony, in my opinion, to the hypocritical U.S. tolerance of citizen-repression by client states.

Lim Bang Kyu – 33 years in prison

Old men with quiet voices, like Mr. Chang Hyun Kim (80), Mr. Lim Bang Kyu (67), Mr. Lee Yng-Son, Mr. Kwon Nak K- and Mr. Song Kay Chae, described their tiny cells, too small to fully stretch their bodies, unheated, cold in winter, hot in summer, isolated from other prisoners.

They were frequently tortured. They said they were able to maintain sanity by constant study and a powerful determination to be true to themselves and the ideal of a united Korea.

There were many more who could not physically withstand their treatment and died while still in prison. Only 94 out of 700 long-term (over 17 years) prisoners have survived imprisonment.

Hwang Sun, knowingly invited arrest and imprisonment by spending three months in North Korea. When we met her, she had just finished serving a two-year prison sentence. Her demeanor was also humble and iron-willed.

These men and women are quiet models of humility and strength of purpose.

Testimony - Massacre Survivors

They came to give public testimony, after fifty years of silence, in a meeting room of the National Assembly in Seoul. They have been encouraged by the warming of relationships between North and South since last June's visit to North Korea by ROK President, Kim Dae Jung.

A succession of speakers, survivors and activists seeking truth and reunification, gave the results of investigations to-date. For example:



Of approximately 3 million people killed, 2 million were civilians; more massacres committed by South Korean and U.S. forces than North Korean forces (none by Chinese forces); evidence of a U.S. military

Kim Yong-Son and Hwang Sun, fellow prisoners of conscience.

policy of considering all Koreans “the enemy” on the basis that distinguishing between friend and foe was impossible.

Two old women removed their shoes and socks to show horribly mutilated feet; the result of strafing and bombing attacks on their villages.

Delegation with survivors

We listened to graphic descriptions of massive political prisoner massacres, such as the one near Taegu at an abandoned Cobalt mine, where 3500 were killed and

tossed down a mineshaft, some still alive when covered by earth.

We learned of the 80,000 killed on the Island of Cheju for resisting the division of Korea and the formation of the U.S. sponsored South Korean government of Syngman Rhee.

While these massacres were carried out by the South Korean National Police and the ROK army, under Rhee, the U.S. military command was aware they were taking place and even, by report, had observers present at some sites.

Testimony – Labor Leaders

They live in a tent, on a parking lot owned by the Nandong Catholic Church, near where they used to work, at the Daewoo plant in Incheon. They dare not leave this sanctuary, because their pictures are prominently displayed everywhere on a “Wanted Poster” as violators of the National Security Act (NSA). Their offense? Wanting to go back to work at Daewoo.



They cannot, because Daewoo is in the process of being sold to General Motors for a fraction of its value, and cutbacks are part of the preparation for sale. These people believe their government is sacrificing Korean workers to an inhumane version of capitalism, that puts maximized profits ahead of the health of a national economy.

The day we visited them, 200 workers had been arrested and jailed for attempting to reclaim their jobs. While 1700 remaining workers labor on inside the fences, 3000 armed riot police monitor every entrance.

These young leaders are well aware that one day they will have to leave the compound. They know their action has guaranteed certain prison sentences under the NSA.

Testimony – Student Leaders

Would anyone have believed that students elected to leadership positions by their fellow students would automatically become wanted criminals – again, under the draconian National Security Act? They live in small utility rooms on campus, where they



organize protests and demonstrations against the U.S. military presence in their country and for the re-unification of North and South.

They dare not leave the university, which grants them sanctuary, for fear the police, who wait patiently at the gates, will arrest them and send them to prison. They accept their positions knowing the inevitability of prison.

Student Body president, Ulan University

Massacre Site Visited -- Victims Honored

A jumbled mix of loose rocks and bones and skulls mark the location, deep within a mountain, where 3500 political prisoners were executed in 1948 and tossed into a mine shaft. We were told, that toward the end of that grisly



procedure, which went on for days, the South Korean National Police ran short of bullets and resorted to tying prisoners into seven-member groups, shooting one and letting his falling body pull the rest into the shaft. Those still alive, died slowly of suffocation as more bodies poured down upon them and were finally sealed away from history by tons of earth.



We gave homage to those who died, in a ceremony on the side of the mountain, near where most remain buried from sight, but no longer

from mind.

Closing the Circle

This writer, against all expectations, in a remarkable turn of fate, found himself standing upon a platform amidst a sea of humanity, in downtown Taegu, where forty-nine years before I had walked the streets as an Air Policeman on town patrol.

I was facing, with my companions, a dedicated band of Korean Activists intent upon bringing the truth of their own history to a largely ignorant Korean public.

With microphone in hand, and a big –lunged speaker at my side, I joined with others to voice my



own conviction that the Korean people should be free to determine the fate of their own country, to re-unite with their families in the North, to be rid of the baleful U.S. military presence in their midst that festers as the ultimate expression of U.S. arrogance toward a people who have a universally-recognized right to be free of foreign occupation.

The passing public read posters depicting massacres and human rights abuses that have been visited upon their parents, their neighbors, perhaps even themselves, for over fifty years. They read the stories, examine the pictures with interest, then with horror.

I knew that many, like many of us in the U.S., would put those images out of their minds and go on. But some will not. Some will want to know more about their heritage, the true history of their country. They will ask questions. They will become part of a movement that is growing stronger and more vocal every day.

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REBUILDING EL SALVADOR – April 2002 - *John Amidon*

The Tom Paine Chapter of Veterans For Peace (Albany NY) and the Romero Foundation are partnering to send a work delegation to the area of El Carmen, the department of Cuscatlan, some 30 miles east of San Salvador. Our immediate purpose of the delegation is to assist in the reconstruction of housing destroyed by the recent earthquakes and hurricanes experienced by El Salvador.

Upon our return we will also work to educate, plan and raise funds for a second delegation to El Salvador to continue the work of rebuilding. **OUR GOAL IS TO DEVELOP LINKS FOR LONG TERM SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRUGGLE OF THE PEOPLE OF EL SALVADOR.**

The first delegation is scheduled to leave Wednesday, April 10 and fly to El Salvador. There, we will be met by a member of the Romero Foundation and proceed to the host community. We will return to the States on Saturday, April 20, 2002. Participating individuals will purchase their own airline tickets. Our group may be as small as two and will be no larger than ten individuals. We will be housed by hosting families. Work assignments will include construction, brick making and removal of debris from structures destroyed by the earthquakes. We will work with community members learning more about each other and the conditions in El Salvador. This is a wonderful opportunity to share the friendship and good will which comes from working together, shoulder to shoulder in common purpose creating a better world to live in.

The cost of the trip will range between \$700 and \$900. This includes the price of airfare and expenses of approximately \$20 a day while in country. Requirements: You need not speak Spanish but you must be in good physical condition. If you cannot walk at least 5 miles unassisted and in good form, please do not join. You will need a valid passport. You will need to provide for all of your expenses. Working in Central America requires patience, a willingness to adapt to a more relaxed time frame and sometimes differing organizational structures for work details. It is a great learning experience. If you are interested in joining this work delegation please call John Amidon at 518-482-1562, E-mail <jajaja1234@aol.com> for complete information.

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REMOVING THE NAVY FROM VIEQUES – 2001 To May 2003

Announcement in the Winter 2002 issue of the VFP Newsletter:

National Vieques Summit For Peace With Justice

The National Vieques Summit will convene community activists, environmentalists, labor leaders, religious leaders, cultural workers, artists and elected officials who have been in solidarity with and who have shown commitment to the struggle for peace with justice in Vieques. The summit seeks to reconfirm the commitment of those gathered and reactivate a national campaign to work in tandem with the leading organizations of Vieques that will focus on the points of unity outlined below. The National Vieques Summit will be held in New York City on Saturday, April 13 and will achieve the following:

Outline a strategy and redefine a work agenda regarding the struggle for peace with justice in Vieques, Puerto Rico;

Produce a document (e.g. resolution, position paper, etc) with signatories that will be presented to the President of the United States.

Summit supporters and participants will unite in solidarity around the following:

Understand that the central objective of the struggle in Vieques is the universally accepted 4 point program for the island municipality of demilitarization, decontamination, devolution, and sustainable economic development;

Recognize that the struggle for peace with justice in Vieques is a human rights issue that has had serious ramifications of genocide, and ecological and environmental degradation;

Endorse use of non-violent, peacefully civil disobedience, and other efforts in that spirit, as a strategy to disrupt, demand and denounce military training exercises and the occupation of the island municipality by the U.S. Navy.

The National Vieques Summit will have as its priority the above outlined points of unity. Organizations, individuals or elected officials interested in supporting and/or participating in the summit can address any issue(s) that fall outside of the purview of the points of unity at information and literature tables to be provided at the summit. The summit seeks to reach out to and include all peace with justice loving people irrespective of political affiliation or tendencies and whether you support commonwealth, independence or state-hood.

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Vieques Celebrates the Navy's Departure - by David Cline

May 1, 2003 marked the beginning of a new era for the people of the Puerto Rican island of Vieques. On that date all land under military control was officially transferred from the Department of the Navy to the Department of the Interior, ending 62 years of bombing and shelling as the main military training site, the "crown jewel" of the US Navy's Atlantic Fleet.

I traveled to Vieques for the celebration with a six person Veterans For Peace delegation. For more than three years, US veterans have worked together with Puerto Rican veterans and community groups on this cause and wanted to share in the joy of this important victory.

The Celebration For Peace For Vieques began on the evening of Wednesday, April 30 and continued throughout the weekend. The main stage was located at the former main gate of Camp Garcia across the street from the Peace & Justice Camp, which has maintained a constant presence there since the death of security guard David Sanes in April 1999. His death by errant bombs re-ignited a mass civil disobedience movement that swept Vieques and all of Puerto Rico as well as many communities in the United States.

The stage was decorated with a huge banner showing a hand holding the Puerto Rican and Vieques municipal flags releasing a dove of peace. On the night of April 30,

thousands gathered, waiting for midnight to celebrate the Navy's departure. Speakers talked about the struggle and the sacrifices made by so many (over 4000 were arrested and jailed in the civil disobedience campaign) and as the clock approached midnight the excitement grew.

At 12 midnight, flares were shot into the air and the crowd surged toward the gate, once the dividing line where Viequenses couldn't cross. The gates came crashing down and people with wire cutters began taking down the fences. People waving Puerto Rican flags climbed on top of the guard post, a cinder block building that had once been the base for military police operations. Soon others pulled out sledge hammers and began demolishing the cinder block building, a symbol of the despised military occupation.

Members of Vieques Horsemen for Peace rode up through the once off limits land, shooting flares and roman candles skyward and shouting victory slogans. Several abandoned Navy vehicles were discovered, overturned and set afire. At this point, Puerto Rican police were ordered to "restore order" and although there were no violent confrontations or arrests, the police had to retreat several times as the overwhelming crowd threw water to cool them down.

The following day this incident was played up by the news media with one Spanish language paper running a cover photo of a burning vehicle and the headline "They Burned The Peace". Ms. Sila Caleron, the Commonwealth Governor, denounced the events as the work of unnamed outside forces and demanded an investigation and arrests.

The truth is that the majority of people who tore down the gates and guardhouse and burned the vehicles were local residents celebrating their liberation. It is ironic that when Germans tore the Berlin Wall down, it was hailed as an act for freedom, when US tanks pulled down Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad, it was billed as "liberation", yet when Viequenses celebrated the end of over 60 years of continuous US military bombing by tearing down symbols of that oppressive presence, it was called criminal vandalism.

Throughout the remainder of the weekend, celebrations took place at the liberated former base entrance. Vendors stalls lined the road like a country fair with rallies and presentations taking place each day and concerts each evening featuring traditional, bomba, salsa, reggae, rock and rap music. One day there was a Grand March from the town square in Isabel Segundo. On another, Ecumenical services were held to commemorate the victory of peace. On Sunday, Veterans held a ceremony.

I was asked to go with those who had placed a large white cross on the bombing range after the death of David Sanes in April 1999 in the first act of civil disobedience, to the bombing range now silent but still contaminated and littered with unexploded bombs, and helped put up another cross commemorating the victory.

A number of memorial services took place for those who died from military toxins and others who lost their lives in this struggle. At a municipal cemetery, we prayed at the grave of David Sanes with his sister Myrta.

Another service was for Angel Rodriguez Cristobal, a Vietnam veteran who had been arrested in earlier (1979) protests and was murdered in a Federal Prison in Tallahassee, Florida. I met his widow and daughter along with other family members and presented them a "Veterans for Peace for Vieques" button in honor of him and then participated in a service at Esperanza (Hope) beach where a bronze bust of Angel looks out over the water. People shared memories of him amid shouts of "Presente" and then flowers were strewn on the water in his memory.

The Navy's departure is just the first big step in a continuing struggle on Vieques. The Committee for the Rescue and Development of Vieques (CRDV) has long advocated a program of 4 Ds- Demilitarization, Devolution (return of the land) Decontamination and Development (a sustainable economy for the benefit of the people).

Some of the former military land is now open as a wildlife preserve and public beaches but many people still have land claims against the Navy and two-thirds of the island remains in the possession of the Interior Department not the government or people of Puerto Rico.

The cleanup of the land and restoration of a safe environment will also remain a major focus of concern and activism. A recent study by the Health Department found a 27% greater Cancer rate on Vieques as well as elevated levels of Asthma, Diabetes and Hypertension, compared with the rest of Puerto Rico.

The bombing ranges are still littered with unexploded ordinance and are heavily polluted from many years of the buildup of RDX (Cyclonite) explosive residue from conventional bombs as well as quantities of Napalm and Depleted Uranium that were also used there.

The Victory for Peace for Vieques is something to cherish, especially in this dark times of war and repression both at home and abroad. Vieques shows that a determined and united people, using mass civil disobedience can overcome even the most powerful of forces. We must continue to stand in solidarity with the people of Vieques in the battles that lay ahead. VIVA VIEQUES LIBRE!

David Cline was the national president of Veterans For Peace 2001-2006 and a coordinator of Vietnam Veterans Against the War. He participated in the civil disobedience both on Vieques, PR and in Washington, DC. He is a disabled Vietnam veteran and lives in Jersey City, New Jersey.

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IRAQ WATER PROJECT:

Overview by Art Dorland, IWP Committee Chair 2004 --

Iraq Water Project, founded way back at the end of the last century, is still at work providing some tiny measure of help to a country and a people our nation has profoundly damaged. If only we had a scintilla of the resources that went into imposing that damage!

I have to assume that IWP has not in any abiding way impressed itself upon the consciousness of all Board members. Some of you are inevitably barely aware of us. I therefore proceed to a very brief overview of the project's work, with every confidence that more copious details will be published in the Nobel Committee award notification we are daily expecting, and you will be pleased to read.

Back in around 1998 or so, as an oppressive but still sovereign Iraq was struggling under the onus of United Nations sanctions, two California VFP stalwarts, Fredy Champagne and Edilith Eckart (peace be upon her soul), struck upon the idea of helping Iraq's people restore clean water services that had been nearly annihilated under the sanctions regime. Never having heard of Veterans for Peace, I met Fredy on an illegal trip to Cuba and distinctly remember him telling me his plan to gun the engine and ram a big flatbed truck piled with replacement water equipment smack through United Nations check points and on to the nearest broken down Iraqi water plant.

The plan was open to adjustment.

Not long afterwards Edilith made contact with staff from Life for Relief and Development, a Michigan based American/Islamic NGO with offices and workers on the ground in Iraq capable of repairing derelict water treatment equipment. This promising bride IWP wedded at once, and after all the intervening years we are still working with these great people. Over many months the LIFE/VFP cooperative effort managed restoration of six small to medium sized water plants in various parts of Iraq, including one at Falluja, a town none of us had heard of when our delegation was shown the site in 2002.

These were the halcyon days before the magnificent George W. Bush decided finally to finalize his deciding, and rebuilds like these were relatively cheap. LIFE, it seemed, was able to construct an eagle aerie on a sparrow budget. But then came the iron tread of US intervention with everything that followed, including massive inflation. The Labanni water plant, near Basra, for example, had been a sodden, barely functioning industrial mess when we visited in 2000. Next seen, on a revisit in 2002, the plant was fully functional, brightly painted, and even had a tidy vegetable garden where the trash dump used to be. The bill for this work came in at \$123,000, and that included repairs to three other nearby treatment plants. The next time Labanni needed repairs---after the invasion---the estimate was a quarter million, and that was just for the one facility.

This unwelcome development, together with the withdrawal of several of the project committee's members, including its surviving founder (they believed continuance under the US occupation would inevitably compromise IWP independence and make it in fact an unwilling partner of our government's foreign policy) demanded a new approach to the work. After a couple of more small projects with LIFE we moved onto a new path in 2006, and have persevered in this alternative way even till now.

PORTABLE STERILIZERS



Since the aforementioned difficulties were going to inevitably diminish resources, IWP needed a way forward that would not require large amounts of money available all at once. Some Board members will remember Sami Rasouli, founder of Muslim Peacemaker Teams and the Iraqi American Reconciliation Project (IARP). Sami spoke at two VFP conventions. IARP has been for years installing small water sanitation units in Najaf area schools, at the very reasonable cost of about \$1000 to \$1500 per. IWP borrowed a light from Sami's torch and we have been following a similar course since. Through correspondence Sami even introduced us to an Iraqi water engineer, Faiza alAraji, living presently in Jordan who nevertheless has many contacts and resources in Iraq itself.

After what was, at first experiment, uneven success in purchasing and shipping from Jordan ultraviolet sterilizers to various Iraqi hospitals and clinics---20 units or so: some made it, some did not---, Faiza set up her own three man team in Baghdad that acquired the equipment locally and installed it in various parts of the country. This arrangement, which included installations at Abu Ghraib prison and the famous alAskari shrine at Samarra, notoriously blown up by alQaida (?) in February 2006, accounted for some 80 more units until break up of this team in the spring of 2011 due to mortal threats on somebody's part to the individual members. We are now functioning through a Youth and Student organization in Nassiriya, augmented by occasional combinations with

Muslim Peacemaker Teams and our original partner Life for Relief and Development. This past month IWP managed placement of its 140th water treatment unit.

A serious problem throughout has been maintenance of the equipment once installed, and there has been no really satisfactory solution. All contact with the institutions served by the Baghdad team was lost when the technicians fled Iraq. Probably the larger hospitals have resources for upkeep, but the very poor and remote clinics will not, at least that is my guess. Sami and LIFE are capable of follow up attention, and we have sent extra funds to the Nassiriya people for the same purpose. But it's a crap shoot. This advisement has always been prominent in website reports and solicitations.

So where does the money come from? At the outset of the project, back in the mists of the last century, Fredy Champagne and his team were terrifyingly efficient at raising funds through private donations (Fredy triumphs still: witness the imminent rapture of the Golden Rule). We also had support from foundations. In the early period when we worked exclusively with LIFE, IWP paid out upon invoice about \$227,000. That's probably the cost of one goddamn US military contractor and his shack-up.

Since foot went forward upon the new pathway in 2006 IWP has expended a further \$177,000 with a current balance in the account of \$10,310. We have had foundational support during this period, some VFP chapters raised significant funds, Michigan Peaceworks and a group in Alaska helped us out, as did a fundraising west coast tour by VFP member and ocean scientist Dr Marcus Erikson. At a much reduced level, private donations continued. But the bulk of funding over the last few years has been provided by member Tom Yusha Sager, both privately and through his family foundation.

For the past two pages I have trampled my pledge to be brief. But I have not reported to the Board for quite a time, the project is but dimly known to most of VFP anymore, and I have saved you the weary trouble of awaiting the almost in-the-bag, tedious Nobel award letter. For even more punishment you may direct your eyes to iraqwaterproject.org, especially the archive "What's New".

Art Dorland, Iraq Water Project Chair

**THE NATION DEMONSTRATES AGAINST WAR – January 18.
2003**

The Planning

Working in conjunction with other organizations takes a special skill and a considerable amount of insight, based on experience. Veterans for peace has been very fortunate to have had David Cline at the forefront during this extremely active and sensitive period of massive organization:

I have had several discussions with ANSWER about speakers at the January 18 rally. Originally when we met with them several weeks ago, they talked about having a few vets speak at the second rally at the Washington Navy Yard.

When I called to discuss this again last Monday, Sara Flaunders said they had Samau Brown (?), a Native American Viet era vet at the pre-march rally and that Ron Kovic, author of "Born on the Fourth of July", an active duty GI resister, and the father of a soldier deployed to the Gulf would be speaking at the second rally.

Congressman Charles Rangel, a Korean War vet and John Conyers will also speak about the draft, minorities and the war.

I told Sara that when we had met previously, my understanding was we were going to work with them on who to have speak. She said the speakers list was too long and no one else could be added. I expressed my unhappiness with that but let it go.

Yesterday she called back to say she thought over what I had said and felt we should have a VFP speaker. I proposed Jaime Vazquez who is a very good speaker, member of NJ Chapter 21 and Jersey City Director of Veterans Affairs. She is supposed to get back with final confirmation but I now expect he will be one the program.

ANSWER rallies are known for having a million talking heads and these speeches will only be 90 seconds long, basically the time to make one simple point. I recommended to Jaime that he focus on how opposition to the Iraq War is not unpatriotic, but rather a higher expression of patriotism then we are getting from the White House. Dave Cline

A Stirring in the Nation- New York Times editorial Jan. 20, 2003

A largely missing ingredient in the nascent debate about invading Iraq showed up on the streets of major cities over the weekend as crowds of peaceable protesters marched in a demand to be heard. They represented what appears to be a large segment of the American public that remains unconvinced that the Iraqi threat warrants the use of military force at this juncture.

Denouncing the war plan as an administration *idée fixe* that will undermine America's standing in the world, stir unrest in the Mideast and damage the American economy, the protesters in Washington massed on Saturday for what police described as the largest antiwar rally at the Capitol since the Vietnam era. It was impressive for the obvious mainstream roots of the marchers - from young college students to grayheads with vivid protest memories of the 60's. They gathered from near and far by the tens of thousands, galvanized by the possibility that President Bush will soon order American forces to attack Iraq even without the approval of the United Nations Security Council.

Mr. Bush and his war cabinet would be wise to see the demonstrators as a clear sign that noticeable numbers of Americans no longer feel obliged to salute the administration's plans because of the shock of Sept. 11 and that many harbor serious doubts about his march toward war. The protesters are raising some nuanced questions in the name of patriotism about the premises, cost and aftermath of the war the president is contemplating. Millions of Americans who did not march share the concerns and have yet to hear Mr. Bush make a persuasive case that combat operations are the only way to respond to Saddam Hussein.

Other protests will be emphasizing civil disobedience in the name of Martin Luther King Jr. But any graphic moments to come of confrontation and arrest should be seen in the far broader context of the Capitol scene: peaceable throngs of mainstream Americans came forward demanding more of a dialogue from political leaders. Mr. Bush and his aides, to their credit, welcomed the demonstrations as a healthy manifestation of American democracy at work. We hope that spirit will endure in the weeks ahead if differences deepen and a noisier antiwar movement develops. These protests are the tip of a far broader sense of concern and lack of confidence in the path to war that seems to lie ahead.

###

Cadence and solidarity Jozef Hand-Boniakowski

January 21, 2003

On Jan. 18 there was an enormous sea of humanity cruising through the veins of power in Washington, D.C. In great numbers, too awesome to accurately count, hundreds of thousands of people, perhaps half a million, the lifeblood of an emerging and robust U.S. peace movement, came to the citadel of corporate capital power to express their displeasure with the war policies of the Bush-Cheney oil barons.

Jan 18 was a day that non-violent and peace-loving people gave the U.S. peace movement momentum and challenged the mind-set of the Pentagon profiteers to pause and reflect, to rethink, perhaps, their insane drive to war. Little progressive Vermont sent 1,000 protestors on 20 buses to the demonstration. Other demonstrators drove, flew, walked, or wheeled themselves in the finger-numbing cold to say, "Enough. Not in our name."

They were teachers, students, dental technicians, information technologists, bus drivers, architects, sales people, socialists, capitalists, anarchists, Christians, Jews, Buddhists, musicians, atheists, the young, the old, veterans and non-veterans, who, for one day, united to say no to a war machine out of control.

At the demonstration, Veterans For Peace reworked a standard military drill into a peace cadence. This pleased the throng and, hopefully, chagrined the chickenhawks eager to turn youth into cannon fodder fighting for oil. The chickenhawks include George W. Bush (AWOL), Dick Cheney, Trent Lott, Paul Wolfowitz, John Ashcroft, Tommy Thompson. Chickenhawks send others to kill while they themselves avoid military service.

As a consequence of using war as foreign policy, many U.S. veterans are wounded and suffer military-related illnesses and health conditions. Many return home in boxes covered with the thank-you of a crisp, clean, U.S. flag. Most are quickly forgotten.

Dick Cheney requested and received five deferments, said he "had other priorities than military service." As a Vietnam-era veteran, I have no problem with those who avoid military service, not allowing themselves to be exploited by the military-industrial complex. I have respect for the conscientious objector who refused to serve. I have contempt, however, for those who avoid service while sending other's sons, husbands, brothers, mothers, wives and sisters off to war. Dick Cheney is one of these.

At the D.C. anti-war rally, Veterans For Peace warned the masses not to go to war, not to listen to the exporters of death who tell the lies and manipulate patriotism to get the public to accept war. We called upon the crowd to stop the killing in our name.

On the day before the D.C. demonstration, the president of Veterans For Peace, David Cline, was interviewed on MSNBC. The subtle manipulation by the corporate media was

easy to miss. The program showed demonstrators against war in Baghdad, hundreds of Arab people with signs and banners in flowing Arabic script while the voice over mentioned that on the next day there would be big protests in Washington, D.C. This attempt at linking pro-Iraq sentiment with U.S. protestors was followed by a segue in keeping with George W. Bush's thought-stifling, "If you are not with us, you are against us" philosophy.

The MSNBC program went to a commercial break after mentioning that there would be an interview with the president of Veterans For Peace afterwards. During the segue, generic action music underscored the announcement: anti-war demonstration $\frac{3}{4}$ pro-Iraq or anti-American? Consider the choice offered. This insult to a dedicated and decorated Vietnam War veteran is an affront to all veterans who served their country so that freedom of speech could prevail $\frac{3}{4}$ even if that freedom is expressed through the distortion of the corporate-state media, the propaganda organ for the established power.

When Veterans For Peace regrouped near the intersection of Pennsylvania and Independence avenues, an amazing thing happened. Here was the same David Cline, who just the day before, in the belly of the beast, presented a stern and committed call to peace on national television, with bullhorn in hand, calling out in military cadence, anti-war chants with the full backing of the Veterans For Peace ranks.

When passing demonstrators first saw the Veterans For Peace, they yelled and cheered. Veterans For Peace responded with a new cadence. The crowd joined them. Soon everyone was one mass peace drill team. Then a new crowd would notice the vets, and it started over. And over. And over. For almost two hours, the chanting continued.

In the book, "War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning," veteran war correspondent Chris Hedges writes, "There is among many who fight in war a sense of shame, one that is made worse by the patriotic drivel used to justify the act of killing in war. Those who seek meaning in patriotism do not want to hear the truth of war, wary of bursting the bubble. The tensions between those who refuse to let go of the myth and those that know it to be a lie feed into the dislocation and malaise after war. In the end, neither side cares to speak to the other. The shame and alienation of combat soldiers, coupled with the indifference to the truth of war by those who were not there, reduces many societies to silence. It seems better to forget."

Veterans For Peace who have been to combat refuse to forget. Veterans For Peace who served our country but did not see combat commit ourselves in working with our brothers and sisters to end war. We know the consequences of American foreign policy because once, at a time in our lives, so many of us carried it out. We find it sad that war seems so often delightful to those that have no knowledge of it. We will proudly and patriotically continue to denounce war despite whatever misguided sense of euphoria supports it. We will be back on Feb. 15 in New York City where we will join millions worldwide in saying no to war.

###

OPERATION DIRE DISTRESS – March 22, 2003

In a last – ditch effort to head off war in Iraq, a coalition of Veterans For Peace, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out and Veterans For Common Sense gathered in Washington, D.C. We were too late to stop it, but not too late to start gathering opposition to its continuation and the policies driving it.

OPERATION DIRE DISTRESS MARCH 22-24 IN WASHINGTON, DC VETERANS AGAINST IRAQ WAR

TEACH-IN & SPEAKOUT

Saturday, March 22 from 1-5 PM
American University-Kay Chapel

DEMONSTRATION-SUNDAY MARCH 23

Assemble 12 Noon at Constitution Gardens
Solemn Procession to Vietnam, Korea, WW II Memorials &
March to VA, White House, Rally on the Ellipse

LOBBYING-MONDAY MARCH 24

Meetings with Congressional allies and state reps.

All veterans, active-duty GI's, reservists, family members & supporters are welcome and encouraged to attend.

Wear your medals, ribbons, uniforms, vets organization colors etc., bring flags, banners, signs

[Veterans Against Iraq War www.vaiw.org](http://www.vaiw.org)

participating organizations: Veterans For Peace www.veteransforpeace.org
Vietnam Veterans Against the War www.vvaw.org
Veterans for Common Sense www.veteransforcommonsense.org
Military Families Speak Out www.mfso.org

Operation Dire Distress - A Success And A Beginning - -- Woody Powell

The Teach-In, Saturday, March 22

The Kay Chapel at the American University, Washington, D.C., was packed all afternoon, as speaker after speaker, with solid knowledge and passionate eloquence, expertly laid out the fallacies and falsehoods driving the war in Iraq, the ways it could have been averted, with honor, and the need to end it quickly.

I was impressed by the sanity with which people who have earned the right to speak as soldiers and citizens and patriots of the highest order confronted the insanity of the actions of the Bush administration. It was a long and illustrious list of combat nurses, intelligence experts, academics, clerics, citizens of all stripes - people like Bobby Muller, Daniel Ellsberg, Ray McGovern, Charles Sheehan-Miles, Jamie Vasquez, Jonathan Schell, Charley Richardson and Nancy Lessing of Military Families Speak Out, our president, David Cline. CNN saw fit to broadcast it for four solid hours.

Back at the national office in St. Louis, the phone rang continuously, as reporters looked for interviews and veterans called to join. Website membership applications jumped to a high of more than thirty within a few hours.

The phone calls kept coming in, most voicing support - and, yes, a sad few who were angry and did not yet understand our brand of patriotism.

Some calls were from mothers and fathers of youngsters serving in Iraq - or who were slated to serve soon. They wanted to know more about Military Families Speak Out (MFSO).

The Procession - Sunday, March 23

The day of the march was brisk and sunny. Veterans and Military Families from all over the country collected on a knoll near the Vietnam Memorial. We listened to a few, short speeches. Most of us had our messages firmly placed in our hearts and minds. In solemn procession we made our way from one war memorial to another.

At each, a small delegation of veterans walked in and placed a wreath in memory of those we knew and didn't know that were lost to their families.

Peter Shaw skirled his bagpipes on each occasion but one; when he joined the delegation to the Korean War memorial. There we laid our arms on each others' shoulders and kept a short silence.

We visited the Office of Veterans Affairs. The Gulf War 1 vets, of a war not yet memorialized, laid their wreath at the doorstep. In a short speech, Erik Gustafson of EPIC and a member of VFP, noted how the congress voted out a resolution supporting the troops, yet, at three the next morning, voted to cut \$25 billion from the budget of the Office of Veterans Affairs over the next ten years.



The final official delegation delivered the VAIW statement of purpose, signed by over 3000 veterans, ranking from Admirals and Generals to PFCs, Airmen and Sailors, to the White House.

The President's people refused to accept it.

Coming Away The press was all over us. Television, radio, newspapers, journals. Statements were freely given by all who were asked. People spoke from their hearts, their experiences and from their conviction that our country is on a very wrong course. We made these points:

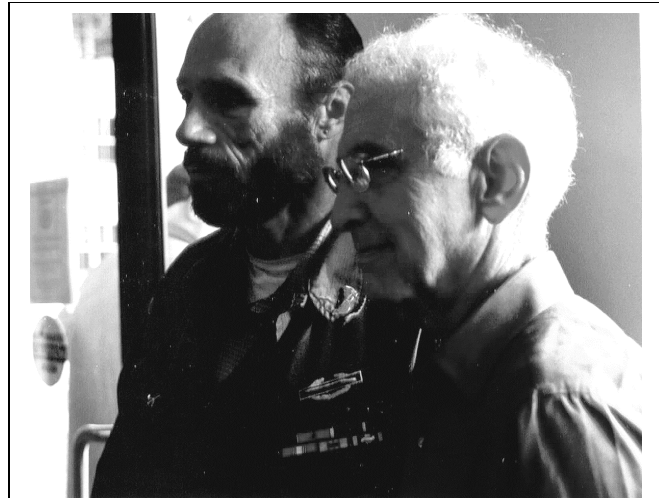
- * That just because this war had started, did not mean that it should now be supported. A bad war is a bad war.
- * Supporting our troops has more to do with providing healing services when they come home, spiritually battered by what they have had to do, than supporting one more day of horror for them.
- * Each veteran of each war had hoped against hope that their war would be the last; that somehow our nation would have learned, would have matured, would have concluded, as we have, that one war only leads to another and that where there is the will a better way of resolving differences can certainly be found.
- * We are determined to have our representation restored in government.
- * We are prepared to educate the people of this country; help them to understand how much wealth, how much international good will, how many lives the present administration is squandering, with its militaristic policies.
- * We believe our citizens can be made to realize that the real threat to our national security is our threatening posture to the rest of the world, and that we have an important part to play in bringing that about.

###

VFP President David Cline Addresses Teach-In At American University

Address of David Cline, president of Veterans For Peace at the Veterans Against Iraq War Forum, Washington, DC, March 22, 2003

Good afternoon, my name is David Cline, I'm the president of Veterans for Peace. (applause) I have long been a member of Vietnam Veterans against the War and one of the people (applause)... and one of the people who helped organize Veterans Against Iraq War. Veterans Against Iraq War is a coalition of individual veterans and organizations including, Military Families Speak Out – people who have children in the military, Veterans for Common Sense, Vietnam Vets Against the War, Vets for Peace, Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation is involved, and other groups....Gray Panthers.



Dave Cline & Daniel Ellsberg

And we organized this demonstration. As we began to organize this coalition, we felt that the only way we could describe the state of our nation was Dire Distress. When we called this demonstration, we didn't know we'd be at this historic moment that we are right now. And if that name was right then, it's more right now, because today, we see the worst fears that we had of about what this government would do.

People in congress voted for the authorization of the use of force thinking it was just so Bush could bluff his way through, stonewall, and Saddam would back down, and now they're beginning to wonder.

Like the Gulf of Tonkin resolution, congress abdicated their responsibility to the American people, and that put the responsibility on the backs of each and every citizen to stand up against what the president was doing, to stand up in the face of complicity by congress, to stand up in the streets. That's what Americans have been doing ever since... (applause) that's what American citizens of all nationalities have been doing ever since this war threat began, last fall, last year, last spring really, there were demonstrations in April last year in Washington, there was one in October, there was one in January, there

was one in New York in February, they're marching in New York City right now as we speak.

People around the world have been demonstrating. There has been a bigger outpouring and uprising of people for peace than I have ever witnessed on an international scale. And as people continue to demand and call for peace, we see a president just turning his back.

I think what Bobby Mueller said earlier about recognizing the nature of this fight, the nature of this struggle, what has to be done, that it's not just stop the war, yeah, we have to stop the war, but we have to change the direction is what we gotta begin thinking about again.

You know I remember back in 1971 Vietnam Veterans against the War came here for Operation Dewey Canyon III, and at that time veterans held a whole series of demonstrations, some veterans returned their medals, a whole series of activities took place. And at that time we had a representative, John Kerry speaking for us in congress. And at that time John Kerry said, "This nation must turn. And we hope that veterans like us can help in that turning. When they see a guy going down the street missing a leg, they'll say Vietnam and it won't mean an ugly memory, but it will mean that place where this nation turned and soldiers like us helped in that turning." Now, I have to say I think John Kerry hasn't kept the faith with his brothers, but many of us have. See, this is about standing up for what you learned the hard way. And among veterans, many veterans have opposed this war throughout this nation, in every city and every town. And it's for a lot of reasons.

You know, some guys.. anyone who's been to war, one of the things you learn from war, is no more war. That war is the last resort when all else fails, not the preferred alternative. That's what war teaches a veteran. (applause)

Another thing that many veterans feel, is that this is not a war for any of the claims that we've heard from the White House. You know, I heard someone speaking in Washington DC and he said weapons of mass destruction should be called weapons of mass distraction, to take our thinking away from what's really going on here.

I think that, if we look at behind the scenes, if we look at it pretty openly really, we're dealing with what's nothing less than a war of aggression by our nation against another nation. It can't be called anything less than a war of aggression. (applause)

I was brought up to believe that the people who fought in World War II, and what this nation stood for, was to oppose aggression. That was my understanding of why so many people sacrificed for 5 long years or 4 long years in World War II, and what our country stood for, we were not an aggressor nation.

Yet today we are attacking Iraq. No case has been made for a threat to our national security, no case has been made for a connection to terrorism, it's "just because." It's just because the people in the White House all managed to avoid military service so to them, it doesn't matter, (applause) it doesn't matter that blood is shed.

It's just because when we were in the jungles and rice paddies in Vietnam, learnin' the lessons the hard way, they were flying around in south Texas or they were hiding somewhere in a college or they were writing speeches for somebody or maybe they were doing some illegal substances for all I know. But they certainly weren't doing what we were doing, and so their lessons were: use the soft way, use the way of privilege, stick with your own people, the rich, the people that always benefit from this. Because this is about corporate profit in the end, this is about getting control of the region, this is about getting control of the oil fields.

Operation Dire Distress is a three day operation, today's this teach-in, tomorrow we're going to hold a veteran's demonstration gathering at 12 noon at the Constitution Garden by the Vietnam memorial, we will have a solemn procession to each of the Vietnam, the Korea, and the site of the World War II memorial where we'll lay wreaths. And then we're going to march to the VA, where we're going to lay a wreath for those who are sick and dying from Gulf War illnesses, those sick and dying from Agent Orange, those sick and dying from atomic veteran radiation exposure, those that the V A and the Government turn their back on, we're going to remember them.

Then we're going to march to the ellipse and send a team to present our petition (The Veterans Against Iraq War statement) and this is signed by over 3000 veterans, many of them are career military people, what I used to call a lifer, but they all feel, many of them feel the same way too, because what they see is a military and a government that's out of control with what used to be and what should be. The promise and the reality have gotten too far apart.

And like Lois said earlier, they've dropped the rhetoric about the promise of freedom, it's all about good and evil now, this very simple, black and white, but the world isn't like that. You know, I'm a Vietnam Vet, so it shouldn't surprise you that I always talk about the lessons of Vietnam. And I think one of the best summations of that was in a poem by Bill Earhardt. It was a poem ironically called "The Invasion of Grenada", and in the end of that poem he says, "I didn't want a highway named 'Vietnam Veteran Memorial Drive', I didn't even want that black gash, that black marble stone down in the earth in Washington, what I wanted was for us to recognize our limits as a nation, what I wanted us to learn is that the world is not black and white, and it is not ours." (applause)

Today, if anything, instead of learning from the past, you know, America after the Vietnam War, a lot of people got amnesia... boy that was a bad time, let's forget about that, you know? But some people didn't get amnesia, they kept trying to kick the Vietnam Syndrome because they seemed to have a vested interest in waging these wars. Now we've come full cycle. What Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon were trying to do to Indochina, George Bush and Dick Cheney are trying to do to the whole globe.

Instead of learning from Vietnam, we have seen a magnification of the cancer. So what we have to do is have a long-term understanding, strategy, and plan and become long-term activists to change this.

The turning that we talked about in 1971 hasn't happened, and I am glad to see so many veterans here who have been involved in the past in trying to turn this country, because the conditions will only get worse.

You know, we can talk about the people dying in Iraq, and then we can talk about the education that's gonna to be cut, or the health care that's gonna to be cut, or the VA health care, the VA benefits and programs that are gonna to be cut, or all the people that gonna not get a better job because wages are going to stay low. I could keep going on with all these problems because the social and economic needs of the American people will be sacrificed at the altar of war. (applause) They are being sacrificed at the altar of war today, and we cannot, and we cannot fail to recognize that.

The strength of this movement will be when we can link the struggle against this war and this imperial foreign policy, with the struggle or efforts to try and reach the economic and social needs of the American people. Once we do that we will have a qualitative mass in this country that will turn this country. That has to be our understanding and the way we work on this.

You know, they say it's a free country, well a lotta' things ain't free, and a lotta' things keep getting more expensive. And I think that once we start understanding that connection... we were talking today about how some people can't even participate in a meeting like this. Because they go to work each day, they get up, they go to work getting paid 6, 7, 8 dollars an hour, they come home from work, pick up their kids at the day care center, go home and feed 'em, put the kids to bed, take a shower, go to bed, and get up to do the same thing all over again, and that's a lot of people's lives these days in America. So we should speak for them too. We should speak for all the people in this country, especially those that are being shut out today.

Let me just say, that today they keep talking about supporting the troops... they pass resolutions, and the real message behind some of this is don't say nothing about the war now that the fighting has started. I don't think that's an option. I think that if a war is wrong before it was starts, it's wrong after it starts. (wild applause)

There has been a massive campaign, demonstrations, civil disobedience, and these protests will continue. I just noticed coming into the hall, Ellen Barfield, Ellen is the vice-president of Veterans for Peace, she's been arrested three times in the last week engaging in civil disobedience in trying to stop this war. (applause)

Let me just wrap up by saying this. You know, Bobby was talking earlier about how we were mad when we were coming back, and we were.... a lot of times when we were came back from war we didn't know what was up because we were in a war zone one day and we're at McDonalds the next day, and didn't know what's heads or tails. But today we're not like that anymore. You know, we might have been angry young men, but we listened good to some of the rhetoric we used to put out back then and we used to quote Thomas Paine when he said, you know, there's a sunshine patriot and a summer soldier, but what we need is a winter soldier.

So today I can tell you, we will be marching tomorrow, we will be meeting with congressmen on Monday, and we will be continuing a campaign, because we are determined to keep the winter soldier banner flying. We are winter soldiers and we will continue to struggle for ourselves, for our children, and for all of humanity. Thank you.

###

An outside view:

Will Middle America Board the Peace Train?

By Traci Hukill, [AlterNet](#)

March 24, 2003

Consider the difference between two anti-war demonstrations that took place last week in Washington:

On Wednesday, March 19, the night the war began, a half-dozen women in pink wearing gruesome war-victim makeup and mock bandages led a crowd of 200 protesters from DuPont Circle to the Kalorama home of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld about a mile away. They managed to stop rush-hour traffic en route, had a brief skirmish with police in which a young man was arrested, and presented a child-sized coffin made of Styrofoam to a two-story brick house across from the French ambassador's palatial residence.

"Donald Rumsfeld!" shouted Medea Benjamin. "Shame on you! You've got the blood of Iraqi civilians on your hands!"

A cry went up from the demonstrators. Some were already lying down, staging a die-in on the street. "Donald, come get this casket! How are you going to sleep at night knowing this war is immoral, unjust and illegal?" When the group turned to leave 45 minutes later, Benjamin propped up the Styrofoam coffin on the roof of a silver Impala parked in front of the house. It was Code Pink at its best - vocal, theatrical and radical.

The following Saturday, after U.S. forces had shocked and awed Baghdad and the rest of the world with a brutal all-night pummeling, a more august group of speakers took turns at the podium in the chapel at American University to denounce Bush's doctrine of preemptive war and the imperialist posture implied therein. A Nobel Peace Prize winner, retired military officers, Vietnam veterans, former intelligence agents, scholars, celebrated leakers of Pentagon Papers - one by one they laid out their arguments in the language and environment of the academy.

The audience of 250 or so, composed mostly of students, erupted into rowdy applause, especially when John Brown, the diplomat who tendered his resignation to the State Department last week over objections to the war, took the stage. But this time the C-SPAN cameras were rolling. And while protesters by the hundreds get arrested in San

Francisco, and Code Pink keeps beating its drum, it is this movement, the one gaining momentum among the middleweights of the political and military establishment, that might finally get mainstream America on board the anti-war wagon.

It helps that this particular part of the antiwar movement has as its unofficial centerpiece a very official document: the National Security Strategy, released by the White House in September 2002.

Middle America - indeed, Western civilization - loves documents. Documents bear the stamp of legitimacy. They can be examined, referred to, brandished. They literally put issues in black and white. The National Security Strategy lays out the doctrine for preemptive war. Its summary contains this paragraph:

"We will cooperate with other nations to deny, contain, and curtail our enemies' efforts to acquire dangerous technologies. And, as a matter of common sense and self-defense, America will act against such emerging threats before they are fully formed. We cannot defend America and our friends by hoping for the best. So we must be prepared to defeat our enemies' plans, using the best intelligence and proceeding with deliberation. History will judge harshly those who saw this coming danger but failed to act. In the new world we have entered, the only path to peace and security is the path of action."

It was the emergence of this manifesto prescribing preemptive military action, one year after 9/11, that spurred Gulf War veterans Charles Sheehan-Miles, Erik Gustafson, Erin Cole and Dan Fahey to form Veterans For Common Sense (www.veteransforcommonsense.org), a primary organizer of the teach-in at American University. Two weeks ago VCS sent [a letter to President Bush](#) objecting to the war. It was signed by more than 1,000 veterans, among them two vice-admirals, a brigadier general and a handful of colonels.

"The White House policy is frightening, and it basically spells out empire for the U.S. I don't know what else to call it," says Sheehan-Miles. "This is such a dramatic change in what American foreign policy is all about that we should be having a huge public debate about it. And we're not - all we're having a debate about are these other things: Saddam Hussein, regime change - something does need to be done about Saddam Hussein, but this isn't it."

Coming from a combat veteran, Sheehan-Miles' words might carry extra weight for the 76 percent of Americans who now support the war. But if Sheehan-Miles, who left the Army as a conscientious objector after his unit's killing of undefended Iraqis left him badly shaken, isn't convincing enough for Middle America, there's always Ret. Rear Admiral Gene LaRocque.

LaRocque survived the destruction of his ship at Pearl Harbor to fight in World War II and command a nuclear-armed carrier task force during the Cold War. Later he was a planner in the Pentagon. No squishy-minded peacenik, he.

On Saturday, LaRocque stood at the microphone in full Navy regalia and in mild, avuncular tones excoriated those who would cast aspersions on the right to dissent in wartime, the burgeoning militarism taking root here and the nation's "pride and joy" in its precision weapons. And he criticized one of the main principles enshrined in the Bush doctrine: That it is America's "responsibility to lead" the rest of the world to freedom.

"Is it the sole responsibility of the U.S. to decide which nations' form of government will stand and which will fall?" he asked. "Is it the responsibility of the U.S. to kill or destroy to bring about a change of government? I think not. I don't believe George Bush has the right to kill one person to bring about a change in government."

LaRocque was inspiringly set up by Bobby Muller, president of the Vietnam Veterans of America Foundation. A Marine lieutenant in Vietnam, Muller took a bullet that severed his spinal cord and left him paralyzed from the chest down. He has since campaigned unceasingly for veterans' rights, for reconciliation with the people of Vietnam and for the international banning of land mines, for which he received a Nobel Peace Prize in 1997.

The parallels with Iraq and Vietnam are obvious. But Iraq is not the problem, said Muller. "This is only the beginning. Iraq will be over in a few days. The problem is an ideology that is controlling this administration. It has to do with how you look at the world and America's role in the world. It's called the Bush doctrine."

Muller laid out the doctrine's history. In 1992, Dick Cheney, then Secretary of Defense for President George Bush, and Paul Wolfowitz, then Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, leaked a draft of a plan for the aggressive establishment of American dominance in the post-Cold War era under the aegis of the Committee for Peace and Security in the Gulf. It sparked a firestorm, and Bush, worried about a reelection campaign he was about to lose, repudiated it. It resurfaced in 1997 when the Project for a New American Century formed. This time the doctrine was signed onto by Project founder William Kristol, Cheney, Wolfowitz and Rumsfeld, among others. In September 2002 their creation finally found a home in the National Security Strategy.

"At its heart is the notion of exceptionalism - that America is in a unique position, it has the responsibility of leadership. It must maintain absolute military supremacy - no other group of countries is to get to the point where they can compete," said Muller.

"It takes us not only to preemption - which implies an imminent threat - but to prevention, before the point of imminent threat is reached. Iraq is preventive, not preemptive. I tell you this so you will know we are more than a decade behind and understand the magnitude of what we are up against, and the head start these guys have on us," Muller said.

The civilians were there, too. John Brown, who joined John Brady Kiesling and Mary Wright in leaving the State Department because of their objections to the war, slammed Bush for employing "the crudest propaganda to make us believe his positions are

justifiable" and skewered the use of slogans and the demonization of critics in place of coherent arguments.

Ray McGovern, a former intelligence officer and founder of the Veteran Intelligence Professionals for Sanity, debunked the alleged connection between Hussein and al-Qaeda and drew perhaps the harshest conclusion of all about the historical moment at which America finds itself as its soldiers invade a country that poses no imminent threat:

"I was born in August, 1939, one week before Hitler sent troops into Poland," McGovern said. "I have been thinking March 2003 is our August 1939."

It has taken time, but the middleweights of the establishment - and some of the heavyweights - have found a point around which to rally. The comparisons to World War II keep coming. In a March 23 Los Angeles Times commentary, special assistant to President Kennedy Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. added his voice to the chorus of dissent. His subject: the Bush doctrine.

"The choice reflects a fatal turn in U.S. foreign policy," Schlesinger wrote. "The president has adopted a policy of 'anticipatory self-defense' that is alarmingly similar to the policy that imperial Japan employed at Pearl Harbor on a date which, as an earlier American president said it would, lives in infamy. Franklin D. Roosevelt was right, but today it is we Americans who live in infamy."

This is what the anti-war movement has needed in order to reach the living rooms between the coasts: the mantle of respectability. Criticism of the administration by civic and military leaders has been mighty scarce around Washington, and Saturday's teach-in was a first.

In the end there was one denizen of the establishment - okay, a former denizen of the establishment - who bridged the gap between this faction of the peace movement and the Code Pink crowd.

Daniel Ellsberg, who stood trial in 1973 on 12 felony counts for leaking the Pentagon Papers and exposing the Nixon administration's willful deceit of the American public in order to drum up support for the Vietnam War, arrived at the teach-in rather reluctantly. He had decided to spend the weekend in jail to register his displeasure - "I just didn't want to watch television this weekend," he deadpanned - and had been sprung by the event's organizers, to his visible annoyance. He was intending to go back later that day and still wore the plastic bracelet of the District of Columbia's hospitality.

Ellsberg spoke about another unjust war, the Mexican-American War. The wresting of Texas from Mexico was condemned by none other than General Ulysses Grant as "one of the most unjust wars ever waged by a stronger power against a weaker," a cynical attempt to acquire territory out of which a slave state could be formed.

"I believe that a consequence of this wrongful war will be wrongful terrorism," Ellsberg concluded. "The question is: what do you do about it?"

He answered himself with a quote by Henry David Thoreau. "Cast your whole vote," he said, showing his bracelet. "I voted. As they used to say in Boston, vote early and vote often. Thank you."

Traci Hukill is a freelance writer in Washington, DC.

###

BRING THEM HOME NOW CAMPAIGN

Good For The Troops, Their Families & Possibly Peace In The Middle East

(On August 13, Military Families Speak Out and Veterans For Peace launched a campaign in Washington DC to bring the troops home now (<http://www.bringthemhomenow.org/>). There was immediate response to C-Span coverage, and e-mails supporting the campaign have been flowing into MFSO and VFP headquarters in St. Louis ever since.)

August 25, 2003

Today's news and commentary is still resounding to August 19th's horrific bombing of the UN building in Baghdad. It was an apparent suicide bombing, which, like the earlier destruction of the Jordanian Embassy, and the daily attacks on US troops, bespeaks a high level of organized resolve to be rid of all foreign presence.

We are reminded of the human body, when an organ transplant goes wrong and the entire body mobilizes to reject it. Something like that is happening in Iraq

This administration is exposing our soldiers to a guerrilla war we believe it cannot win. It is subjecting them to a grind of constant fear as they watch the daily attrition of their numbers. It is changing their psyches in ways that will make it very difficult, impossible for some, to come home and re-engage a normal life. It is sacrificing another generation of children and their grieving families to a hapless desire for world domination.

We hope to establish that bringing the troops home now may not only preserve their lives, but provide an opening for an international effort that would have a better chance of bringing at least stability to the region.

It should be obvious that President Bush made a severe mis-calculation when he manipulated intelligence and inflamed public opinion against an admittedly rotten despot (who had been “our” rotten despot until 1991) and launched what he implied would be a nearly bloodless war. He further mis-calculated when he bought the claims of an Iraqi expatriate and con man (Mr. Chalabi) that he could rally the Iraqi people under his leadership.

The Muslim world is long used to US-manipulated puppet governments. It knows our propensity for providing selective military support in the hoary old game of creating regional dependency and stability through controlled violence and the suppression of independent regimes. Muslims have not trusted emissaries from the west since the pillaging and looting of the crusades.

Given this deep cultural distrust that spews hatred like their territories spew oil at the least little poke, how can we be expected to re-build a nation arbitrarily created by colonial administrations and administered by puppet regimes, until one got out of control?

We read that advisors to the administration, who originally pointed out that Iraq was probably ungovernable by a western presence, were either ignored, or dismissed. Their advice did not fit a certain ideological imperative articulated by Project for a New American Century, PNAC, which called for, among other things, the establishment of permanent military bases in Iraq. (<http://www.newamericancentury.org/>)

The men who articulated the principles of PNAC are the president’s closest advisors (Rumsfeld, Perle, Wolfowitz, Cheney, Abrams, Jeb Bush).

Veterans For Peace believes we are looking at the inevitable result of an ideologically-driven adventure going rapidly sour with no face-saving means of withdrawal.

Some of us are veterans of the Korean War and Vietnam, where our troops were a generally unpopular presence in either North or South. We have some idea of what our men and women in Iraq, so miserably unprepared for occupation duty, are going through. We remember our own anger, arising from ignorance, at people who smiled at us by day and shot at us by night. They were trying to reject a foreign presence.

“What-if” games are interesting, but sterile. We really don’t know how things would have turned out on the Korean peninsula if we had withdrawn and allowed the North and the South to re-combine into their naturally symbiotic relationship.

This occupation, however, gives us an opportunity to stop a bad situation from getting worse, and to find out what withdrawal of a foreign presence might produce for the people of Iraq.

We would certainly have to give up any ambitions we might have about the control of oil. We would have to put up with a long period of disbelief before the people of the Middle East could accept that we were trying to serve their best interests over the long haul.

We may even have to endure our own citizens' contempt for starting something, then not being able to finish it. We would have to be uncharacteristically humble.

We would have to help re-build Iraq almost anonymously, by behind-the-scenes support for international efforts led by a UN untainted by an "Uncle Tom" relationship to the U.S.

If we don't bring our troops home, and engage in an unselfish effort, as part of the international community, to repair the damage old and recent policies have wrought, we will be forced to hunker down in Fortress America, for we won't be welcome anywhere else.

###

Military Families Tell Congress: Bring Them Home Now!; Congressional Briefing for September 9, 2003

WASHINGTON - September 5 - Military Families Speak Out (MFSO), one of the organizations that launched the Bring Them Home NOW! campaign last month, is bringing its message to Members of Congress this week. Several families whose close relatives are serving, have served or were killed in Iraq will be participating in a Congressional briefing (Tuesday, September 9 at 2 pm in Rayburn House Office Building Room 2318), organized by Congresswoman Maxine Waters, 35th District (CA-35), to discuss how best to end US military involvement in Iraq.

The situation in Iraq is deteriorating. On average, there is at least one U.S. casualty in Iraq each day. More U.S. troops have died in Iraq since President Bush declared major combat to be over on May 1 than died in March and April. U.S. troops are at risk of injury and death from both combat and non-combat-related incidents in Iraq; serious illness from unexplained pneumonia, exposure to depleted uranium, and other causes; and severe psychological trauma. The people of Iraq are also at risk. Military Families will tell Members of Congress that "those joining the armed forces sign up to serve the country and defend the Constitution, not to be used as cannon fodder in reckless military misadventures such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq."

MFSO is an organization of over 800 military families, many of whom opposed the invasion of Iraq and all of whom are now calling for an end to the occupation of Iraq and the return of all U.S. troops to their home duty stations. MFSO participants at the Congressional briefing will raise concerns about the dire lack of planning and support their loved ones and other troops are receiving. They will question the justifications used to send troops to Iraq in the first place, and will state their view that there is no way to address problems in Iraq as long as the U.S. military occupation continues.

WHO: Military Families

WHAT: Participating in Congressional Briefing called by Congresswoman Maxine Waters (CA-35)

WHEN: Tuesday, September 9, 2003 from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m.

WHERE: Rayburn House Office Building, Room 2318, Washington, D.C.

Speakers Include:

-- Nancy Lessin and Charley Richardson, from Boston, Massachusetts, co-founders of Military Families Speak Out. Their son Joe, 25, is a Marine who was deployed in August 2002 and who returned from Iraq on Memorial Day 2003.

-- Jeri Reed, from Norman, Oklahoma, is the mother of a 21-year-old specialist in the Army. He was deployed to Iraq in March, 2003 and is currently stationed at the Abu Ghraib prison.

-- Candance Robison, from Krum, Texas, is the wife of Army First Lieutenant Mike Robison, who was deployed in February, 2003 and has served in Iraq since April, 2003. He is currently stationed in Fallujah.

-- Myriam Velez, from Cooper City, Florida, has a nephew in the Army Reserves in Iraq. She is also working with Miami-area Latina mothers whose sons serve in the National Guard reserves and are stationed in Iraq.

-- Robin Ponton and her mother DeShauna Ponton, from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Robin, age 13, is the daughter of Army Reservist Staff Sergeant Charles Pollard who is serving with a Military Police Company in Iraq.

-- Fernando Suarez del Solar, of Escondido, CA, is the father of Marine Lance Cpl Jesus Suarez, one of the first U.S. servicemen killed in Iraq (March 27, 2003).

-- Stan Goff, of Raleigh, NC, began a military carrier in the U.S. Army in 1970 and retired as a Special Forces Master Sergeant in 1996. He served in Ranger, Airborne and Special Forces counter-terrorist units, in eight conflict areas. His son serves in the U.S. Army and was deployed to Iraq in August, 2003.

Other military family members will be present and available for questions. [Military Families Speak Out](#) and [Bring Them Home Now](#).

Bring Them Home Now — Or Not?-- By Ellen Barfield

(Appearing in the “Non Violent Activist” on-line publication July-August 2005)

It's hardly surprising that the U.S. public at large doesn't agree on whether the Pentagon should bring the troops home from Iraq immediately. What's intriguing is that even segments of the antiwar movement disagree on that question.

Among the opponents of the Bush administration's war, there are those who believe that the United States has essentially shattered Iraq and must stay there until the country is repaired. Others, including much of the long-time peace movement, believe—as opponents of war have usually held—that the United States and its troops are the least likely to be able to repair broken Iraq.

The controversy came to a head during the March 19 anniversary of two years of war and occupation, when the protests—especially the demonstrations in the highly militarized community of Fayetteville, NC (NVA, April)—became the lightning rod for arguments among various factions of the community challenging the Bush administration on the occupation of Iraq. Sadly (but predictably, given the common frustration over how to change government policy), a lot of energy was used up arguing instead of focusing on the demand for a clear exit strategy, and a plan to take care of the troops—in Iraq and when they get back.

Bring Them Home

Grassroots demonstrators who had concentrated on anti-Bush electoral work all through 2004 had gotten back together for locally organized, nationally endorsed antiwar rallies on and near the two-year anniversary of the U.S. invasion. United for Peace and Justice, an endorser (but not the organizer) of many of the protests, embraced a local focus that generated at least 765 rallies in 50 states.

The Fayetteville, NC, rally drew approximately four times more people than the same town had drawn for the one-year protest in 2004. Organizers of this year's event included Veterans for Peace, Iraq Veterans Against the War, Military Families Speak Out and the Bring Them Home Now campaign. The Bring Them Home Now coalition was formed before the United States attacked Iraq in March 2003, and has always called for immediate troop withdrawal. Veterans for Peace helped facilitate the founding of both Military Families Speak Out and Iraq Veterans Against the War and works closely with them in Bring Them Home Now. Also in the coalition is the new Gold Star Families for Peace, made up of family members of soldiers who have been killed in Iraq.

But days before the March 19 events, a veterans' group and several policy organizations condemned the Fayetteville rally and its “Bring Them Home Now” focus. Operation

Truth, a self-proclaimed veterans' organization that seeks to "amplify the soldiers' voice in the American Dialogue," declared that demonstrating in Fayetteville (home of Fort Bragg) "blames the warriors for the war." Operation Truth Executive Director Paul Rieckhoff said, "If you support the troops, don't protest them in their backyards." Two DC-based groups, the Education for Peace in Iraq Center and Veterans for Common Sense, echoed the criticism and called the Bring Them Home Now focus "pulling U.S. forces and abandoning the Iraqi people."

Antiwar veteran activists tried to repair the breach. VFP's Woody Powell began a dialogue with Erik Gustafson of Education for Peace in Iraq before the Fayetteville demo even took place, pointing out in an e-mail that, "... a real commitment to withdraw U.S. troops in the very near future, coupled with a commitment to provide real economic and humanitarian aid, without strings attached, will lessen, not increase violence; especially if we turn over the running of Iraqi infrastructure to qualified Iraqis and remove the exploitive presence of companies like Bechtel and Halliburton."

Powell went on, "When we ask the administration to bring the troops home now, we are applying pressure in simplistic terms. It is a tactic. I don't think we can either stay there and produce stability, nor leave Iraq perfectly stable. But by leaving, I do believe we can move the process ahead by removing at least one major reason for the insurgents to be. (Not that leaving alone will do it. We definitely need to carry out our responsibility to get that nation back on its feet — but not with military boots on the ground.) We are putting brute pressure on the administration to get out of Iraq. They have to be pushed. We are pushing."

Confronting Criticism

Once the hard work of the Fayetteville demonstration was finished, the Bring Them Home Now campaign spent the majority of its energy responding to these criticisms. Stan Goff of Veterans for Peace and Military Families Speak Out and an outspoken former Army Special Forces soldier, said, "The U.S. military is not in Iraq to do a damned thing for the Iraqi people. What particular brand of cheap magical-mystery acid does someone take when he implies that Pizarro should be nominated to help the Incas with reconstruction? ... I am not going to be diplomatic with Paul Rieckhoff and his ilk, when they misrepresent the action in Fayetteville as somehow being directed against those bewildered, economically caged-in workers in uniform we call 'the troops.'"

In response to the idea that we "broke" Iraq and need to "fix" it, Patrick Resta of Iraq Veterans Against the War says, "If you break something in a store, you don't keep breaking things. You give them a check and get out of there."

More diplomatically, the Bring Them Home Now campaign wrote in an open letter to Rieckhoff, "We acknowledge that Mr. Rieckhoff's organization, Operation Truth, has done incredibly valuable work by getting the stories of soldiers and marines serving in

Iraq and Afghanistan to the general public. In no way do we seek to diminish the importance of the past work of Operation Truth ...

“In the spirit of moving forward together, we would like to see Mr. Rieckhoff publicly repudiate his prior comments regarding the March 19 event in Fayetteville. We would like him to publicly acknowledge that this event was ... assembled primarily by local veterans’ and military families’ groups. We would also like him to acknowledge ... [that] we are in no way protesting the troops themselves nor lessening their sacrifice, regardless of Mr. Rieckhoff’s personal or organizational position on the legitimacy of the Iraq war and occupation.”

Soldier Advocates

In response to charges that Bring Them Home Now is abandoning U.S. troops, the campaign’s member groups have been quick to point out that their very existence is to support and help U.S. troops. Patrick Resta spoke recently at a VFP-sponsored round of counter-recruiting talks in a Baltimore high school. In relating his experiences as an Army Reserve medic in Iraq to several hundred high school students, Resta answered the Operaton Truth challenges by criticizing the poor training and equipping of the troops in Iraq. He described being fed nothing but plastic-packaged Meals Ready to Eat for months on end and being issued less than half the bullets he should have received before entering Iraq for a 500-mile trip to his base. Since his unit was 1,100 people short before deployment, unfit troops were dragged in, resulting in two heart attacks and one death. He took out a loan before he was deployed, to buy the \$1,500 body armor he was not issued before he went. When he finally did receive body armor in Iraq, he hung the extra set on his vehicle doors, which were “armored” with nothing but half-inch plywood.

Patrick also debunked the benefits his recruiter mentioned when he joined. He is receiving only about a third of the college money he was promised, and it will end when he is discharged. As a Reservist he will only have six months of Veterans Administration health care, regardless of the health damage he now has or may later discover. He already has a bad knee and back injuries from lifting injured troops, but as a Reservist he cannot get ongoing medical coverage.

Justice for Veterans

Along similar lines, when VFP President David Cline testified recently at hearings about the threatened closure of the Manhattan Veterans Administration Hospital, he said, “The Veterans for Peace Statement of Purpose has a plank which reads, ‘to seek justice for veterans and victims of war,’ and that is what I am asking for today—just treatment for those who have served in defense of this country, and now need health care ...

“It is no secret that when we talk about health care the crucial issues are quality and accessibility. Moving any existing services out of Manhattan or Brooklyn will create major problems for many.

“The Veterans Administration health-care system has been in a crisis nationwide for the last decade. Federal budgets have never provided the funds and staffing necessary for first-class medical care. The budget for next year is grossly under-funded while money for foreign wars sucks us dry.

“The current administration has no problem creating a new generation of veterans. What kind of treatment will the government give them when they come home, and what about those who served in the past? ... Bring our troops home now, and treat them right when they get back.”

Not Far Apart

Much energy went into debates about small differences of focus. EPIC’s Erik Gustafson wrote to VFP’s Woody Powell, “The only responsible way out of Iraq is through Iraqi-led nation building. The sooner we all get serious about that, the sooner U.S. forces can withdraw.” And Charles Sheehan Miles, of Veterans for Common Sense, wrote to VFP’s David Cline, “There are no good options in Iraq. To continue our current policy of occupation and attempting to dominate the future of the country presents Iraq, the region, and ultimately the United States with a disaster.”

Even Operation Truth’s Paul Rieckhoff has said, “If we are to make real progress in supporting and protecting our troops we should hold our elected officials’ feet to the fire for the decisions they make.” Bring Them Home Now and its member organizations can certainly agree with these statements.

The difference is between the idea that the U.S. military can fix Iraq and the view that the United States needs to get out so the rest of the world can help, as it will when the United States steps aside. Socialist writer and editor Anthony Arnove, who resigned from EPIC’s Speakers Bureau in dismay at the condemnation of the Fayetteville action, wrote, “I believe we should be calling for reparations, debt elimination, and international solidarity for Iraq, as well as an immediate end to the occupation, not for ‘stabilizing Iraq’ through the U.S. military. The United States is a root cause of instability in Iraq, not the solution to it.”

After former presidential candidate Howard Dean advocated continued U.S. presence in Iraq, Cindy Sheehan of Gold Star Families for Peace wrote to him, “The Iraqi people are not feeble-minded. To think that the Iraqi citizens need our military presence there to rebuild their country is arrogant and even racist. I think the \$81 billion appropriations bill that the misguided and foolish Congress just passed would be better off being a reparations bill.”

New Veterans for Peace Executive Director Michael McPhearson, himself the father of a soldier in Iraq, said, "I don't want my son undertrained and ill-supplied, but that is not counter to Bring Them Home Now. They want you to pick a side, but it's not that way. I don't want anyone else to die."

Ellen Barfield is a U.S. Army veteran, a member of the board of Veterans for Peace and a member of WRL's National Committee.

THE STORY OF ASRAA

Asraa Comes to America

by Dick Underhill and Michael Uhl

At 10 a.m. January 25, 1999 a nine year old Iraqi girl named Asraa was walking home after finishing her mid-term examinations at the Al-Najid primary school in a remote village 30 minutes south of Basra. The 500 families of Abu Floos, located within the so-called No Fly Zone, were living on the edge of survival, their lives made even more difficult by U.S. imposed sanctions.

Asraa was suddenly knocked to the ground by the impact of an explosion from a U.S. fired missile. Multiple fragments had lodged in her head, chest, and abdomen, and severed her right arm just below the shoulder.

An hour earlier, in a working class neighborhood on the north end of Basra, as four year old Mustafa and his six year old brother Haider were on their way to the store to buy candy, another U.S. missile fell. Haider was killed instantly; Mustafa's young body absorbed more than 130 pieces of shrapnel.

In early 2001 photographer Alan Pogue went to Iraq as part of a Veterans For Peace project to help restore water treatment plants destroyed by U.S. forces during the first Gulf War. At that time, 5,000 Iraqi children were dying each month, many from amoebic dysentery caused by the untreated water in a public health crisis made even more urgent under sanctions that blocked efforts for reconstruction.

As Alan was getting off a bus in Basra, he took one final glance at the passengers. His eyes met those of a young girl with a scarf covering her hair, and a terrible scar where an arm should be. There was no time to talk. Alan snapped two pictures as the bus prepared to pull away. While Alan was in Iraq, he had also taken pictures of Mustafa and the boy's mother Um Haider. He'd already learned their story, but had failed to discover the identity of the girl on the bus. In September 2002, Alan's photographs were viewed by Hollywood-based free-lance writer Cole Miller. Cole contacted Alan and created a web-

site featuring posters made from these photos, and became committed to the wider goal of restoring health and well-being to victims of war.

And then something amazing happened. In November 2002 Ellen Barfield, Vice-President of VFP, saw one of Cole's posters at the School of the Americas rally outside Ft Benning, Georgia. Ellen recognized the girl as a child she too had photographed in Abu Floos in 2000.

Four weeks later, Alan and Ellen traveled to Iraq to search for the girl in his photograph. Returning to Abu Floos, they showed the picture to some boys from the village, and were immediately escorted to the house of Asraa Amir Mizyad. After visiting with Asraa and her family, they established the date and place of the attack, which took her arm. In January 2003 Alan and Cole began preparations to return to Iraq to bring Asraa and Mustafa back to the U.S. for medical treatment. Final papers for Mustafa and his mother, Um Haider, were approved on March 14th. Um Haider and Mustafa managed to get to Amman, Jordan. Asraa and her family received their approval on March 18, 2003. The next day the American invasion began, and they were unable to get out.

Meanwhile in Amman, tireless efforts by many peace activists supported by Representatives Dennis Kucinich and Lloyd Doggett, and, at the last minute, financial sponsorship from actor Sean Penn, became the crucial elements for obtaining final State Department authorization for bringing Mustafa and Um Haider to Los Angeles, where a team of doctors provide a free evaluation and treatment. Mustafa and his mother later traveled in the U.S. on a VFP sponsored tour. In March of 2004 Alan and Cole prepared once more to bring Asraa and her father to Houston, Texas, where doctors at the Shriner's Hospital volunteered to provide surgery and prosthetic services free of charge. By August 9th, when the two activists boarded their flight to the Middle East, the violence in Iraq was increasing. In Kuwait they were advised to wait a few days to see if conditions would improve.

Alan recommended pressing on. Things might get better, he reasoned, but they might also get worse; and get worse they did. In addition to stepped-up military activity, there was red tape to contend with. When Alan and Cole reached the Iraqi border they were denied entry by the Humanitarian Operations Center (HOC). The Kuwaiti border guards demanded a visa issued by the new provisional Iraqi government, but there was no Iraqi consulate in Kuwait to issue one. Asraa and her father would have to come out on their own.

Um Haider was contacted in Basra. She borrowed a car, and drove to Abu Floos, where she sent copies of Asraa's and her father's passports to Alan and Cole. They needed these documents to procure visas. Several days passed. Finally, visas were obtained from the Kuwait authorities, and on September 3rd, Asraa and her father, Abdul Ameer Salman, crossed from Iraq to the waiting smiles of Alan and Cole. Asraa and her father, along with Alan (Cole had preceded them), finally arrived in Houston on September 12th..

Months of effort by a large number of people have gone into helping this one child. Alan and Cole hope that communities and organizations across the United States will be motivated by their effort to organize similar medical relief initiatives on behalf of other victims. VFP helped sponsor Alan's effort to bring Asraa home.

Critical support for Alan and Cole's campaign was also provided by Bert Sacks of Seattle, Leslie Baer of Los Angeles, founding director of Xela Aid (www.xelaaid.org), and Scott Galindez, a TruthOut editor who ran a grassroots email campaign from www.voices4change.org.

###

Poster Girl Will Get Help Here - By Rachel Graves, The Houston Chronicle

Monday 13 September 2004

Prosthetic arm planned for teen injured by missile.

Her picture has been around the world, but until now, Asraa Mizyad was simply a poor, injured girl in a small Iraqi village.

On Sunday, she became a world traveler, and soon she will have two arms.

Fourteen- year-old Mizyad arrived in Houston for medical care Sunday. The trip was the product of two years of work by two activists who immortalized her in a photograph.

At Shriners Hospital she will be fitted for a prosthetic arm and receive rehabilitation and treatment for shrapnel wounds in her abdomen, chest and skull.

Mizyad lost her right arm to an American cruise missile four years ago during U.S. bombings in the No Fly Zone near Basra, said Cole Miller, one of the activists who helped bring her to Houston.

Mizyad walked out of a several-hour ordeal in airport customs and immigration Sunday — just one delay in a long chain of bureaucracy — looking dazed and tired, but quick to offer a shy smile.

Mizyad wore a traditional Iraqi dress, in orange and trimmed with polka dots, the right sleeve dangling empty. Her hair was covered with an embroidered head scarf.

She stayed silent as her father answered questions from the media in Arabic.



Abdul Ameir Alman, Mizyad's father, said through a translator that he never dreamed that the trip would become a reality. Now, he said, he hopes only that Mizyad "gets back to normal."

Alman described a grim situation in Iraq, even after the war.

"Things have not changed. The health situation, the sanitary situation is still very bad," he said. "There is still very much uncertainty and fear."

But Alman was quick to say he does not blame the United States for his daughter's injuries. "This was fated from God," he said.

Austin photographer Alan Pogue, an activist with the Veterans for Peace, captured a searing portrait of Mizyad, her right stump visible.

Los Angeles writer Miller suggested making the picture into a poster, and they say it has been used in anti-war demonstrations around the world.

The activists struggled through two years of bureaucracy, near misses and dead ends to get Mizyad medical help that is not available in Iraq.

Miller and Pogue see Mizyad as an ambassador for all the wounded children of Iraq.

"There have been hundreds if not thousands of children hurt in similar incidents," Pogue said. "I hope that when people talk to her, they will ask about these other children who need help."

Miller said he hopes Mizyad's story will inspire others to bring Iraqi children to the United States for medical care.

Each of those children, he said, brings an important message about the "human face of collateral damage."

"With the child comes the story of what happened to the child," Miller said, "and we need to be paying attention to that because it's our government doing it, and we're responsible."

###

ARLINGTON WEST

Perhaps the best example of effective consciousness-raising VFP ever come up with is a project that, at this writing, is still on-going on the Sunday beaches of Southern California. Started by Steve Sherrill, an associate member of Veterans For Peace Chapter 54 in Santa Barbara, it demonstrates two very important principles of communication:

1. Using a recognizable, meaningful visual with minimal comment; people are quietly, without pressure, invited to think about what they see.
2. Repeated, anticipatable, performance; providing opportunity for people to spread the word, increase audiences week after week, gain the attention of the media, become an institution.

Here is a brief history of the project prepared for National Public Radio by chapter member Ron Dexter:

The idea evolved at a Town Hall Peace Activists meeting back in November '03 at the Muddy Waters Restaurant.

Steve Sherrill then made 340 crosses to symbolize the number of soldiers who had died in Iraq. The government was ignoring the total number of dead and not allowing coffins to be photographed.

Steven asked Lane Anderson to come and help put the crosses up on the beach (and bring a table full of anti war and protest materials.)

While taking the crosses down, they decided to do it again.

Stephen said they would need more help and asked Lane Anderson if the Veterans For Peace might help. Lane took the idea to the next VFP meeting, that happened to be on the next evening, and put out a call on the Internet. About a dozen VFP members showed up the second week.

Ted Berlin suggested calling it Arlington West and set the tone as a memorial. Ted Berlin, a WW II PT Boat Captain has died since.

Nancy Tunnel, our art director, suggested painting the crosses white.

Ron began installing flags and Nancy began her Wall of the Fallen, a chronological list of names.

A mother of a fallen soldier wrote her son's name on a cross with a magic marker.

The next week Lane showed up with some cardboard dog tags and we hung them on the crosses, but Ron made some tags that fit the crosses better.

About Thanksgiving, we wondered what to about the Parade of Lights. Don Calamar, WW II Combat Photographer, came up with the idea of candles and Lane added the red

cups. The first candlelight vigil was during the Parade of Lights 2003. Don Calamar has died since; but his wife Pat Chamberlin is still very involved.

Ken Korten built a special rake to smooth out the sand between the crosses

Some one suggested postcards and we have handed out close to 140,000 to people from all over the world with various messages. French, German and Spanish.

Dottie McIntosh brought the first book for comments by visitors and people have filled 3 books. Most comments are positive.

Nancy salvaged the first flowers somewhere and Florabundance in Carp has supplied them since then.

CHUCK RYAN picks them up every Sunday.

Nancy makes the flower arrangements that we put at every cross when it is visited by someone on that Sunday.

Armando Velasquez, Korean War Vet brings goodies every Sunday from Trader Joes.

Michael Cervantes and Bob Potter write up the name tags. Michael keeps the alphabetical Fallen Name Books in order. (It helped for finding names)

The pictures of the first 1000 fallen were brought by a nice young man anonymously...we haven't seen him in a while.

440 crosses with a name on it have been visited at least once.

Those have been visited 625 times. The average group of visitors is at least two.

That makes the total visitors to a cross with a name of it well over a thousand. And we sometimes forget to add a sticker for a visit. Not one complaint.

Every Sunday, Sgt. Scott Rose's uncle puts flowers at Scott's cross, kneels and prays for a while. Another of his nephews has been recently deployed.

Donations have paid expenses and excess used for Phone Cards for wounded at Lansudal hospital in Germany for day patients that didn't get cards from other sources. No volunteer gets paid except for some expenses. We also have a \$500. standing fund for VA Dr. Joe Narvowitz for local vets in need.

Why Arlington West Santa Barbara Might be Successful – Ron Dexter

AW could not have been dreamed of in the beginning. Elements evolved one at a time; the ones that survived have been very effective. Being part of something immediately tangible and successful is very rewarding, that many progressive efforts don't provide.

Filling the Personal Needs of the Volunteers:

AW is physical and the results of seeing it set up each Sunday is rewarding.
There is comradeship in putting it up, taking it down and being there during the day.
There is the continual reward of being thanked by visitors for what we do.
There is the recognition by the community for what we do.
There is the feeling of connection while talking to people from all over the world.
There is the good press by the News Press, Independent, and national media.
Leading visitors to the cross with the name of their loved one or friend is a very moving experience for that visitor and for the volunteer.
There is instant reward for our efforts mentioned above.
We are among friends who have become close and depend upon one another.
Breaking bread and just kibitzing under the tents is rewarding.
Making the name cards. All of Nancy's creations.
Making the crosses for Stephen.
Handling the crosses, putting on the names, the flags, putting up the flags and the wall.
Post cards have been a connection to the visitor, just the act of handing them out.

What Affect AW Might Have on Visitors:

The size and the precision of the display. People often mention it.
That we have been there for 21 months, but just on Sundays.
The candle at every cross on Memorial Day.
That there is a cross for every fallen and a name on every cross.
Our finding almost every name on a cross when requested.
Nancy's wall, especially the picture wall.
Nancy's individual "quotes".
The flowers.
Our respect for the fallen.
The patriotic element of it.
The mementos with the names in the front rows.

That so many of the fallen from all over the country have been visited here in Santa Barbara. (More that 26% counting each visit. 17% of the individual fallen.)
The public's contact with us personally. "How are you doing?" "Where are you from?"
Especially for people who are not often greeted: the shy, fat and ugly. Even greeting the

"pretty" on a non-predatory level can be a relief for people who are always being "hit upon".

Our subject is not threatening to most people. We are not selling, we are giving.

The personal contact by foreign visitors with concerned "real Americans".

The free gift of a postcard, especially in Spanish, French, German and English.

The different cards and different issues.

Donating can provide a connection to an issue and a feeling of participation.

###

Media Response Example

Memorial Marks U.S. Toll From Iraq War

By VERONICA TORREJON

The Associated Press

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. - Lane Anderson sees the ghosts of fallen troops he knew in Vietnam when he looks out at the sea of white crosses that cover the sandy shore near Stearns Wharf. The memorial, dubbed "Arlington West," is made up of one small cross for each U.S. military death in Iraq, placed on the beach at sunrise and taken down at sunset every Sunday. This Sunday, more crosses will be added to the mock cemetery for deaths in this past week's fierce fighting at Fallujah and Ramadi.



Anderson made sense of his comrades' deaths more than 30 years ago by telling himself the country had learned a lesson in Vietnam.

But last Sunday, he said he couldn't help drawing parallels between that conflict and the fighting in Iraq as he and more than a dozen volunteers arranged the crosses, each bearing the name, rank, age and hometown of a fallen U.S. serviceman or woman.

"I see a tragedy," Anderson said. "I see Vietnam in its first year. Even then, people kept saying once we started the war we had to finish."

Anderson and other volunteers from the Santa Barbara chapter of Veterans for Peace started erecting the crosses last November and intend to continue until all the troops come home from Iraq.

Stephen Sherrill conceived the idea and took it to the veterans group. "Before, the casualties were just a number in the paper," Sherrill said. "But I thought, when Americans see the price we are paying, they will understand."

Sherrill, a semiretired building contractor and longtime anti-war activist, makes every cross. When he started, there were close to 400. By last Sunday, he had made 605. The Santa Barbara beach crosses inspired similar tributes in Santa Monica, Oceanside and Ann Arbor, Mich., with plans for a display in Maine, said David Cline, national president of St. Louis-based Veterans for Peace.

"Taps" played in the background as a steady stream of tourists and locals paraded past the Santa Barbara display. Most stopped just long enough to scan a makeshift wall of cardboard and wooden slats that features the names and pictures of every person killed. "Each of those are people, and they had so much to do in this world," Vietnam veteran Sharon Lee Kufeldt said as she surveyed the crosses. "I am one of them. I wore my uniform proudly. Tears still run down my cheeks when I hear the songs."

Nicole Soliman, 57, stopped at the edge of the memorial and wept silently. The Santa Barbara resident finds herself drawn back to the growing display every week. "It's my little way of paying tribute," she said.

Passer-by Ray Sargent approved of the memorial but disagreed with the anti-war message. The 77-year-old Korean War veteran believes President Bush had reason to send the military into Iraq.

"I think you people are beautiful for doing this," he told a volunteer. "But we'll never know until history tells us whether Bush was wrong or right." Chris Haskell, 45, respected the effort to honor the fallen fighters but disagreed with using their deaths to make a political statement.

"How many lives were saved by our invasion of Iraq?" he asked. "How many people who were imprisoned under Saddam were saved?"

Stacy Menusa, 31, came from Santa Maria with her 4-year-old son Joshua and other family members to see the cross of her husband, Gunnery Sgt. Joseph Menusa - one of the first Marines killed in Iraq. The native of the Philippines was granted U.S. citizenship after he was killed in an ambush.

She didn't see politics or a war protest when she looked at the rows of white crosses. "I see heroes," she said.

WALKIN' TO NEW ORLEANS – March 2006

March 14, 2006

Vets, storm victims begin 'Walkin' to New Orleans' protest march

The Associated Press

MOBILE, Ala. — War veterans and hurricane victims set out today on a march to New Orleans to protest the war in Iraq and what they view as a lack of relief aid for Hurricane Katrina victims.

Paul Robinson, the local chapter president of Veterans for Peace, said the 140-mile "Walkin' to New Orleans" march is scheduled to end Saturday.

He said marchers include veterans of the Vietnam war, the war in Iraq and victims of Hurricane Katrina who are demanding not only an end to the war in Iraq but also a large increase in resources to help hurricane victims rebuild their lives. He said marchers would go by foot and in cars and at night will stay in tents, motor homes or their vehicles.

Anti-war activist Cindy Sheehan will join the marchers in New Orleans, her sister, Dede Miller, said Monday at a news conference.

"I'm marching because this will bring attention to the war and what's going on here in the South. It's outrageous," Miller said.

In the Path of a Storm, Vets Protest a War – March 2006

by CHRISTIAN PARENTI

[posted online on March 19, 2006]

New Orleans

A column of American military veterans of wars in Iraq, Vietnam and points in between, as well as parents and families of soldiers, marched into New Orleans Sunday chanting radical cadences and flying a 1776 version of the American flag.

Young Iraq vets led the column of roughly 250 through the gray, wrecked landscape, many wearing their desert camouflage uniforms, with upside-down American flag patches on their shoulders, sporting shades, beards, kaffiyehs and chests full of metals. At night and along the roads the conversation frequently turns to PTSD, poverty, depleted uranium-caused cancer, unpaid student loans, Ramadi, Tikrit, IEDs and the intense camaraderie of this new movement.

Older veterans, mostly from the Vietnam War, who helped a younger generation of soldiers to launch [Iraq Veterans Against the War](#) (IVAW) are still as angry as they were thirty years ago, but their once-youthful anger and grief has been tempered by a generation of struggle. And it is upon this platform that the young Iraq vets are now building their piece of the movement.

"Our motto is that never again will one generation of veterans turn their back on another," said Dave Cline, a longtime activist and early member of [Vietnam Veterans Against the War](#).

The column spent the six days prior to arriving in New Orleans tromping and caravanning from Mobile, Alabama, through the devastation that is, still, the Gulf Coast. Along the way the vets and their supporters left teams to help "muck out" some of the trashed homes along the small towns of the Gulf Coast. But the protest's larger aim was to make the connections between the devastation here and the ruin of Iraq. The protesters say corruption, incompetence and inhumanity mark both.

"All the money that is going to Iraq could be going down here," says former Army sniper and IVAW member Garrett Reppenhagen.

According to the IVAW, the invasion and occupation of Iraq could cost \$2.65 trillion. Other numbers mentioned along the march were the more than 2,400 American troops and 100,000 Iraqis killed.

At times the connections between Iraq and the Gulf Coast became all too real, or even surreal. The ruined homes, lack of water and sporadic electricity along the way reminded many vets of the war zones in Iraq and Afghanistan that some had left only months before.

"In Gulfport I heard a pop or a snap and looked back, and one of my guys took a knee," said Navy corps and combat vet Charles Anderson, referring to the common military position of kneeling in preparation for action. "I went back to him, put my hand on him and told him: 'It's OK, we're in Mississippi now.' "

On Thursday, the thirty-eighth anniversary of the My Lai massacre, the marchers were camped deep in the wrecked bayou country east of New Orleans and the mouth of Lake Pontchartrain. In a clearing by a brackish creek, among a forest of dry, ashen-colored, half-topped pine trees, the vets listened to the stories of local residents who spoke from a small plywood stage about the horrors of the storm and the abandonment that followed. Bereft of state or federal aid, many of the people there were still in bare survival mode.

A local man named Raymond Couture broke down in tears as he told his story of finding thirty-four corpses in a local nursing home. "They ain't done nothing for us here yet, so I know they ain't done nothing for them people in Iraq." Then the vets and military families spoke. Tina Garnanez, a young Navajo, lesbian and vet, spoke of her experiences in Iraq. She described the track record of lies, broken promises and rising violence in Iraq as

mirroring the history of broken treaties, genocide and poverty that shape reservation life in the United States.

Dinner in the broken forest was alligator gumbo; the IVAW kids partied out and then slept under the stars.

Later, in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Demond Mullins, who returned from heavy combat in Iraq only five months ago, looked out at the ravaged, filthy wreckage in a quiet fury. "I can't believe this. This is worse than Baghdad. What my country has become sickens me."

The march from Mobile to New Orleans marks a new stage in organizing among Iraq veterans and thus a new stage for the peace movement. A year ago IVAW was, in reality, mostly just a good idea and a small speakers' bureau. Now it is a real organization and a key piece in the larger coalition of groups like [Veterans for Peace](#) and [Military Families Speak Out](#) that make up the heart of peace movement.

###

Stan Goff, Special Forces, retired, was the primer cord that set off this profoundly revealing event – revealing in that it demonstrated to the world (even more than to the US) the extent to which US militarization has bankrupted our ability to care for our citizens, in or out of uniform. Here is what he had to say when it was all over:

...in Summation – Stan Goff

As I begin, I am exhausted. The tops of my ears are peeling from sunburn. Sitting here at this keyboard, one wonders if it was real. We just did something along the Gulf Coast with this march we spent the last two months coordinating, but I haven't had time to reflect enough on it to see the different facets of what just happened. I just know something did. I hope others who participated, will read this and post comments to say what they think happened, because I wasn't alone in thinking that something did.

We did not suddenly catalyze anything, but we also did not engage in some kind of action where each person's responsibility was just to show up to enlarge a protest, then go home. Something with a longer lifespan than that has taken an embryonic form, and it feels tangible even when I haven't had time to sort out exactly what it is. I already miss the people who were there.

We came to life each morning like a flower opening to the sun, steadily and gradually. Grumble's cowboy-coffee container was a gravitational field that drew us in like particles from the multiluculent peaks and domes of our tent-towns. With the first hot sips, people holding their bodies tightly against the chill shared their little experiences with fire ants, cold, heat, or something dislocative they might have seen the day before, and healed each other with laughter.

Then there was food and the resumption of conversations from the day before. More laughter. Occasionally, some tears, whereupon one, two, even three people might embrace. When one of the Iraq vets shed a tear, six, seven, or eight would fold around him... or her... as if their combined heartbeats and heat would drive out sadness and distress.

And the walking. There is nothing that compares to walking, in my opinion, for stimulating the circuits in one's head; something about spinning the earth along under your feet like a log roller that creates a kind of muscular background music and the scenery that goes past becomes a spiritual setting. After a while, when the blisters and sore metatarsals and general fatigue take form, anything grandiose that might have contaminated one's consciousness is trimmed away with the knowledge that in the end, it all comes down to bodies — to the limitations of bodies, the capacities of bodies, the caring for bodies, the recognition of bodies.

In a large group like this, from 120 to 300, pick your day — it fluctuated — one talks while s/he walks, listens, collects and offers little scraps of acquaintance that accumulate into nascent friendships... contextualized by that body-knowledge, by the rhythm of walking, by the rolling of the earth under our feet in the same direction, and by the steady stream of change that flows past us.

Even when that scenery is of loss and disorder.

Especially when that scenery is of loss and disorder.

And there was dancing. We danced down the Gulf Coast. Ask anyone who was there. We danced in Prichard. We danced along the highway during breaks when the Iraq vets would pull out their drums. We danced in a relief worker camp and in a soccer field. We danced down the streets of Slidell to drums, a tuba, and a tenor sax. We danced in Congo Square. We swayed and clapped to the sounds of church choirs.

We laid flowers below old photographs of the dead. We juggled. We ate gumbo and peanut-butter-jelly sandwiches. We talked to people with cameras and camcorders.

At one point, we had fifty vehicles in tandem, with two buses up front that made the queue look like a train. Each vehicle had its emergency flashers on, and other people passing in atomized cars would gawk and wave and honk horns and flash two-finger peace signs. Traffic management and preparation to simply move became monstrously complex.

But even that "glitch" suddenly revealed itself as strength. I hated directing that traffic, but when I looked back down the shoulder of the road one day, and all those cars were lined up, it was apparent that we were showing our strength. We were a train, a peace train, and we started taking towns by simply moving in... cops were stunned and baffled, struggling to retain some semblance of control and authority, and we let them have it.

Did you get that? We LET them have it. Where was the power then, eh?

Every glitch, every last minute change, every late decision to follow some suggestion from a marcher, or a local survivor became something surprising and wonderful. We knew where we wanted to begin and end, but the route was pure jazz... improvisation, with every marcher playing her or his part.

I haven't sorted this out yet, but I will say this as I prepare to close and rest. We scared people. We publicized this event in ways that caused people to decide NOT to come. We warned about contamination, about austerity and physical effort, about weather and insects, and we said it would last for six days.

So those that came were young and old and everything in between, and black and white and everything in between, and rural and urban and everything in between, and northern and southern and everything in between, and even male and female identified along multiple continua. But there was a common demographic... a personality demographic, or maybe a character demographic, held in common.

Everyone who came was willing to try something none of us completely understood. Everyone who came was willing to drop everything to do something they sensed might be important. Everyone who came was willing to accept risk. And everyone who came was willing to accept responsibility.

That's what none of us who organized this could see clearly until it happened, because the phenomenon we just experienced was a collective dynamic that was the qualitative offspring of the quantity of people who have this common character.

I don't know what we just did... except to put a couple hundred people outside their familiar surroundings, onto the margins of the grid, and move them cross country like a mechanized battalion through this incredibly strategic place.

I know this. We are not done yet.

Stan Goff Veteran For Peace, Military Families Speak Out

###

DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE WAR – 2006

Memorial Day 2006

ARLINGTON NORTH - PHILADELPHIA

This Stunning Display is staffed by Veterans, and Military Families, 24 / 7, 'round the clock,
from 8am, May 26, until Sundown, May 29

THE BANGOR MAINE WATERFRONT

Anti-war protesters march down Central Street in Bangor on Saturday. Organizers estimated a crowd of 1,500 people participated in the peace rally, which called for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq. Bangor Daily News/ Bridget Brown

Corinth resident Mary Ann Portmann hoists a peace dove puppet Saturday during a Stop the War rally on the Bangor Waterfront. Bangor Daily News/ Bridget Brown

Brian Clement of Old Town, an Iraq war veteran and a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War, accompanies his father, Richard Clement of Pittston as they push a float during a Stop the War march. Bangor Daily News/ Bridget Brown

About 1,500 attend peace rally on Bangor Waterfront

Monday, October 02, 2006 - Bangor Daily News

By Aimee Dolloff

Bangor Daily News

BANGOR - A father and son walked side by side Saturday among the hundreds of protesters marching and chanting through the streets of downtown Bangor in a peaceful demonstration against the Iraq war.

They both appeared emotional, walking at times with arms over each other's shoulders, other times wiping a tear away as they helped push a trailer bed lined with white crosses to signify the lives lost in the war.

Richard Clement of Pittston is a member of Veterans for Peace. His son Brian Clement is affiliated with Iraq Veterans Against the War.

Brian Clement is in the inactive Reserves and is a student at the University of Maine. He is studying history in hopes of becoming a teacher.

Richard Clement's wife, Rita, marched a few feet behind with Military Families Speak Out, the group to which she belongs.

"This war should have never been started in the first place, and we've got to do everything in our power to stop our politicians," said Rita Clement.

Brian Clement, 24, was stationed in Iraq, just north of Baghdad, from 2004 to 2005 as an Army specialist.

When he signed up for the military, he was confident that he was doing the right thing and would be able to make a difference in the lives of the Iraqi people.

"The more I spent time there, I realized we were doing more damage, more harm than good," Brian Clement said.

He joined Iraq Veterans Against the War when he returned home, but said he supports the soldiers still serving and the veterans who have returned.

"I support them wholeheartedly. They're my brothers," he said. "I was over there with a lot of them — and a lot of them are there again. I just want to see them come home."

The group's Web site states that Iraq Veterans Against the War was founded in July 2004 by Iraq war veterans at the annual convention of Veterans for Peace in Boston. The group's purpose is to give a voice to active-duty service people and veterans who are against this war, but who are under various pressures to remain silent.

"He says that he's proud of his mother and I for what we do, and I'm proud of him," Richard Clement said of his son. "He's the man."

The Clements were among an estimated 1,500 people from around the state who attended Saturday's peace rally at the Bangor Waterfront. The age of those in the crowd ranged from infants in strollers to teenagers, the middle-aged and elderly, including an 82-year-old World War II veteran.

"It's great to have so many young people here today," said Ilze Petersons of the Peace & Justice Center of Eastern Maine.

The booming sound of drums echoed through the streets. Signs urging President Bush to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq and stop the war bobbed up and down as the protesters marched, chanting anti-war sentiments such as "Leave Iraq, bring them back" and "This is what support the troops looks like."

It was the largest rally in Maine since 2002, when about 3,000 people traveled to Augusta to protest the upcoming war.

Bangor police were on hand to monitor the event and direct traffic, but no incidents were reported.

"[The protesters] let the public know it's not just a small fraction of weird hippies," said Karen Foley of Bangor. She's a member of Military Families Speak Out. Her son is in the Air Force stationed in Italy, awaiting orders to deploy to Iraq.

To her, the importance of Saturday's rally was "the truth."

"The young men and women who joined the military after September 11 did so with the best of intentions," Foley said. "I feel they were lied to."

The war isn't about terrorists and democracy; it's about money and power, she said.

"As a mother, I feel like this is my way to protect him," she said. "He doesn't always agree with me, but he supports me."

Doug Rawlings, a founder of Veterans for Peace, was Saturday's main speaker.

For him, the event was a chance to send a message, but also to reinforce anti-war efforts.

A Vietnam War veteran, Rawlings said he's serving his country in a different way now.

"I think I'm serving my country much more effectively now than I did in Vietnam," he said.

Veterans for Peace led the march from the waterfront to the Margaret Chase Smith Federal Building and back, a total distance of about a mile and a half. At their side was Mary Horrigan. Hanging around her neck was a poster-size sign.

"This was my baby," she said, pointing to a picture of her son, U.S. Army Master Sgt. Robert Horrigan of Belfast, who died in Iraq at age 40 on June 16, 2005.

"And these are all my babies," Horrigan said, referring to the poster listing the Maine soldiers who have died in the war.

"This being here gives me a reason to continue living," she said. "I have to do something."

She, too, echoed the sentiment that Saturday's event was for everyone to send a message to Bush that the U.S. must bring its troops home.

"We're not a fringe crazy group," she said. "It's everybody."

CAMP DEMOCRACY – Washington, DC – September 2006

Antiwar Message Travels From Texas to Washington Military Families Group Expands Agenda – Wed. Sept. 6

By Petula Dvorak, Washington Post Staff Writer

The antiwar activists who picketed near the president's ranch this summer traded dusty Texas for soggy Washington yesterday, when they set up camp near the White House to continue their vigil.

"Every day, we realize there is a war in Iraq," said Charlie Richardson, co-founder of Military Families Speak Out and whose son is a U.S. Marine recently returned from Iraq. "But the vast majority of Americans don't; they forget. Less than 1 percent of this population has gone to war. And we need to get those troops out -- now."

Richardson and about 100 other military family members, veterans and peace activists kicked off a 17-day demonstration called "Camp Democracy" yesterday. With piles of military boots to represent slain soldiers and banners calling for an end to the war as their

backdrop, they rallied in the pouring rain and stayed throughout the day's relentless drizzle.

Camp Democracy, a spinoff from Camp Casey in Crawford, Tex., started by antiwar activist Cindy Sheehan, will feature a series of speeches, lectures and discussions under white tents pitched on the Mall at 14th Street and Constitution Avenue NW.

Sheehan, whose older son, Casey, was killed in Iraq in 2004, started the Crawford protest camp early last month on a five-acre lot she bought in July, after her roadside vigil last year drew about 10,000 supporters from across the country. She wasn't in Washington yesterday, but organizers expect she will be a speaker before they pull up stakes.

The main voices heard yesterday were those of veterans.

Charlie Anderson, 29, spoke loudly through the rainstorm. "I was so optimistic," said the Toledo native, who joined the military when he was 19. Then he "rode into Iraq without body armor," he said. And "I had no idea what the mission was, because it was changing every day."

Dozens of other veterans nodded when Anderson said this. A Vietnam War veteran in a wheelchair clapped. A naval recruiter from the Vietnam era raised her fist in the air. A Gulf War veteran mouthed the word "yes."

They talked about shortfalls in veterans' benefits and medical care. They discussed ways to end the war and tactics to starve the war machine of its essential fuel -- young recruits like them.

"I've been to dozens and dozens of counter-recruitment actions," said Joe Hatcher, who served in Dawr, Iraq, from February 2004 until March 2005 with the 1st Infantry Division. Now, the 25-year-old California native tours the country and sets up camp outside schools, where he gives students his real-life version of the recruiters' pitch about military life. His group also advises families on ways to opt out of military recruiting.

Camp Democracy will have similar themes every day for the next few weeks: Organizing the Progressive Agenda Day, which will feature several members of Congress; Immigrants' Rights Day; Labor Speaks Out Day; Climate Crisis Day; and others.

Camp Democracy has no single message, though its organizers said they wanted the veterans and their families front and center because "they are the ones affected most by this war, except for the Iraqi people," said David Swanson, coordinator of Camp Democracy, which was born when the people protesting in Crawford wondered what they could do next.

The variously themed days and speakers from causes across the spectrum are one way to demonstrate that war affects all parts of American life, organizers said. They want to show that funding to rebuild New Orleans is hamstrung by war costs, and immigration legislation is threatened by the drumbeat of war on foreign soil, Swanson said.

"People keep telling us that this will muddle our message," Swanson said. "But this is not a three-week PR campaign. It's more complicated than that. We're trying to bring people together to make a stronger movement."

DEMONSTRATIONS, LOCAL & NATIONAL INTENSIFY IN 2007

39 peace activists arrested at the Nevada Test Site with "West Wing President" Sheen

150 people gathered to welcome 25 Peace Walkers in a rally just outside of the Nevada Test Site (NTS) to protest the proposed "Complex 2030" plan, the "Reliable Replacement Warhead" and the occupation of Iraq. The Western Shoshone National Council welcomed the gathering. Speakers included Carrie Dann, activist and Shoshone elder, Fr. Louis Vitale, NDE, Colonel Ann Wright, SEIU local leader Jane McAlevey, and Catholic activist and actor Martin Sheen. After the rally a procession led by the Western Shoshone National Council representatives walked to the entrance of the Nevada Test Site. Carrie Dann crossed the line first and was soon joined by Fr. Louis Vitale, Martin Sheen, Ann Wright and 35 other men and women in this important nonviolent civil resistance. The Nye county sheriffs detained the "trespassers" in holding pens just inside the site.

The Peace Walkers, a diverse inter-faith group from around the country hosted by NDE, had started walking on Tuesday from the Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas, and walked throughout the week to the NTS as a statement of peace, a protest of nuclear weapons, Complex 2030, and as a spiritual pilgrimage. Peace Walker Shaina Meiners said, "the Peace Walk was an amazing experience in opposites. In the shadow of the nuclear devastation at the Test Site and the bombings of the Nellis Air Force range an awesome interfaith group came together for a nonviolent experience in enjoying the desert, sharing our traditions, and working for peace." The Peace Walkers started the morning with a sunrise ceremony led by revered elder and spiritual leader of the Western Shoshone Corbin Harney, a couple of miles from the NTS, before walking to the rally. Franciscan Friar Louis Vitale, O.F.M and Priestess Dr. Anne Key also offered blessings to the gathering.

After people finished crossing the line, the rally was asked to move back. The detainees were all processed within an hour. Carrie Dan was the last woman released. Complex 2030 is the name given to the administration's ambitious plan to rebuild and reorganize the Nuclear Weapons Complex by the year 2030, including construction of a new nuclear weapons productions facility that may be situated at the Nevada Test Site.

###

VETERANS' CONVOY – FAYETTEVILLE TO NEW ORLEANS 2007

By Sanford Kelson and principal organizer, Cherie Eichholz

Veterans For Peace sponsored a veterans' convoy through the southeastern United States that terminated in the Ninth Ward of New Orleans. This is the story of the convoy.

Veterans, including those who served in the Vietnam and Iraq wars, traveled to Fayetteville NC, home of the Army's Ft. Bragg, on March 17, 2007 to attend the local anti-war parade and rally as the first event of the veterans' convoy. The parade and rally were a fitting beginning of two weeks of effort to support the troops, end the war and to work for peace and justice.

The day after the parade and rally, members of the convoy, hosted and supported by local peace activists, fanned out at lunch time throughout the parking lots of fast food restaurants to engage active duty military members about the war. The active duty service people were given copies of two videos, *Sir! No Sir!* and *The Ground Truth*, GI Rights pocket card and a copy of the Appeal For Redress.

Sir! No Sir!, a film by David Zeiger, details the forgotten and suppressed history about the soldiers on the front line of the Vietnam antiwar resistance who helped end the war.

The Ground Truth, a film by Patricia Foulkrod, consists of the real life stories of Iraq War veterans who tell why they joined the military, what they learned in Iraq and what it was like when they returned home.

The GI Rights pocket card explains rights that active duty members of the armed forces enjoy including their rights to say what they think about the military and to participate in peaceful demonstrations when off-duty, out of uniform, off base and in the USA.

The Appeal For Redress is a way for active duty service members to appeal to their Congressional and Senatorial representatives to urge an end to the war. It is sponsored by active duty service members, and by a committee of veterans and military family members. The Appeal For Redress reads:



As a patriotic American proud to serve the nation in uniform, I respectfully urge my political leaders to support the prompt withdrawal of all America military forces and bases from Iraq. Staying in Iraq will not work and is not worth the price. It is time for U.S. troops to come home.

An Iraq War veteran, in a related action, stationed himself and one volunteer on the sidewalk near the entrance to the front gate of Ft. Bragg. The veteran held a sign saying, Iraq Veterans Against the War and the volunteer, standing about 20 yards behind, held a sign with the organization's WEB site. As soldiers drove by, a small minority of them ignored the action, gave a thumb down sign or flashed the finger. Three stopped and angrily yelled pro-war slogans. However, the response of passing troops was overwhelmingly supportive. They smiled, waved and/or gave a thumb up or the peace sign.

After engaging the troops in Fayetteville, the participants went by bus convoy to engage the troops stationed in five other military bases, to wit: Fort Jackson, SC; Mayport/Jacksonville Naval Stations, FL; Ft. Benning, GA, and Maxwell-Gunter Air Force Base, Alabama. Again, the convoy members were received overwhelmingly in a warm and appreciative manner as documented in media reports. For example, one soldier, when he was driving by the convoy action, upon realizing what was going on, got so excited that he flew open his driver's door and started out of his car to greet us before he stopped his car and parked it. He excitedly exclaimed that he was against the war. Most soldiers approached were very respectful and accepted the materials convoy members handed them. A small minority waved convoy members away. There was no hostility expressed by anybody, not convoy members or service personnel. Police officers at one stop thanked the veterans for coming to support the troops. A soldier said he believed Veterans For Peace convoy members were supporting the troops in good faith and thanked them for coming.

Convoy participants hope that a debate about the war among the troops may have been sparked or, if the debate was already occurring, that it was aided with additional information including ways for the soldiers to lawfully resist the war. At least one military family engaged in debate. The Appeal For Redress was offered through a car window and accepted by the female driver. A man sitting next to her in an army uniform took it from her and threw it out the window. The woman got out of the car, retrieved the Appeal For Redress, re-entered the car and began a dialog with the soldier, possibly her husband. Convoy members engaged many people at shopping centers who were related to soldiers, including spouses. Every one of these people, not most, but all, were very appreciative of convoy members' efforts, even excited. There were spikes in the numbers of signers of the Appeal For Redress and membership applications by active duty members of the armed forces to Iraq Veterans Against the War from the areas the convoy visited.

Local activists at each convoy stop held events welcoming the convoy and provided housing and food. The convoy would not have been possible without this support.

On Sunday, March 24, 2007 the veterans' convoy arrived at the Ninth Ward in New Orleans. The Ninth Ward is adjacent to the canal at the spot that the levy failed. The Ninth Ward community consisted overwhelmingly of African-Americans. The community had the largest number of African-American homeowners in the US – over 80% owned and lived in their homes, most handed down from one generation to another.

This area, when first settled after the Civil War, was not coveted and was inexpensive. The Black community that developed there was a substantial factor responsible for the culture of New Orleans including fine food with a unique flavor, jazz music and a special atmosphere that brings in visitors from all over the world. A majority of these residents were employed in jobs that paid below living wages that denied them many of the necessities of life but enabled many of their employers to become rich. They also suffered disproportionately, as minorities and the poor do throughout the US, in regard to health-care, education, public services, etc. The police were harsh on the community. A current bill board solicits applicants for the police department with a military type invitation: *Join the Front Line*.

For some time now, the city and corporate America have coveted the land of the Ninth Ward to develop it commercially. The canal would be enhanced to accommodate cruise ships that could discharge tourists to hotels and casinos that would replace the vibrant African-American community of homeowners. Certainly, such a planned commercial endeavor that would cost millions of investment dollars and would include renovation of the levy to world class standards instead of the gross neglect it received.

Many elected officials saw Hurricane Katrina and the flood as God's way to initiate their planned gentrification effort. Most structures were destroyed when the ill-maintained levy gave way. The now homeless, who were unable to evacuate or stayed to ride out the storm, were forced at gun point onto buses and jets by order of the government. These people were taken to destinations throughout the US without being informed where they were being taken. These people, as well as those who evacuated voluntarily before the flood, lost all their worldly possessions and have no individual means to return to New Orleans to procure temporary housing and to rebuild their homes.

Local city government is proceeding to confiscate their land for use by corporate America instead of helping the rightful owners to return. For example, the city is posting the land that has been cleared of damaged homes with notices to the owners that if they do not cut the grass and weeds within 30 days that the procedure to confiscate the land will be initiated. This is cynical because city owned land in the Ninth Ward, e.g., former

playgrounds, are not being maintained and no effort is being made to notify the involuntarily absent homeowners directly by mail or otherwise.

A local grassroots organization, Common Ground Relief, is maintaining the yards that are being posted in an effort to save it for the homeowners. Common Ground is also involved in re-building structures that were not completely destroyed or demolished. This rebuilding is a political statement to the city from the community that they will fight for this land and not give it up willingly. This effort is an epic battle to save the land for the rightful owners and to restore this African-American community. It is not unlike previous battles fought by the oppressed indigenous populations to save their lands that began 500 years ago when Europeans invaded all the continents of the world stealing land from the rightful inhabitants. It is not unlike the battle of American Indians or the current battles of indigenous groups like the Zapatistas in Mexico, of the Iraqi and Palestinian resistance to save their rights to land from rich and powerful forces who covet it.

Volunteers rotate through New Orleans contributing to the battle. Some came planning to work for a week and stayed months, some never left. The people involved in this battle have created a new community that is a model for what America could be. This local, grass roots community, faith based, is a model in opposition to the dog eat dog society in which the poor suffer throughout the world. People of all different backgrounds are pulling together not for money and power but in solidarity to re-build and to fight official oppression. They are real American heroes.

Common Ground leaders believe it is only because of concern of out-of-state volunteers, many affluent college students, who are always present that the city doesn't move in immediately and take the land. Nevertheless a dirty war is being fought against Common Ground's efforts. For example, refrigerated trucks storing food to feed the volunteers have been sabotaged. Expensive repairs were required and thus around the clock guards are required. Police and National Guard patrols harass the community. Signs informing citizens where to file complaints about police corruption are being confiscated by the patrols.



It is for these reasons and the knowledge that every bomb dropped in Iraq explodes in neglected and distressed areas of America, like portions of the Gulf Coast, that the veterans' convoy volunteered to work in solidarity with Common Ground. Convoy members worked on one house that Common Ground wants ready by October, on the date of the owner's 100th birthday, so she can move back in. Members also helped out at the NAACP with litigation to restore public housing that was destroyed and for which destruction the City rejoiced. We also were involved in assisting a religious

group whose church was supposedly demolished by “mistake”. Members of Common Ground who are veterans are establishing a chapter of Veterans For Peace.

This was not the first involvement of Veterans For Peace in the Ninth Ward. VFP delivered supplies, volunteers and money to this community before the Red Cross, before the Salvation Army, before FEMA and before other such government and mainline organizations appeared on the scene after Katrina and the flood. VFP raised and donated \$500,000. Common Ground went into action quickly with this seed money, building medical clinics, providing legal aid and delivering food, water and necessary supplies to the people. Because Common Ground acted so quickly and effectively, even police and National Guard members sought and received free medical aid at its clinic, the only one available at the time. 85% of money raised by Common Ground goes directly to the community and 15% to raise more money.

Conclusion

Veterans For Peace members learned a great deal from the veterans’ convoy. Many of us believe that the Appeal For Redress, which was initiated by active duty military personnel, and the reception we received in the military towns show that military members are ready for anti-war activism. The convoy effort and like actions may be the way to fuel this activism.

Some members of the convoy are seeking donations and funding to finance a full time presence by members of Veteran For Peace and Iraq Veterans Against the War at as many bases as possible. Engagement of the troops full time is an effective way to let those in the military who are against the war know they are not alone and to embolden them to lawfully challenge the illegal and immoral war that they are so wrongly being used to fight. This engagement may spark debate and critical thinking among some members who have been socialized by the military to obey and not question what they are being ordered to do.

As Hurricane Katrina and the city’s effort to steal the peoples’ land have created a movement for justice in the Ninth Ward, the Iraq War and the effort of Veterans For Peace may create a movement of military and civilian activists united against the war. These two movements may grow into an all encompassing national peace and justice movement as important as that of the 1960-70s.

###



APPEAL FOR REDRESS

Fed Up Soldiers Finding New Ways to Protest the War

By Jeanine Plant

How some soldiers are using a little-known shield law to protect their right to dissent.

There is a strict protocol for military dissent. A service member can exercise free speech, for example, but she should be off-duty. She can protest the war, but not in uniform. In an unprecedented move, 1,171 service members signed the Appeal for Redress -- a three-sentence statement that beseeches Congress to support the prompt withdrawal of troops from Iraq -- amid a flurry of anti-war activity happening around the country and a vigorous public debate about escalation in Iraq. According to its creators and their lawyer, J.E. McNeil, executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based Center on Conscience and War, the appeal is perfectly legal and stays within the bounds of respectful discourse.

The appeal's message is not groundbreaking; anti-war sentiment in the military is well-known. The oft-cited February 2006 Le Moyne College/Zogby poll showed that 72 percent of active-duty troops wanted out of Iraq by the end of last year. And the GI Rights Hotline, affiliated with the Center on Conscience and War, gets roughly 4,000 calls a month, 40 percent of which, McNeil estimates, are questions about going AWOL. And dissent in the ranks is not exceptional either.

But the way in which these service members expressed their objection to U.S. policy in Iraq is. Their employment of the Military Whistleblower Protection Act, which shields military members from reprisals for communicating with Congress, is relatively novel.

Last week, the creators, Navy Seaman Jonathan Hutto and Marine Corps Sgt. Liam Madden, announced the appeal to Congress at a press conference held on the steps of the Cannon House Office Building in Capitol Hill. Supporters from the anti-war groups Iraq Veterans Against the War, Veterans for Peace, and Military Families Speak Out attended and spoke.

Rep. James McGovern, D-Mass., who introduced the End the War in Iraq Act in the last session to curb spending on the war, and Rep. Dennis Kucinich, D-Ohio, also came out in support. Rep. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Rep. John Lewis, D-Ga., issued letters of support. Hutto and Madden, joined by others from the military, like Army National

Guard Sgt. Jabbar Macgruder, wore civilian clothing, and were careful not to disparage the president or speak on behalf of the military.

These reflect the rules under the Department of Defense's Directive "1325.6" or "Guidelines for Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces." The guideline forbids petitioning Congress, which is why Hutto and Madden made it explicitly clear that their statement is a "redress." Service members have the right to "complain and request redress," it reads. "Those directives are what constrain what they can and can't do," said McNeil. "I encourage them to be very careful."

"Generally [when you join the military], you don't give up your right to be a citizen," she explained. "You have a right to vote or talk to members of Congress, but not in your official capacity. And you could talk to reporters, but not say anything that would tend to subvert the mission of the military."

While there have been no complaints of overt retaliation yet, these service members can be reprimanded in insidious, indirect ways such as being passed up for a promotion or feeling alienated from their unit. Kucinich promised to rebuke any such overt threats or actions.

"These are amazing men and women who say that this war is abhorrent to them, and still follow orders," said McNeil. "I hope that Congress understands that they are making a double sacrifice: They are risking their careers," she says, "and their lives." In fact, according to Hutto, 60 percent of the signatories already served in Iraq. Macgruder, who served in Iraq in 2004 and joined the military in 2000, says he has heard rumors about his unit's redeployment at his base. And though few of his unit's soldiers lost their lives, he felt the personal impact of the war. "I was engaged to get married," Macgruder said. "And that whole thing fell apart because of the deployment." The people most angered by the war, he says, are "the people who get called up after they got out of the military." The service members listed I.R.R., or Independent Ready Reserves, "these are the people most against the war; those guys are more willing to speak their mind."

The Pentagon has statistics about how many service members were deployed to Iraq more than once, but such statistics are not readily available to the public. The /Army Times/ did publish such numbers in its December 2006 article "Deployment data underscore the strain of combat operations." But a senior editor at /Army Times/ told AlterNet that obtaining the information is atypical; the Pentagon is usually cagey about releasing it for public relations reasons, and their journalist got an anomalous tip.

According to the data obtained by /Army Times/, out of the 1.4 million soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, nearly one-third of them, roughly 420,800 service members, deployed more than once. And since September 2001, 683,380 soldiers deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, 163,949 of them at least twice, according to /Army Times/.

Recruitment statistics are also hard to come by, but the National Priorities Project, a Northampton, Mass.-based advocacy organization, was able to obtain it through the Freedom of Information Act. "We do get the data through FOIA, but it does require some follow-up," said Anita Dancs, research director of the National Priorities Project. "If you are dealing with the Pentagon, you are dealing with FOIA," Dancs said. She also mentioned that the reason National Priorities received so much media attention is that it is too time consuming for independent journalists to access information through FOIA.

"Who is bearing the burden of war? It certainly is not the wealthy; it is the low-and-middle-income families, the people who are most likely to be attracted to the economic incentives," Dancs said, confirming the stereotypes. Macgruder was one such recruit who joined for the financial benefits. "I really wanted to earn my spot to go to school," Macgruder said.

Macgruder, like the others who signed the appeal, is not a pacifist, but says he became disenchanted with the war when it no longer seemed to make sense. "This is what changed my mind," Macgruder said, citing a lack of justification for the war. "To me it wasn't deployment, it was the reason behind the deployment." The Appeal for Redress started out as a kind of book club. Hutto read David Cortright's */Soldiers in Revolt/*, which chronicles GI resistance during Vietnam. Hutto was so taken with the book that he invited Cortright to speak near his base in Norfolk, Va. Cortright, a key figure in military resistance during Vietnam and now a research fellow at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, inspired Hutto, along with Liam Madden, to start their own movement.

In his first-person essay, "Reminiscences of Resistance," Cortright describes feeling utterly satisfied by his anti-war activities that started to consume him in 1968. "The commitment to speak out, once I had finally made it, was incredibly fulfilling. Suddenly my life had meaning and purpose -- I was a committed anti-war activist, spending every waking moment agitating and organizing against the war."

Cortright's anti-war activities as a service member include a full-page ad of a petition signed by 35 members in his unit in the */New York Times/* and his role in *Cortright v. Resor*, a class-action lawsuit against the army. "My experience as a GI protestor was a small part of the large-scale resistance movement that shook the foundations of the U.S. military during Vietnam," Cortright writes. "The rebellion in the ranks spread to all the services and reached every base where U.S. troops were stationed, including and most especially in Vietnam, where fraggings [which means an assassination of an officer by his own troops by grenade] and combat refusals sapped the military of its fighting capacity."

###

The Successful Rally/March in Syracuse Sept. 29, 2007

Dear Veterans For Peace and Supporters,

I was most privileged yesterday on a perfectly gorgeous fall day to participate in the Bring the Troops Home Now Rally and March in Syracuse, NY, sponsored by IVAW, the Syracuse Peace Council, SEIU 1199, and the Student Peace Action Network. 2,000+ peace activists gathered in Everson Plaza in downtown Syracuse for a rousing rally that included stellar speeches by VFP President Elliot Adams and IVAW New York Regional Coordinator, Michael Blake.

About 25 IVAW members, including a large contingent from the Fort Drum IVAW Chapter, followed by upwards of 75 members of VFP from WW II through Gulf War I, lead the march through downtown Syracuse to Walnut Park near the Syracuse University campus where a second rally with kick-ass music and a festive mood ensued.

What was especially heartening for me was the large cohort of college age, younger participants both in the march and at the rallies, something that has noticeably been missing from other rallies and marches I've attended the last couple of years since I've been back in the US of Empire after spending two years as an ex-patriot peacemaker in Sri Lanka. Standing off to the side, however, watching a group of young dancers -- long-haired, blue-jeaned, bare-footed, on the elder edge of my grandchildren's generation -- grooving to Grateful Dead guitar riffs and a cover of a Sublime love song, along with the lifting encouragement was also the bitter-sweet realization that I have spent much of the past 40 years, since I returned from Vietnam, attending similar rallies and marches for peace.

When finally we end this one other illegal, inhumane, immoral and insane war, then we need to get really serious about manifesting a second American revolution to radically change the power that Eisenhower's "military industrial congressional complex" has over American government, to truly create a government "of, by and for" the people, not only for the members of the upper, privileged classes of our society.

Peace Out & In,

thomas brinson, Facilitator
Long Island Veterans For Peace, Chapter 138
SPC Raheen Tyson Heighter Memorial Chapter
VVAW Long Island Contact
II Corps Vietnam, 67-68
Peacekeeper, Nonviolent Peaceforce,
Muttur, Trincomalee, Sri Lanka, 2003-2005

REPORTS ON SEPTEMBER 15, 2007 ACTION IN D.C.

VFP BOARD MEMBER PATRICK MCCANN


200+ of us got arrested beginning at 4pm EST on the US Capitol steps. 192 of us were booked at a US Capitol Police station in SE. Most of us spent 3-5 hours in handcuffs on the buses, then 9 - 10 hours in processing lockup. As I write, my wrists are still swollen and numb from the plastic handcuffs (which many of us eventually found our way out of). Who cares, I'm pumped! They have picked up a rock, only to drop it on their own foot. Like the youth of Soweto in 1976, we have only been emboldened by the experience!

We raised hell in that lockup! We criticized ourselves for being too cooperative when busted, and made immediate steps to correct that early mistake. Our militance rose decibels by the hour. When they told us to be silent, we laughed and chanted. When they told us to sit, we stood.

After we were busted, IVAW went through the crowd raising \$100 bail for each of their members who were arrested. Half of the national leadership of both IVAW and VFP were still in lockup at 4 this morning, 12 hours after we were busted.

I have never experienced such a learning curve in my life as I did these past 15 hours. We militantly resisted the police, strategized, and built community. We know now what we will do the next time we are busted in a mass way. We will develop mass responses from those who weren't busted to support those who were. Today was historical, and we have every intention of spreading our experience.

2006 was a year where mobilization turned to resistance; 2007 is the year to deepen the resistance! As a first step, we need to develop nationwide reports of what went down in the US Capitol Police processing center in SE DC.

Dave Cline, past president of VFP (2001 - 2007) and national organizer for VVAW, passed the night before our night in lockup. As I head down with others to the Vietnam memorial Wall to hold the first of what will be many memorials to him, I can think of no one who has contributed more to the US movement for peace. Dave, we know that you are proud of us for wasting no time to fill the tremendous void that you and Bill Davis have left! We miss you so much, but are so happy at where you helped to bring us in our movement. 

Letting it go here; the tears flow again. As Rev. Yearwood of the Hip-Hop caucus said yesterday, "Let's go get them."

Nuff luv and respect to all, P-Mac

###

VFP BOARD MEMBER KEN MAYERS

I think I'll start with a with a partial cast of the leading characters, more or less in order of appearance.

Mike Ferner - VFP member from Toledo, articulate advocate of direct non-violent action, VFP Board Sec'y. Leah Bolger - VFP Portland OR, retired Commander USN Thomas Brinson - VFP Long Island, Non-Violent Peace Force Sri Lanka alumnus Adam Kokesh - Co-Chair (Elect) Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) Elliott Adams - President VFP Will Covert - VFP San Diego - "Each One Reach One" Organizer Captain "Ironpants" - Shift Commander, Capitol Police Force Officer "Sweetie" - Charming cop

Preface to The Action

There is a steadily increasing sense in VFP that carrying signs and marching in the streets simply isn't enough in the face of increasing repression at home and aggression abroad. Although Veterans for Peace is not a pacifist organization (although many of the members are pacifists), non-violence is built into the statement of purpose. The challenge is to find creative, non-violent tactics which can propel the movement forward. What are the appropriate "next steps" that will get those who now passively support the objectives of VFP to become active?

Mike Ferner from Toledo is one of the VFP members who has been most committed for several years to taking steps beyond our familiar marches, signs, movies, lectures, concerts etc. Just a month before the invasion of Iraq, Mike was part of an Iraq Peacekeeping Team (IPT) that went to Baghdad and other parts of Iraq, including a four-day fast on the border between Iraq and Kuwait, to try to head off the war. He returned a year later to write about the aftermath of the war. The stories of both trips are contained in his book, "Inside the Red Zone." (Mike's wife, Sue Carter, incidentally is the president of the Ohio ACLU. Good thing, too, given the number of times Mike has been arrested for Civil Disobedience.) So Mike, who is now the Secretary of the VFP Board of Directors, has been goading us for years to step up the resistance.

VFP President Elliott Adams is also a member of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and is a FOR-trained facilitator of non-violence training. So even though I am in the "slow reading group," my well-spent time with Mike and Elliott has brought me around to the view that I need to push the envelope a lot more than I have in the past.

At one of the plenary sessions at the VFP convention in St. Louis a few weeks ago, Mike asked that anyone interested in developing a "Direct Action" for some time during the

September 15 events in Washington get together for a planning session after the plenary. About half a dozen of us showed up to kick around some ideas. One was Leah Bolger from Oregon, a retired Navy Commander. (Think about that for a second. Here's a woman, a 24 year active duty veteran, who joined the navy around 1980 and rose to the rank of Commander! Along the way she spent a year as a "Military Fellow" at MIT! And now committing to civil disobedience in the cause of peace. What a woman.) Another one was Thomas Brinson, a Vietnam combat-vet and recovering alcoholic with severe PTSD who spend three recent years with the Nonviolence Peace Force in war-torn Sri Lanka. I think I may have been the most conservative - or at least the most "restrained" -- of the group. I argued that historically the direct action (or civil disobedience) events that had been most constructive were those which by their very nature made visible to the public some shameful injustice. That perhaps a rank below that exalted level were those which at least had some obvious symbolic link to a wrongheaded policy or practice. Otherwise an act of civil disobedience is likely to be perceived by the public as either misbehavior or, worse, a public nuisance.

Some of the ideas that got kicked around were clearly in the latter category - such ideas as driving very slowly on the beltway in all lanes to slow up traffic. I flat out rejected those. Eventually we came to an idea which seemed in principle to meet the second level criterion - message linkage. We will be having a planning session tonight to see if we can work out the final details of the idea in order to execute them this Thursday. I'll come back to that at the end of this message. But at this point I simply wanted to provide some of the "mind-set" that led up to the events this past Saturday.

The week after the VFP Convention, Adam Kokesh - Co-chair (elect) of IVAW was in Santa Fe, and I got to spend a fair amount of time with him. Among other topics we discussed was the plan for the September 15 protest march in Washington. International ANSWER was the umbrella organization orchestrating the march, but they were counting on IVAW to design and lead the event. IVAW's design was to have an "Honor Guard" of uniformed IVAW members in single file carrying an upside-down American flag (the official Flag Manual recognizes this as an international distress signal) followed by 5 black flags, each of which would have the logo of one of the major contractors profiting from the war. The honor guard would be followed by a mass formation of IVAW members flanked by a security line of VFP members. The march would proceed from Lafayette Park in front of the White House down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Peace Monument at First and Pennsylvania, near the Capitol. (The Peace Monument, incidentally, is probably the smallest monument in DC.) ANSWER had a permit for this line of march. They also planned a "die-in" at the Peace Monument and hoped to have enough volunteers for the die-in to have at least one per American killed-in-action. A boom-box would play a recorded gun salute followed by Taps to signal the start of the die-in. They also hoped to have the die-in persist long enough so the police would arrest

at least some of the die-in people for obstructing sidewalks or whatever. This much was more-or-less public knowledge.

However, IVAW had a hidden agenda which Adam asked me to keep quiet. If they had enough people in the line of march, especially IVAW and VFP folk, they planned to march right on by the Peace Monument and up to the barriers at the foot of the Capitol to stage the die-in there. If that didn't provoke the arrests, IVAW would penetrate the barriers and hoped VFP would follow. Adam asked if I thought VFP would do so. I said that I for one would be right behind him and that I knew of at least a handful of others who would, but I couldn't estimate how many.

In the weeks before the event, ANSWER sent out a call for volunteers for the die-in, volunteers who recognized they were risking arrest. They received over 1000 volunteer forms. A day or two before the event they sent out a message asking all "die-in" volunteers to come to Lafayette Park at 10:30 for a briefing. They also provided a message about what to expect if you were arrested and how to prepare for the event.

At the briefing they asked all die-in volunteers to register again on paper with local contact information so they could track people who were arrested and make sure they didn't get "lost."

The Action

Saturday afternoon's weather was about as beautiful as I've seen in Washington DC. It was a day worthy of Santa Fe. Deep blue skies, warm with a pleasant breeze to keep the flags unfurled, a great day for a parade. According to the Associated Press about 100,000 people took part. Spectators along the route were generally supportive, except for a two block area between 6th and 8th streets where a counter-protest group, "Gathering of Eagles" were concentrated, shouting that we traitors who didn't support the troops. IVAW was prepared with a call-and-response: "Who are we?" "We are the troops." "What do we want?" "Bring us home." (Another frequent chant along the route of march was "No Justice, No Peace. US out of the Middle East.")

The march went pretty much according to the IVAW plan, except that when we passed the Peace Monument the sidewalks narrowed, pretty much forcing the bulk of the 100,000 participants to spread themselves out on the grassy areas from one side of the mall to the other. So it became impossible to see how many people were actually responding to the signal for the die-in when it happened. IVAW, along with those of us in VFP who were in the security detail were all concentrated in a fairly confined space right in front of the capital steps, up against a barrier which consisted of a double row of movable metal gates that looked kind of like bike racks. I was right there with Mike Ferner and Ellen Barfield when the signal went down. We lay down on the warm

concrete. It was actually very peaceful. I think I even took a little nap lying there. But at some point the action-hungry IVAW contingent got tired of waiting for an arrest and started to climb over the barriers. As soon as they did so, of course, the Capitol police nabbed them. I turned to Mike and asked, "Are you ready to go?" "Sure." We worked our way to the front, up, and over.

As I have previously written to most of you, as soon as we cleared the barrier there was a Capitol policeman on either side of us, forcing us to the ground. I quickly found myself prostrate with a cop's knee placed gently but firmly on my back while he put plastic cuffs on me. Under the circumstances he was remarkably considerate about it. He then stood me up and realized he needed to get the pack off my back. He called another cop over to help so he could cut the cuffs he had just put on me. "Don't move. I'm cutting this plastic and I don't want to cut you." I didn't move. Then more cuffs. He asked me if I had any weapons on me. I assured him I did not. He asked if I had an ID. "Back left pocket, in the wallet." He found it. "Is that your wife?" (picture of Elizabeth and me with "Wily Coyote.") "Yes." "Very nice." He removed the contents of all of my pockets and put them in my pack. Then he put the pack loop in my cuffed hands behind my back, grasped by left elbow firmly, and led me up the Capitol steps and to a sunny patio-like area to the right of the top of the steps where there were about 30 or so of my cuffed colleagues already sitting against the wall. The officer told me to have a seat and went off to get his next "collar." Adam Kokesh gave me a nice sign of recognition. There were perhaps a half-dozen or so officers there keeping an eye on us. At some point not long after I got there, someone (it may even have been I, though I don't remember) shouted out, "Let's stand up for peace," whereupon a rhythmic chant went up, "Stand up for peace, stand up for peace, stand up for peace" while all of us somewhat gracelessly found one way or another of getting to our feet and helping colleagues to do so in spite having our hands cuffed behind us. I sort of expected the police to make us get back down, but they didn't. So we started walking around the area, conversing with our friends - old and new. As long as we didn't get close to either an exit point or the balcony where the crowd below could see us the cops pretty much let us move as we pleased.

I think it was between 3:30 and 4:00pm when I was arrested. I had been up on the "patio" for about 20 minutes before Mike appeared. I asked what had taken him so long. Being more experienced than I in direct action arrest tactics, Mike had decided to resist arrest - non-violently of course. He had essentially gone limp so that it took four officers to carry him up the stairs. (He weighs about 205.) This occupied 4 officers instead of one, in effect requiring the government to expend more resources than my cooperative attitude had. An interesting point.

Arrests continued until close to 6pm. The patio got pretty crowded after a while. Finally, around six or so they led us around the side of the Capitol to a parking area where the buses would come in to pick us up. (Incidentally, these were "green" biodiesel DC

busses.) But there was room for only 30 or so on each bus, and before you could get on a bus you had to be searched again, your possessions removed (including any water you happened to have) and placed in a plastic bag on which your name was written in magic marker. Your ID was put in your pocket for use in the next stage of the process. All this was obviously pretty time-consuming - a very familiar hurry-up and wait experience. As we stood in this long line, Elliott Adams discovered a crushed water bottle on the ground and kicked it. Someone kicked it back and a short game of kick-the-bottle ensued to fill the time. Eventually Elliott, Ellen, Mike and I all ended up on the same bus and off we went to the Capitol Police processing area in an old garage in southwest (or maybe it was southeast Washington. Across the street a small crowd of supporters from the march had gathered to offer moral support.

There we sat and sat and sat - on the bus. When we arrived a policeman got on the bus and explained that there were two full buses ahead of us so we would be on the bus for quite a while. He told us that after we were processed, people who lived in DC, Maryland, or Virginia could be released without bail until their appointed court dates. Those of use from other states could be released on \$100 bail - cash only - until a court date. Out of area folks without access to \$100 were out of luck and would be transferred to jail until a Monday hearing. But to be released in any event required photo ID. Immediately people on the bus were offering cash to those out-of-area folks who didn't have it. But there was one young woman who didn't have any ID.

He said we could stand up and stretch and try to make ourselves as comfortable as we could. Some asked if we could get some water as a number of people on the bus were pretty dehydrated. He said he would do what he could. A woman said that she needed her medication that had been taken with her belongings. The cop said he could do nothing about that. Someone asked how long we were likely to be on the bus. "No idea. Probably an hour or two."

The IVAW and VFP folks for the most part took this all in stride. After all, no one was shooting at us and we knew we had invited arrest. But some others in the bus were not mentally or emotionally prepared for the experience and the stress started to show on them. A young man in the seat behind me with a "smiley face" drawn on his forehead was particularly "unsmiley." One of the women on the bus managed to work her hands under her butt and past her feet so her cuffed hands were in front of her. A policeman noticed and recuffed her. A young man across the aisle from me opened up the window and stuck his head out to talk to a friend on the sidewalk across the street. A cop quickly pulled him back and closed the window, explaining that this was for safety. A vehicle could come by and knock his head off. This made sense, but I decided to test the logic, since I was on the side away from the traffic. I opened my window as far as it would go - about four inches. No reaction. OK.

Joe Hayes from Grand Junction, Colorado, a retired federal law enforcement officer (Park Service), decided to stand up on his seat. He stood there for a while until the cops on the bus decided that probably wasn't a good idea. An policewoman who looked a great deal like my niece, Trish Boyle, went over to Joe and asked him to step down. At first he was going to be non-violently resistive. But then she looked up at him and very sweetly said, "Please step down. I don't want to hurt your leg." He melted and cooperated. From then on among ourselves we referred to the policewoman as "Officer Sweetie." We were all smitten.

But smitten though we were, after a couple of hours some of the natives were truly getting restless. We had gone through a couple of rounds of "No justice, no peace. US out of the middle east." And "What did you learn in the service. War is not a game." Then a woman police captain - as Henry Higgins might have said, "A large Wagnerian woman" got on board. "All of you sit down. I need to explain things to you." Confronted by authority, a number of bus passengers started raising tough questions. "We've been detained for hours without food or water or access to medications. When you detain people you have a responsibility their welfare." "I'll see about water. We don't have any food to give you. You can get your medications after you've been processed. Now close those windows and keep them closed. You can make this hard on yourselves or easy. We all want to get out of here, too." She was big and tough. A counterpart to "Officer sweetie," she soon got the nickname "Ironpants." But still we sat.

Ironpants got off the bus and another good cop got on. When some people complained that the cuffs were too tight, he took them off one by one and loosened them a little. Others were getting very sore shoulders; he took the cuffs off and re-cuffed them in front. After all these hours they started escorting men and women to the bathroom one-by-one as they requested it. There was something of a "Stockholm Syndrome" in reverse going on. Some cops told us how much they respected what we were doing. One in particular was very articulate on the plight of immigrants and the poor. Nicest of all, he used his own cell phone to call a friend of the ID-less woman who could bring her her driver's license from home!

I think it was about 8:30 or 9:00 when we finally got off the bus and lined up in the entryway to the processing center, essentially the driveway into the old garage. The evening was a beautiful as the day had been, with bright stars and mild air. A little on the cool side for those in short sleeves, but otherwise very comfortable as we stood in line for what seemed like an unnecessarily long time. Ironpants had explained that the lengthy delays were because they hadn't expected so many customers. But this didn't explain why about 50 cops seemed to be standing around doing nothing when they presumably could have been assisting on the intake process.

Eventually I got to the head of the line and was taken and searched for the third time with a very thorough "pat down." A blue plastic bracelet and a yellow plastic bracelet were then secured on my wrist along with a stiff plastic strip that had a token with the number 128 attached to it. The colored strips apparently identified which bus I had been on. The 123 was my ID number for the process, including the number for my eventual mug shot. The contents of my personal effects bag were inventoried and I was led over to the booking table where about a dozen or so young policemen entered the booking data - although all bookings were "officially" signed by officer Dougherty, a very serious looking, unsmiling, blue-eyed, blond-haired, 250 pound football player. Most of the cops at the table were vets themselves; rapport was easily established and the bookings went smoothly. After booking, we were shown to plastic chairs that were set up "theatre style" facing the booking table.

For the first few hours, the police kept us in our own color-coded areas, but as the hours stretched on they pretty much let us move around the room at will. Every once in a while someone would raise a peace chant of one sort or another, just to remind both the detainers and the detained of why we were there. These most often followed an assertion of authority by Captain Ironpants. Over the course of the evening, her attitude seemed to change. Elliott Adams feels that she actually had an epiphany of sorts. At about 4:30 in the morning she ordered one of the junior officers to go over to a nearby cafeteria and see if they had any sandwiches left over from the night before. Soon he was back with a couple of hundred baloney and cheese sandwiches and several dozen doughnuts. Ironpants asked us to come up and get what we wanted in an orderly fashion which we greeted with both laughter and compliance. By about 5am the processing seemed to accelerate. We all got the impression they wanted to complete it all before the next shift change.

At about 5:30 am, number 128 was called for the mug shot. I sat down next to another grim faced officer who was holding a sign with number 128 on it. We were facing a small digital camera and flash. I asked the grim-faced officer if I could get a couple of 8X10 glossies for my kids, but he didn't smile. Then back to the chair.

I think it was 5:45 when I number 128 was called again. First I was taken over to a table where my personal effects bag was returned to me. I was told not to open it until released. Then to another table where options were explained to me. I seriously considered staying in jail until Monday, just as a matter of principle. I had asked Mike about it. He had been in DC Metro jail a few months earlier with a couple of hundred Christians who had been protesting the war in front of the White House. He advised against it. I had brought along a couple of hundred dollars just in case I needed to pay cash bail, but I decided to hold onto the money for the time being since I anticipated another possible arrest later in the week if we are able to pull off our "No Exit" protest. It turns out that if you send in the fine about 10 days before your appointed court date, you

don't have to show up. That provides some flexibility; so I decided on that option and signed the citation to appear in court. The last step was finger printing. Actually just right thumb printing. Five times. Then the officer put some detergent in my left palm, told me to rub my thumb around in it a few times and wipe it off. Then I was free to go.

As each of us left, those still to be processed sent up a cheer. And after we walked out the door into the back alley behind the processing center we got our belongings out of the plastic bag, put the bag in the dumpster, and strolled out to the sidewalk where a small welcoming committee from ANSWER and Code Pink was waiting for us to "sign out." I waited for Elliott, Ellen, Will Covert, and Mike to show up. By this time the sky was getting light, the dawn of another beautiful day. We all had breakfast together and then headed over to the Vietnam Memorial to join an informal memorial service for Dave Cline, former president of VFP, who had died just a few days before.

Now I've probably told you a lot more about the whole process than you wanted to know. But there it is.

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VFP BOARD MEMBER MIKE FERNER

Day One of the IVAW's "Truth in Recruiting" Campaign

September 19, 2007

Can We Talk?

By MIKE FERNER

Washington, DC.

This began as a story about the Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) "Truth in Recruiting" campaign. But by the end, it seemed more like a story about whether or not we can still talk with each other in this country.

In the early morning chill of September 17, on the plaza in front of Union Station, members of IVAW set out literature and donuts on a card table and waited for the young International A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition activists to arrive. After a briefing, four-person teams left for various military recruiting offices and the campaign was underway. In addition to handing flyers to people walking into recruiting offices, the effort includes "Befriend a Recruiter," a tactic intended to waste as much of a recruiter's time as possible by talking with youth who have no intention of joining the military.

Within minutes, the teams at an Armed Forces Recruiting Station in the northwest quarter of the District called back to the IVAW post with a report that volunteers

were being hassled by "Gathering of Eagles" members in town to dog peace activists throughout a busy week of activities in the nation's capital. IVAW members Adam Kokesh and Mark Train, and Veterans For Peace (VFP) member Leah Bolger jumped into Kokesh's aged Ford Bronco to offer assistance.

When they arrived at the recruiting office, D.C. Metro Police and Federal Protective Services officers were already on the scene and more were on the way. A dozen Metro Police formed a line between a handful of "Eagles" members in their 50's and 60's holding signs, and about a dozen 20-something activists in yellow A.N.S.W.E.R. t-shirts, walking and chanting in a picket line.

Already the volume on both sides was approaching a 10, on its way to 11. VFP president, Elliott Adams, a former Army paratrooper familiar with much more explosive situations in Viet Nam, had arrived with the A.N.S.W.E.R. activists and was talking with the police. Bolger, a retired Navy Commander, was soon in conversation with one of the women Eagles.

Bolger said she tried asking the woman if she was concerned about the civilian death toll in Iraq. "She thought the reported estimates were way off base," Bolger related. "But when I started explaining what I thought was the case, she asked me how many abortions I'd had and whether I had a man waiting for me at home!"

Deborah King-Lile, 55, and a 25-year Navy veteran from St. Augustine, Florida who served in the Persian Gulf War, was the first to offer a comment to a reporter. "We didn't finish the job then (in 1991), so my husband had to go there in 2005. My son-in-law just returned from a one-year deployment and he's prepared to go back if necessary to keep my granddaughter from having to go." Nodding towards the picketers the neatly-coiffed woman added, "I'm sick of the vocal minority."

Beverly Perlson said her son is on his fourth deployment in Afghanistan with the 82nd Airborne. The Oak Lawn, Illinois resident stressed, "He believes in the war." Pointing to the picket line she said, "It's really painful for a mother of a soldier to see that. I wish they'd go somewhere else, like Iran. I don't believe they represent mainstream Americans who are quiet and at work on a day like today." Contrasting her version of mainstream America with the sight before her, she added disdainfully, "Just look at these people and look at their clothes."

Before rejoining a colleague carrying a "Support the troops" placard from Veterans of the Vietnam War, Inc., Perlson said, "I'm tired of having Cindy Sheehan speak for me. I came out of my living room because of what she was saying."

"That boy there called me a bitch, a fucking bitch," Angela Lashley said, looking towards a picketer who was angrily telling one of the Eagles to "get back over on your side" of the police line.

"My son is in Iraq, I don't know where," Lashley added. "He educated himself; he didn't need the education benefits. He felt compelled to serve."

She pulled a c.d. out of her purse and pointed to a song on the label she wrote called "So Brave." "It's not about waving the flag or God bless America. It's got nothing to do with a political agenda. What we need to do (about the war) is get the politics out of it and let the President do his job."

"It's painful to the parents of a dedicated soldier. We're not warmongers. We are artists and teachers. When these children scream nasty words, it hurts. I tried to speak kindly to them. Screaming won't help," she said, her eyes filling with tears.

"The mothers of this country won't tolerate people like this breaking the morale of our soldiers."

A few minutes later she was in conversation with IVAW board member, Adam Kokesh. "I respect you. I can see in your eyes you are good. But I also see much hurt and disappointment. I'm glad you served. I'm just sorry that whatever happened to you made you feel like this. But while you're doing this you're breaking the morale of our soldiers. It's hard for me but I try to be kind. Didn't Cindy Sheehan's words have a bad effect on you?"

"Cindy Sheehan had no effect on my morale," the former Marine replied. "My morale was low because we couldn't get the equipment we needed."

Larry Bailey identified himself as Chairman of Gathering of Eagles. From Chocowinity, North Carolina, the gregarious 68 year-old is a retired Navy SEAL Captain. He smiled and said, "I like talking to people with a measurable IQ."

"Our group is ad hoc, we don't have membership fees so anybody who feels like they're part of us just is." He said that the Eagles who came to Washington this week "paid our own way, just to get in the face of these people we call the 'moonbats.'"

Asked what motivated him to travel to Washington, he answered, "I'm a Vietnam vet. I'm doing this to make sure the troopers from Iraq and Afghanistan don't get the same as troops coming back from Vietnam. Back then, the American people didn't counter the left-wing propaganda. I'm not pro-war. I'm pro-troops."

Later, Bailey and Kokesh began conversing about whether Iraqi civilians have been killed in the war.

The Eagles chairman, referring to a widely-quoted Johns Hopkins study published in the British medical journal, Lancet, said, "Six hundred thousand Iraqis that's the number we're supposed to have killed. That doesn't make any sense whatsoever. I can guarantee you that our military did not directly kill any such number of Iraqi civilians."

Kokesh countered, "That number is based on a scientific survey

"Come on," Bailey laughed, "We both know that you can make scientific surveys say anything you want."

"I've heard of the Lancet," he continued. "It's right up there with the top medical journal here. But you know who controls the media let me tell you what La Monde (a prominent French publication) did."

He related to Kokesh a brief anecdote about a story La Monde did on a Gathering of Eagles demonstration in which the magazine published "completely untrue" crowd figures, making it look like his group was greatly outnumbered by their opponents. Although they interrupted each other at times, their conversation continued and it seemed that both of them were looking for something on which they could agree. Bailey offered that he was a Libertarian. Kokesh smiled and said so was he, and repeated his earlier concern that in Iraq he saw U.S. troops that were poorly equipped. Larry responded that he had given one hundred dollars to help purchase helmets for U.S. troops.

A spokesman for Gathering of Eagles, Kristinn Taylor, said he has three family members in the military, including one who was in Afghanistan.

He related a number of details he considered important background about the groups involved. "The IVAW was started by Veterans For Peace, you know, and that's a Marxist front. VFP had a 'water project' for the Sandinistas, and the same thing for Cuba and even Iraq."

A middle-aged man in business casual dress, wearing a USEPA I.D. tag, watched while he took a smoke break. He offered that he was a Vietnam veteran, and when asked if the actions of protesters of that era affected his morale, he answered with a smile, "Ruin my morale? I was wishing somebody over here would pay attention to them!"

Two construction workers eating lunch on the sidewalk looked preoccupied with their sandwiches. When asked their opinions, one said he had no comment and the other replied, "Well somebody's got to go. It (war) is inevitable, isn't it?"

Meanwhile, the picketers, numbering about 20 with the addition of two VFP members, continued to march in a loop in front of the recruiting station, chanting loudly, "Hell No We Won't Go," and "No Justice; No Peace. U.S. Out of the Middle East." Four TV cameras and what appeared to be assorted independent videographers eventually showed up to cover the ruckus. Bullhorn-amplified chants continued for another hour.

Asked if he viewed the morning's activity as a success, Kokesh said, "We got some help doing our job and no one got recruited here today. There must be 30 cops here. Do you think any kid is going to go in there and talk to a recruiter with this going on?"

Mike Ferner is a former Navy corpsman and author of "Inside the Red Zone: A Veteran For Peace Reports from Iraq", available on his website www.mikeferner.org

How the DC Police are Using "Stay Away" Orders to Muzzle Anti-War Protesters

Free Speech Takes a Capitol Beating

By MIKE FERNER

Free speech took a beating with another round of arrests September 18 in the nation's capital. It was administered by the police at a rally sponsored by the most unlikely-sounding group to be involved in such a thing: Veterans for Freedom.

U.S. Senators Joe Lieberman, John McCain and Lindsey Graham were among the featured speakers at the rally held in Upper Senate Park on Capitol Hill. About 150 people attended the rally to support the group's pro-war position, as did about 30 people who were not in support. Before the rally concluded, Leah Bolger, David Barrows, Christine Rainwater, Anne Kittridge, and Anne Katz were arrested by Capitol Police.

Barrows said he had gone to the park because he heard Lieberman was going to speak. When the Senator was talking, Barrows spoke out, "I don't want your 'bomb and run genocide' in Iran."

"As soon as I did, a plainclothes policeman came up to me and said, 'You're under arrest,'" the 60 year-old D.C. resident continued. But, Barrows said, instead of going with the officer immediately he moved another six feet closer to the stage, whereupon he was placed under arrest.

It wasn't until he was taken to the Capitol Police station that Barrows discovered one of the charges against him was assault. "They told me I was being charged with assaulting a Gold Star mother at the rally. When I looked at their report, the accuser's name and address had been blacked out but I recognized the photo of a well-groomed Asian-American woman I'd seen around Capitol Hill several times. Why in the world would I assault a Gold Star Mother? It makes no sense."

Barrows was given a "stay away" order (not allowed to step foot on and Capitol property which includes the Capitol Building, the five House and Senate office buildings, and assorted bits of property adjoining them) and has a trial date pending.

Bolger, a retired Navy Commander and member of Veterans For Peace, said she went to the park for the same reason Barrows did, "to hear Lieberman, McCain and Lindsey Graham." She was arrested and charged with unlawful assembly. After a night in the D.C. Metro Police lockup she pled not guilty at her arraignment. Trial is set for October 23 in D.C. Superior Court.

"It's just bizzare," the Corvallis, Oregon resident said. "How can I be charged with 'unlawful assembly' when I was at an outdoor rally in a public park sponsored by someone else? I was in the Hart Senate Office Building when I heard Lieberman was supposed to speak, and I went to hear him."

She said she was sympathetically talking with a member of a group called "Families United" about the pain of losing a loved one, when a Capitol Hill police officer told her and Adam Kokesh, co-chair of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) to move to the other side of a sidewalk serving as a rough demarcation line between the Veterans for Freedom members and others, generally defined.

Bolger continued that, "At one point in his remarks, Senator Graham gestured to those of us separated from the main group and said, 'These people just don't get it. The reason your loved ones fought and died was for them to have the right to do what they're doing right now.' Bolger responded out loud to Lieberman that "You can't win when you're killing innocent people."

"Then the cop told me, 'this is your second warning,'" Bolger added. "And then when I said to Lieberman, 'This war is wrong. America is wrong.' I was arrested. Somehow I doubt the same thing would have happened had I said 'God Bless America' really loudly."

Another person arrested, Annie Katz, from Kingston, New York, said reading the Constitution aloud in Upper Senate Park that day was enough to get her arrested. Attorney Jack Berringer, who represented Barrows and Bolger, complained of what he called the court's "preventive" use of stay away orders to limit the movements of protesters and potential protesters, but as aggravating as those are, he said, "they're not the real story here. The real story is how these people (Bolger, Barrows, and others arrested in peace protests) are fighting to keep free speech alive."

Berringer referred to a web site that several people are constructing who have represented themselves "pro se" in similar cases. He and attorney Mark Goldstone are advising the group's work which he hopes will become a legal resource for others.

"Funding the War is Killing the Troops"

Interrupting the Empire, 30 Seconds at a Time

By MIKE FERNER

The massive U.S. Capitol Building is situated to dominate Washington, D.C. from every angle. Its brightly lit facade dominates the night skyline even more. Inside, a first time visitor is at least impressed if not overwhelmed, waiting to enter the House or Senate gallery. A mural entirely dominating one stairwell titled, "Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way," depicts heroic, windswept pioneer families cresting a mountain pass. Dark, formal portraits of the icons of American history look down from within ornate, gold frames. The illuminated words of founding fathers inscribed on marble walls fairly shout hosannas to liberty, freedom and democracy. By the time a visitor approaches the final security checkpoint immediately outside the gallery itself, mere mortals about to view the workings of the gods are properly awed; particularly if they've read the back of their gallery pass which states:

Rules of the Gallery

Nothing may be taken into the Galleries other than articles of clothing and handbags. Guests must remain seated and refrain from reading, writing, smoking, eating, drinking, applauding or picture taking.

Front railing must be kept clear of all objects and guests must not lean on railings. Appropriate hats may be worn by gentlemen for religious purposes only. Any disturbance or infraction of these rules is justification for expulsion from the Galleries.

The Sergeant at Arms

Such was the setting on September 20, 2007, when Linda Wiener, Leah Bolger and I walked into the gallery overlooking a session of the U.S. House of Representatives. In large letters our banner read, "FUNDING THE WAR IS KILLING OUR TROOPS" and it had a fine pedigree -- only hours before it was a tablecloth at the trendy Washington Chop House where a sympathetic busboy donated it to the cause. Neatly folded and tucked into my pants, it made it past every security check except the last, electronic one which beeped at the cell phone I'd forgotten in my pocket. It seemed fitting that a banner with such a prestigious past should hang momentarily from the balcony of the House gallery, but such was not to be.

We were seated in a coveted first row, immediately behind the balcony railing, prepared to send our message at least verbally. Below us, the Acting Speaker of the House was conducting a vote described on a small, electronic scoreboard only as "On the previous question." Voting consisted of a surprisingly raucous, undisciplined period when members walked around and talked loudly with their colleagues. To the untrained eye it appeared entirely chaotic. We waited for two such votes on equally mysterious questions and decided to do our presentation over the noise and bustle below.

I put on my blue garrison cap with white letters spelling "Veterans For Peace," and stood up with Linda. In unison, we said loudly and clearly, "Congress! Congress! Funding the war is killing our troops. Please stop." About half the members on the floor of the U.S. House of Representatives stopped talking and turned to look. We were able to repeat our message a couple more times before the Acting Speaker pounded a gavel and said the magic words to the Sergeant-at-Arms and Capitol Hill Police: "Restore order!" Within seconds I felt a strong hand on my arm and heard a voice say, "Sir, come with me!" We accepted his invitation but continued delivering our message on the way out and in the hallway where we were quickly handcuffed and propelled towards the elevator.

After a 30-hour twilight of custody by the Capitol Police, D.C. Metropolitan Police, and finally U.S. Marshals, I appeared before the judge in D.C. Superior Court for less than five minutes. My attorney, a third-year law student from the Georgetown Law Clinic successfully rebuffed the prosecutor's request that I be given a "stay away" order preventing me from stepping foot in the several Congressional Office Buildings, the Capitol, and sundry bits of property adjacent to them all. I was told to return for a "status hearing" on October 30th, and released on my own recognizance. That jail experience, although relatively short, was degrading as all jail experiences are intended to be. Going back to Washington D.C. for a status hearing and again for a trial is costly and inconvenient. But let's face it. Many, many people in social justice movements before us have paid much more dearly than we're asked to. For the most part, peace protesters these days aren't being clubbed mercilessly, or disappeared into a gulag of prisons, or tortured when we're arrested. We're not yet under martial law, subject to being swept off the streets at a whim, nor are we being gunned down for protesting. That's why it is so very important that we step forward now, before things get that bad, and demand an end to this war and justice for Iraqis and our returning troops.

Officer Wilson of the Capitol Police, whom I've gotten to know after a couple trips through his booking facility, asked, "Is it worth it? You know you're not going to stop the war." I have to admit that just that morning on my way to the Capitol I considered saying "the hell with it" and going home. I had just been arrested September 15th with 200 others on the grounds of the Capitol. I knew this next arrest would entail an overnight stay in the D.C. Metro Police lockup and more trips to Washington for court appearances. One more arrest wasn't going to end the war. But I thought of the absolute hell experienced by the people of Iraq and the relative hell experienced by our soldiers occupying them; of the physical and mental

anguishes they suffer and will continue to suffer for years to come; of the culpability I share in this criminal war. The logic seemed simple and clear to me: this was something I could do, therefore I must do it. In trying to end this war using nonviolence, such actions are among the most significant a person can take. So I answered Officer Wilson, "Yes, it's worth it," and tried unsuccessfully to explain my position to someone with a very different view of the world.

Later, I learned that on the day Linda spoke out and were arrested, 36 activists were arrested elsewhere in the Capitol Building, doing a die-in and reading the names of people killed in the war as a tour group of students watched. From that one day's experience, imagine what would happen if we decided to educate Congress with a variety of short speeches four times a day, for four days a week, for two weeks. That would take just 32 people; 64 people could keep it going for a month. Then, the next time 100,000 people come to D.C. for a demonstration and 5,000 of them do a die-in, what would happen if they were prepared to stay there indefinitely--and got on their phones to tell their friends to join them--and within days we had several times that number filling the streets, filling the jails? Now that actually begins to stop business as usual in Washington.

We can do it; therefore we must!

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An Iraq war veteran reflects on the Sept. 15 march

'The first time I put on that uniform I hoped I would wear it with honor. On Sept. 15, I finally did.'

By Michael Prysner

The writer is an Iraq war veteran.

On the morning of Sept. 15, I held in my hands a uniform that was issued to me nearly five years ago. I remembered the first time I held it, wondering if I would ever wear it home, wondering if it would be stained by blood or shredded by bullets. It looks much different now than the first time I put it on—it is faded from 12 months of desert sand and sun. The elbows and knees are worn from lying in the street. The boots are tattered from kicking down doors and walking over cities of rubble. As I put it on for the first time since I returned from Iraq, I finally felt as if I was putting it on for a purpose.

For so many years, that uniform has not stood for justice and freedom. It is the uniform that the Iraqi people saw stomp through their towns. It is the uniform that drove humvees and manned machine guns. It is the uniform that dragged people from their homes and interrogated them in prison camps. But on the streets of Washington, D.C., the uniform took on new meaning.

It was no longer worn with the intention of fighting for the government, but fighting against it. For me, and for my brothers and sisters in Iraq Veterans Against the War, the uniform that once symbolized fear and destruction would now be worn in the spirit of justice and resistance.

In March of 2003, our government ordered us to put on that uniform, march into a foreign land and take it from those who lived there. On Sept. 15, we put on that same uniform to march to the Capitol and face those who sent us to war. A significant factor in ending the war in Vietnam was the ability of protesters and GIs to strike fear in the heart of the government. Countless citizens and soldiers threw their bodies into the gears of the war machine, and made the ruling class realize that instead of

fighting their war, we would fight them.

This war will end when the government begins to fear the masses—when the army they sent to spread imperialism becomes the army that marches to their offices and charges through the police barricades. The first time I put on that uniform, I hoped I would wear it with honor. On Sept. 15, I finally did. I could finally do something right while wearing it. The nearly 200 people arrested on that day—many of whom were Iraq war veterans—showed the government that we will do more than just march.

We will defy them at every turn; we will not fade away, but only grow in numbers and intensity. The longer this war rages on, the more we will resist and the more we will sacrifice.

Wearing that uniform at the steps of the Capitol, I knew that the most important action that I could do was to advance towards the barricade, and help light the spark that will empower people to stop this government.

For the first time, that uniform was worn fighting a just war. When I emerged from jail that night, I saw hundreds of cheering supporters outside. Then, I knew that sooner or later we will win this war against imperialism. And I have never felt prouder wearing that uniform.

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****Canada Refuses Entry to CODEPINK Cofounder Medea Benjamin and Retired Colonel Ann Wright ****

WASHINGTON - October 3 - Two well-respected US peace activists, CODEPINK <<http://www.codepink4peace.org/>> and Global Exchange <<http://www.globalexchange.org/>> cofounder Medea Benjamin and retired Colonel and diplomat Ann Wright, were denied entry into Canada today (Wednesday, October 3). The two women were headed to Toronto to discuss peace and security issues at the invitation of the Toronto Stop the War Coalition. At the Buffalo-Niagara Falls Bridge they were detained, questioned and denied entry. They will hold a press conference on Thursday afternoon in front of the Canadian Embassy in Washington DC to ask the Canadian government to reverse its policy of barring peaceful protesters. The women were questioned at Canadian customs about their participation in anti-war efforts and informed that they had an FBI file indicating they had been arrested in acts of non-violent civil disobedience. *WHEN:

*Thursday, October 4th at 1pm

WHERE: Canadian Embassy, 501 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Washington DC "In my case, the border guard pulled up a file showing that I had been arrested at the US Mission to the UN where, on International Women's Day, a group of us had tried to deliver a peace petition signed by 152,000 women around the world," says Benjamin. "For this, the Canadians labeled me a criminal and refused to allow me in the country." "The FBI's placing of peace activists on an international criminal database is blatant political intimidation of US citizens opposed to Bush administration policies," says Colonel Wright, who was also Deputy US Ambassador in four countries. "The Canadian government should certainly not accept this FBI database as the criteria for entering the

country." Both Wright and Benjamin plan to request their files from the FBI through the Freedom of Information Act and demand that arrests for peaceful, non-violent actions be expunged from international records. "It's outrageous that Canada is turning away peacemakers protesting a war that does not have the support of either US or Canadian citizens," says Benjamin. "In the past, Canada has always welcomed peace activists with open arms. This new policy, obviously a creature of the Bush administration, is shocking and we in the US and Canada must insist that it be overturned. Four members of the Canadian Parliament--Peggy Nash, Libby Davies, Paul Dewar and Peter Julian--expressed outrage that the peace activists were barred from Canada and vow to change this policy.

VETERANS' DAY ACTIONS 2007

All across the country, Veterans For Peace conducted actions, participated in parades and did more this year than any other prior to declare our presence in American communities. A few examples:

Chapter 16 – Washington D.C.

On November 11th (Veterans Day), Veterans For Peace chapter 016 (VFP) became the Delwin Anderson memorial chapter. Approximately 30 of us (including Delwin's wife and 7 other extended family members) attended the Veterans Day concert at the Kennedy Center. We were even listed on the Kennedy Center's playbill! Following the concert, a half dozen members attended a fund-raising cocktail buffet in support of the Iraq Veterans Policy Center. This initiative is being founded under the auspices of the DC chapter of Iraq Veterans Against the War. You'll soon hear more of this project. Peace and blessings, P-Mac P. S. I called in sick to Montgomery County (MD) schools as a protest to not having today off, and used the day to update our group e-mail list.

Chapter 32 - Miami, FL

Mock tombstones draw anguished, curious

BY ERIKA BERAS AND TIM CHAPMAN Ninety-seven-year-old Vicente Sabala was waiting for a bus on Biscayne Boulevard when he saw the curious tableau: a sea of cardboard tombstones dotting Mildred and Claude Pepper Bayfront Park. The old man ambled over and stooped to read the inscription on one. The tombstones are a silent protest, symbolic of the rising death toll from the war in Iraq. "It's terrible," Sabala said after examining one. "All war is terrible."

And so it went on Veterans Day, as the curious and the bereaved stopped by Bayfront Park to see what organizers said was 2,800 cardboard markers, laid out in rows. Sponsors are the organizations Veterans for Peace and Democracy for America.

One of Monday's visitors was Carlos Arredondo. He made headlines in 2004 when three Marines showed up at his door in Hollywood to inform him that his 20-year-old son, Lance Cpl. Alexander Arredondo, had been killed by a sniper in Iraq. In a fog of rage and grief, he rushed to the street and set fire to the Marines' van, badly burning himself in the process.

The Marines later forgave him and he was not prosecuted. But the sense of loss still gnaws at him.

Monday, he knelt at the cardboard tombstone bearing the name of his son -- awarded a Purple Heart, a Bronze Star and a Medal of Valor -- and said: ``I'm not here to argue about anything. I'm here to honor my son and other veterans who gave the ultimate sacrifice.

Arredondo, who buried his son in Boston where he now lives, placed an American flag, tightly folded into a triangle, at the base of the cardboard along with his son's dog tag, combat boots and camouflage uniform.

Although Arredondo said he was not there to make a political point, the organizers of the tombstone exhibit are most definitely making a point -- against the war in Iraq.

One of the tombstones noted that the toll from the war has climbed to 3,816, according to the latest tally by the Associated Press.

The tombstone exhibit first appeared in South Florida three years ago and has reappeared several times.

Simon Rose, a spokesman for Veterans for Peace, said there were fewer tombstones than dead soldiers this year because they ran out of room

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Philadelphia, PA

A 'tombstone' tribute to Del. Valley war dead By KITTY CAPARELLA, Philadelphia Daily News

ON THE LAWN at Independence National Historical Park, the white wooden "tombstones" stood at attention, the way the crosses do at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. Yesterday, visitors stepped cautiously between the rows, as if on hallowed ground, looking for the name of a loved one on the 1,800 symbolic tombstones commemorating Veterans Day.

Temple University sophomore Kerry Brind'Amour, 19, was showing her sister Katie, 21, around Philadelphia, when, she said, they decided to see if a family friend, whom they had grown up with, was there. They didn't have far to look. In the third row, they found the tombstone for Lance Cpl. Patrick Kenny, a Marine with the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, 2nd Division. Kenny died "when a land mine went off under his seat in a Humvee," said Kerry Brind'Amour, tears streaming down her face. Their families had been close in Pittsburgh, and Kenny's death two years ago in Iraq hit them hard. He was only 20.

Like other memorials that honor the war dead, even this four-day temporary one, to be taken down today, evoked tears, sadness and memories of lives struck down in their prime. As mourners placed flowers by the tombstones, Bill Perry, executive director of Delaware Valley Veterans for America, played taps. His organization espouses bringing the troops home now. Perry, 60, a combat paratrooper during the Tet offensive in 1967-1968 in Vietnam, said there were 3,860 American casualties in Iraq and Afghanistan, as of yesterday morning. Along the perimeter of the lawn were markers for 91 women who had died in combat. "I've never seen so many woman die in war," he said.

On Aug. 9, 2005, Sgt. Francis Straub Jr., of the Pennsylvania National Guard, was serving in Alpha Unit in Iraq when a massive blast killed the 24-year-old Philadelphian and three others. Yesterday, his parents left two pink roses and a message on the white wooden board: "I love you



Iraq Vet, Jason Washburn

A Sea of Tombstones, at Philly's Liberty Bell, memorializes the 3,860 KIA of our War in Iraq. Our "Cost of War" Display takes up nearly 3 acres on Fed land between the Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, & the Constitution Center, attracting 10's of Thousands of visitors, from around our Nation, and the world. About 40 **Delaware Valley Veterans, S. Jersey VFP, IVAW, VVAW, & Code Pink** take shifts keeping visitors informed of **The Cost of War**.

Santa Fe, NM

The Joan Duffy Chapter of Veterans for Peace, Santa Fe NM, hit a kind of trifecta on Veterans day with lead articles (with pictures) on chapter president, Daniel Craig, chapter founder, Ken Mayers, and a letter from the latter on preventing an attack on Iran. If interested, you can see them at the links below. In addition, Daniel and Ken were on KSFR's "Radio Café" on Thursday morning from 8:00 to 8:30 and on "Living on the Edge" on Veterans Day from 1:00 to 2:00pm. The chapter also had a strong and welcomed presence in the Santa Fe Veterans' Day Parade for the second year in a row, carrying the large chapter banner, several VFP flags, and a 10ft wide banner that read, "New Mexico Says Out of Iraq NOW!"

Long Beach, CA

[from Fox News Channel 11, Los Angeles]

Antiwar Veterans Banned From Marching in Veterans Day Parade

Last Edited: Saturday, 10 Nov 2007, 10:25 PM PST

Created: Saturday, 10 Nov 2007, 10:25 PM PST

Antiwar veterans who attempted to march in a Veterans Day Parade Saturday in Long Beach were banned by organizers who said the parade is supposed to thank veterans and not be political. Members of Iraq Veterans against the War and Veterans for Peace were prevented from joining the annual parade. Organizers said the groups were trying to push a political agenda at an event to honor veterans. Earlier this week, the Veterans Day Parade Committee rejected their applications to participate.

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Chapter 134 - Tacoma, WA

Veteran's Day Parade in Auburn, Washington

The turnout for the VFP group was down about fifteen from last year's but the good news was that we got surprise adoptees to march with us. I counted five assorted peaceniks who came to stand by us in protective support. One was from Puyallup, three from Federal Way, and yet one more from Tacoma. They lingered with us at the side-street while we waited our turn to march which is always a pretty long time. Finally the well-prepared Post 92 opened the trunk of the parade car and produced VFP vests for the five to wear so they could shore up our numbers. As I waited with them on the street the parade entrants rolled past. Another entry directly across from us in WWII regalia, also waited for their turn to enter the parade. An Army bicycle sat waiting with a rifle attached.

I wish I'd had a camera to catch the image of the four children who marched by, leading an Army entry. They were each decked out in a full fatigue uniform and as they passed that bicycle the picture was memorable. A tiny motorized F15 replica, toy-sized with just enough room for a teenaged driver, drove past. I found myself alternately entertained by the marching bands from across the state with their choreography, and then revulsed by the parents indoctrinating small children with the glory of war. Another photo in my mind is a young father who held his homemade sign stating "GOD BLESS THE VETS" with a 5 year old boy following him holding a toy rifle with an American flag sticking out of the barrel. But once we got marching I was once again amazed by the quick flip from militant patriotism to support for our message. We had immediate applause which lasted throughout the march and many of the clapping hands belonged to middle-aged men in VFW and American Legion hats. I searched into the windows of the souls of

those clapping and found many tears. We neared the risers wherein the military brass and elected officials stood and unlike last year we were not met with deafening silence from the emcee.

This time we heard ourselves publicly honored. The emcee announced Veterans For Peace as a twenty-two-year old group committed to peaceful negotiations as an resolution to international conflict. That swelled my heart. We turned the corner to the end of the parade and as we stood on the sidewalk two reporters found us. The Seattle P-I reporter spoke to Steve and to Jackson Maze, saying he was surprised by our presence, having never heard of our group. He mentioned that the response to us seemed somewhat subdued. Steve replied that it's surprising that anyone applauds for us given that this is a celebration of the military-industrial complex and we're for peace which can be seen to be antithetical to the overall message of the event.

Here's what he printed in today's paper: The parade also attracted a group called Veterans for Peace, which walked the route. "My experience in war made me feel that war is an obscene thing that should be avoided at all cost," said Steve Nebel, a Veterans for Peace member who fought in the Army during the Vietnam War. "I hope it's effective for me as a veteran to speak out." The march is beginning to feel like a social reunion of our neighbor chapters from Olympia and Seattle. Tacoma was represented with six members. For me it feels like a reminder of the invisible web that spreads across our nation linking all of the wives of veterans; we make instant links looking into each others' eyes, recognizing one another. One such woman marching next to me said, "I feel like a fraud". I said, "You're no fraud. You're a survivor, too."

Smedley Butler Chapter 9 - Boston, MA

Congratulations to the Boston Veterans Day 18 for a great action today.? We stood peacefully with gags over our mouths and signs saying "American Legion SILENCES messages of peace from veterans". since they refused our request to have Iraq veteran Liam Madden speak.? 18 of us were arrested by the Boston Police and charged with disturbing a public assembly, which we were definitely not doing.? We were completely silent and peaceful.? The 18 arrested are in the To list of this email and include Dick Smith's wife Ann as well as Arthur Brien 978-686-4418 who does not have email.? 15 of the 18 are veterans and 3 of them are women.

Getting arrested along with 92 year old Paul Brailsford (who managed to get the plastic cuffs off in the police wagon!!), 80 something year old Sev Bruyn, 76 year old Tony Flaherty was a privilege that I have trouble expressing.? Seeing these guys in cuffs was just such an inspiration.

Amazingly enough we get the best media coverage from the local Fox affiliate.? Go figure.? In the next day or so we will be figuring out how to fight this thing in court.? Stay tuned. Nate Goldshlag.

Atlanta, GA

We complied strictly with the stipulations laid on us by the Georgia Veterans Day Parade Association of Atlanta, which included no float and no signs and banners; VFP and US flags only. It was very difficult negotiating our acceptance into the parade after being initially denied and we were only narrowly voted in at the last hour by the Veterans Day parade committee on the condition that we adhere to the stipulations they issued. One of our members did say he wouldn't march in the parade under those conditions, though he wasn't opposed to our doing so. From my view, I felt it was better for VFP to be in the parade under those conditions than to not be in the parade at all. Our chapter president, 90-year George Sossenko, veteran of the Spanish Civil War and World War II, wore his jacket from WWII with his captain bars and medals.

The Grand Marshal of the parade was Lt Gen. Russell Honore, commanding general, First Army at Fort Gillem. When we solemnly and silently passed by the reviewing stand, all wearing black armbands, eyes straight ahead, I heard a rustle. However, an incredible thing happened. The members of the reviewing stand rose as we silently passed by and...actually applauded! Additional applause came from the surrounding onlookers. I thought maybe I was nuts and hearing things, so I later asked my fellow VFP members if that really did happen and they said that it did.

The photo below was taken by the Atlanta Journal Constitution.



Eugene OR

Veterans For Peace Chapter 929 from Eugene Oregon marched in the Lane County Vets Day Parade in neighboring Springfield Oregon. The small contingent on foot and bicycle was followed by their 35' bus with the words "STOP THE WAR", and "Veterans For Peace" in large letters on it. The local Code Pink with two Vet members applied to march as well, and was approved. Both groups participated with no objectionable restrictions imposed, without incident, and to very warm public applause. Other Veteran participants were also very friendly -- Gordon Sturrock

St. Louis, MO

The Don Connors chapter 61 in St. Louis, MO and a delegation from the Columbia MO chapter fielded fifteen veterans to march with a brace of VFP banners a-flyin' and Woody Powell's Prius with magnetic VFP panels on the doors in the downtown St. Louis Veterans Day Parade for the first time ever. We were sandwiched between a pair of Army Humvees in camo and about thirty Patriotic motorcycle riders toward the end of the parade. Reception was surprisingly positive all along the route. Even a few uniformed soldiers gave us the peace sign as we passed and many, many people clapped for us. There were no negative incidents to report. Our stark black and white banners, flanking a single American flag contrasted favorably with the rampantly-expressed, somewhat feverish patriotism that abounded around us with Old Glory do-rags, brass-bedecked leathers, MIA-POW banners, masses of flags and ROTC cadets doing thier self-conscious best to stay in step.

Afterwards we potlucked at the Friend's Meeting House, discussed strategy and tactics, and wound up the evening attending a play sponsored by the Don Connors chapter about a returning Iraq vet suffering from PTSD. The proceeds, after expenses, go to the Iraq Water Project to buy more water purification units being distributed to hospitals in Iraq.

All-in-all, a productive day. We're convinced there are many people in St. Louis who found out about VFP for the first time. We are slowly becoming a cultural fixture in our community. Woody Powell, chapter Scty.

Corvallis, OR

I am happy to report a positive situation here in Oregon. Although the Veterans Commemoration Association (the sponsors for the local parade) don't reach out to us (they don't send me the application, place us near the end of the parade, etc.), we are allowed to march in their parade which is described as the biggest Veterans Day Parade west of the Mississippi. The parade rules state: "Entries advocating, opposing or depicting any politically or socially controversial issues will not be allowed in the parade. Any entry seen doing this along the parade route will automatically be escorted off the route at the next cross-road by committee members or police." We didn't let that stop us from holding "War is not the answer" "Vet care not warfare" and similar signs, peace dove puppets and peace symbol flags as well as our VFP banner and flag. This is the third year that our chapter has participated in the parade, and this time I didn't see any negative reactions—the response has become increasingly more positive in these three years. This year we also had a special guest marching with us—Elizabeth Kucinich! Here is a link to the local newspaper article which covered the parade:
http://www.gazettetimes.com/articles/2007/11/11/news/community/1aaa03_veteranz.txt

The only real complaint I have this year is that the announcer didn't read what I submitted—He simply said "Veterans for Peace is a non-profit educational organization from Corvallis, Oregon." I plan to take that up with the organizers.

Working for peace, Leah Bolger

Chapter 79, Denver, CO

Here in Denver we had been disinvented from the parade by the organizing committee, the United Veterans Council, which is dominated by the VFW and the Legion. At the last minute (Friday morning), I was called to meet with the city's VSO. He informed me that the City was prepared to intervene, as host and co-sponsor, to put us in the parade on our terms. We were permitted to carry our flags and banners (VFP, IVAW and MFSO), even anti-war signs. This change of heart appears to have resulted from some sympathetic press we received (papers and TV) in coverage of our planned protest of our exclusion. There were a lot of variable factors at play here. The mayor's office is very sensitive to public relations because of: a) The Democratic National Convention which will be held here next August; and b) A Columbus Day Parade protest that got nasty, with many arrests and large headlines. Despite our success in getting admitted to the parade, however, we will be considering an alternative, "Armistice Day" celebration – separate from the parade - in the future. This way, we could invite member groups of the larger peace and justice community here in Colorado and enjoy the day among people with whom we share common goals and aspirations. Although we were mainly well-received by spectators yesterday, some of us felt uncomfortable in the presence of the prevailing militaristic, pseudo-patriotic theme of the parade. Somehow, I find the idea of a "Separate Peace" gathering appealing and more appropriate.

Frank Bessinger

Veterans Day: A Day for Peace or for War? *By Ann Wright*

truthout / Perspective

http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/111307R.shtml

Tuesday 13 November 2007

Could you ever imagine that Veterans Day was originally enacted as a day for world peace? Not by the way veterans who stand for peace are treated in Veterans Day ceremonies! Yet, according to the Veterans Affairs web site, Veterans Day, formerly known as Armistice Day, was originally a US legal holiday to honor the end of World War I and to honor the need for world peace.

When it passed a concurrent resolution on June 4, 1926, to honor the end of World War I, the US Congress stated: *Whereas it is fitting that the recurring anniversary of this date should be commemorated with thanksgiving and prayer and exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations.* In 1938, the US Congress codified its earlier resolution by legislation naming November 11 as Armistice Day and dedicating the day "to the cause of *world* peace." In 1954, after World War II and the Korean Conflict, Congress - at the urging of the veterans service organizations - amended the Act of 1938 by striking out the word "Armistice" and inserting the word "Veterans." With the approval of this legislation on June

1, 1954, November 11 became a day to honor American veterans of all wars and a national holiday still dedicated to "the cause of world peace."

Yet, now we have many Veterans Day organizers who want to silence "peace" on Veterans Day. This past weekend we "celebrated" Veterans Day, a day for all veterans and a day for "world peace", or so I thought, until I went to Long Beach, California. Like so many aspects of our military, events surrounding Veterans Day have been privatized. The City of Long Beach has given Veterans Day to a private group, a group that decides which veterans can participate in a Veterans Day parade.

The private organizers in Long Beach said veterans groups that are against the war and for peace were not allowed to march in the parade, as they did not have the proper "spirit." Yet, the legislation enacting Veterans Day states that "the cause of world peace" is the goal of Veterans Day. Private citizens who have never served in the military are authorized by the City of Long Beach to decide what Veterans Day stands for and which veterans are the "real" veterans - the veterans who meet their agenda.

In another strange anomaly about Veterans Day, in Santa Barbara, California, members of the Veterans for Peace chapter have had to carry their discharge papers in order to march in the city's Veterans Day parade. The same requirement was not made for Veterans of Foreign Wars or American Legion or any other veterans group participating in the parade. This year the Boston police arrested eighteen members of Veterans for Peace when they refused to move from the front of the podium at City Hall Plaza when parade officials wouldn't allow them to carry signs opposing the war in Iraq while marching in Boston's Veterans Day parade. Some of the protesters wore gags over their mouths, which they said symbolized the fact that they were permitted to march in the parade but not exercise their right to free speech. According to the Boston Globe, Nate Goldschlag, a veteran standing in front of the podium, said: "Our free speech and civil rights are being abridged here. We should be allowed to express our opposition to this war."

In Atlanta, the Veterans for Peace Chapter and the American Veterans for Equal Rights Georgia (AVER), a gay and lesbian veterans group, had their applications to participate in the Parade initially denied with this comment from the parade organizers: "Application denied. Failure to follow guidelines in previous year." Last year the VFP Atlanta chapter had a truck with a banner that said, "BRING THEM HOME ... NOW!" The truck also had a banner with a picture of First Lt. Ehren Watada, the first commissioned officer to refuse to deploy to Iraq because he believed the invasion of Iraq was illegal. After first denying their applications, the association in charge of the Atlanta Veterans Day parade later said the groups could march but could not display any messages of peace, in the case of VFP, or show any "public displays of affection," in the case of AVER. "This is not a political parade. We don't allow anyone out there to promote ideas. There is no agenda allowed," Melvin Myers, president of the Parade Association, told Atlanta Progressive News.

In the Denver parade this year, the local Veterans for Peace chapter that had walked in the parade last year was told it was not invited back because its members were against the war. The day before the parade, a representative of the Denver United Veterans Council, the group organizing the city of Denver Veterans Day parade said there had been a misunderstanding and issued a late invitation to the VFP chapter. Frank Bessinger, a member of the Veterans for Peace group, said, "We didn't want to have to fight to get into the parade, we didn't want to have to protest. We're a veterans group and we just wanted to be in the Veterans Day Parade."

We veterans know that veterans have always had a variety of opinions on policies of every administration. During the Vietnam War, many, if not most, of those who served in Vietnam disagreed with the United States invasion and occupation of Vietnam. Today, many who have served in Iraq disagree with the invasion and occupation of Iraq, but despite their disagreement

they served. Over 70 percent of the American people disagree with the war in Iraq, so why should veterans who also disagree with the war not be allowed to march in a Veterans Day parade?

City leaders should not give private organizations the right to deny veterans who believe in peace a place in a parade on a national veterans holiday created for peace!

Next year, we should put pressure on our city councils early to ensure the right of all veterans organizations to march in Veterans Day parades on a day dedicated to peace.

Ann Wright served 29 years in the US military (13 years on active duty and 16 years in the US Army Reserves. She also was a US diplomat for 16 years and served in Nicaragua, Grenada, Somalia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Sierra Leone, Micronesia and Mongolia. She helped reopen the US Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, in December, 2001. She resigned from the US diplomatic corps in March 2003 in opposition to the war in Iraq. She is the co-author of "Dissent: Voices of Conscience" that will be available in January 2008.

“TROOP ENGAGEMENT PROJECT” -FEBRUARY 16- FEBRUARY 28, 2008

Fort Stewart Army Base

Hinesville, Georgia

WHAT, WHEN, WHERE AND WHY:

VFP volunteers will engage active duty soldiers at Fort Stewart Army Base in Hinesville, Georgia between February 16 and 28, 2008. The engagement will be modeled on the successful VFP Veterans' Convoy of March 2007. The purpose of the convoy was to provide active duty service members with information calculated to provoke critical thinking and discussion among themselves about the Iraq War and to let them know that if they acted on their consciences against the war that VFP and other groups would support them.

The Veterans convoy traveled by bus to 6 military towns where volunteers fanned out at lunch time mainly throughout the parking lots of fast food restaurants. The active duty service people were given copies of two videos, Sir! No Sir! and The Ground Truth, GI Rights pocket card and a copy of the Appeal For Redress.

Sir! No Sir!, a film by David Zeiger, details the forgotten and suppressed history about the soldiers on the front line of the Vietnam antiwar resistance who helped end the war. The Ground Truth, a film by Patricia Foulkrod, consists of the real life stories of Iraq War veterans who tell why they joined the military, what they learned in Iraq and what it was like when they returned home.

The GI Rights pocket card explains rights that active duty members of the armed forces enjoy including their rights to say what they think about the military and to participate in peaceful demonstrations when off-duty, out of uniform, off base and in the USA.

The Appeal For Redress is a way for active duty service members to appeal to their Congressional and Senatorial representatives to urge an end to the war. It is sponsored by active duty service members, and by a committee of veterans and military family members. The Appeal For Redress reads:

As a patriotic American proud to serve the nation in uniform, I respectfully urge my political leaders to support the prompt withdrawal of all American military forces and bases from Iraq. Staying in Iraq will not work and is not worth the price. It is time for U.S. troops to come home.

It is impossible to quantify the results of the 2007 convoy but it was met with enthusiasm of the local communities and service members. Also there was a spike from the bases visited in signers of the Appeal for Redress and new members to Iraq Veterans Against the War from the bases visited.

The VFP membership passed a resolution at its convention this past August calling for more convoys. This engagement is in response to the members' resolution. So far, two groups are joining this effort. One is the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild which will provide counselors familiar with legal issues affecting the troops including conscientious objector status. The other group is the Appeal for Redress.

Locals near Ft. Stewart report that a new brigade is moving into the base, possibly from Germany, early in the new year, and that an entire brigade will be returning from Iraq in mid-February. There are no announced deployments of the troops currently stationed at the base. So the timing of this action seems opportune.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE:

Contact organizer Sandy Kelson at sandkel@earthlink.net or at 814-382-4887 as quickly as possible but not later than February 10, 2008. The sooner you contact Sandy and let him know the dates you will participate in the action the more efficiently we can plan the details of the action (e.g., possible sleeping quarters at a church). You may participate for the entire engagement from February 16 to February 28, 2007 or any part thereof. Travel to and from Georgia is at each volunteer's own expense. The closest airport is Savannah. Jacksonville is 45 miles away but airfare may be cheaper. VFP hopes that it may be able to arrange staying at a church or such other facility. The details of the final arrangements will be sent timely to you.

Local activists --including Kevin and Monica Benderman --will brief and guide us in this effort and we will follow their lead as they know the local culture and are respected anti-war activists by the civilian community and military.

WINTER SOLDIER - 2008

War Stories Echo an Earlier Winter

By Steve Vogel
Washington Post Staff Writer
Saturday, March 15, 2008; B01

Grim-faced and sorrowful, former soldiers and Marines sat before an audience of several hundred yesterday in Silver Spring and shared their recollections of their service in Iraq.

The stories spilled out, sometimes haltingly, sometimes in a rush: soldiers firing indiscriminately on Iraqi vehicles, an apartment building filled with Iraqi families devastated by an American gunship. Some descriptions were agonized, some vague; others offered specific dates and locations. All were recorded and streamed live to the Web.



Testifying IVAW members

The four-day event, "Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan -- Eyewitness Accounts of the Occupations," is sponsored by Iraq Veterans Against the War and is expected to draw more than 200 veterans of the two wars through tomorrow. Timed for the eve of the fifth anniversary of the war's start next week, organizers hope the soldiers' accounts will galvanize public opposition.

For some of the veterans speaking yesterday, the experience was catharsis.

Former Marine Jon Turner began his presentation by ripping his service medals off his shirt and tossing them into the first row. He then narrated a series of graphic photographs showing bloody victims and destruction, bringing gasps from the audience. In a matter-of-fact voice, he described episodes in which he and fellow Marines shot people out of fear or retribution.

"I'm sorry for the hate and destruction I've inflicted upon innocent people," Turner said. "Until people hear about what is happening in this war, it will continue."

Winter Soldier is modeled after a well-known and controversial 1971 gathering of the same name at which veterans of the Vietnam War gathered to describe alleged atrocities. John Kerry, then a young veteran, spoke at the Detroit event, which brought him to

prominence. The soldiers' claims sparked lasting enmity, which resurfaced during Kerry's run for president in 2004.

The 2008 Winter Soldier will probably be no different. The event drew dozens of counter-protesters who were kept from the conference site at the National Labor College by a contingent of Montgomery County police. Although entrance to the event was limited to participants and the media, one protester managed to slip in and walked toward the stage, interrupting a speaker.

"Kerry lied while good men died, and you guys are betraying good men," the man yelled. The protester was roughly hustled from the room by several men in red knit shirts and jeans -- members of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, who are providing security for the event.

Counter-protesters outside derided the event and were deeply skeptical of the claims being made inside. "We want absolute specifics," said Harry Riley, a retired Army colonel who leads Eagles Up!. "This is too important to our nation. The credibility of our nation and the credibility of our soldiers are involved."

Riley said those making allegations against the U.S. military should have to give sworn testimony instead of speaking at an antiwar conference.

Organizers said they have sought to verify the records of all soldiers speaking, including reviewing their service records and talking to other members of units. Some soldiers had videos and photographs, which were displayed yesterday on a large screen in the auditorium.

"The ubiquitous nature of video, photo and technology really sets this apart" from the original Winter Soldier, said Jose Vasquez, an IVAW member who directed the verification process. Organizers and speakers said Winter Soldier is not meant to vilify soldiers. Instead, they said, it is aimed at changing war policy.

"These are not bad people, not criminals and not monsters," said Cliff Hicks, 23, a former 1st Armored Division soldier from Savannah, Ga., who spoke about his experiences in Iraq. "They are people being put in horrible situations, and they reacted horribly."

A Defense Department spokesman said he had not seen the allegations raised yesterday but added that such incidents are not representative of U.S. conduct.

"When isolated allegations of misconduct have been reported, commanders have conducted comprehensive investigations to determine the facts and held individuals accountable when appropriate," Lt. Col. Mark Ballesteros said.

Yesterday's panels included two sessions on "Rules of Engagement," in which soldiers and Marines described in emotional and often graphic terms incidents in which they said unarmed and innocent civilians were killed.

Most of the stories involved Iraq, though some took place in Afghanistan.

Two former soldiers who served with the 1st Armored Division described an attack by an AC-130 "Spectre" gunship on an apartment building in southern Baghdad that they said took place Nov. 13, 2003.



"It was the most destructive thing I've seen, before or since," said Hicks, one of the soldiers.

Adam Kokesh, a student at George Washington University who served with the Marine Corps in Iraq, said Marines were often forced to make snap decisions about whether to fire on civilians.

"During the siege of Fallujah, we changed our rules of engagement

more often than we changed our underwear," he said.

On the screen, a photograph showed him posing next to a burned-out car in which an Iraqi man was killed after approaching a Marine checkpoint.

"At the first Winter Soldier in 1971, one of the testifiers showed a picture like this and said, 'Don't ever let your government to do this to you,' " Kokesh said. "And still the government is doing this."

At a session on shortcomings in veterans' health care, audience members sobbed as Joyce and Kevin Lucey described the suicide of their son, Marine Cpl. Jeffrey Lucey, a death they blamed on his inability to get treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder.

Mental health specialists were on hand to help speakers and audience members, and a workshop was offered on PTSD.

Those who spoke yesterday described the experience as intimidating.

"It was terrifying for me," said Steven Casey, a former 1st Armored Division specialist from Missouri who also described the AC-130 attack. "I knew somebody needed to hear it. All I wanted to do is say what I saw. I'm not accusing anyone of a crime."

[Stars and Stripes] **Saturday, March 15, 2008**

Veterans groups offer different views of conflict

By [Leo Shane III](#), Stars and Stripes
Mideast edition, Saturday, March 15, 2008

WASHINGTON — A pair of veterans groups on opposite sides of the country this week are offering drastically different views of the war in Iraq and the future of U.S. troops there.

In Washington on Thursday, Iraq Veterans Against the War launched its four-day Winter Soldier event, which organizers promise will show evidence of systemic war crimes, war profiteering and mismanaged strategy that has cost troops' lives.



In San Diego on Friday, Vets for Freedom launched a month-long, 22-city tour to highlight stories of heroism from Iraq, and to encourage communities to continue their support of the mission overseas.

Both groups say they hope their efforts will help educate the public about the truth surrounding U.S. operations there.

IVAW, which claims about 800 veterans of operations in Iraq, named its event after the 1971 summit held by Vietnam veterans pushing for an end to that war.

Kelly Dougherty, executive director of the group, called current operations in the Middle East a similar “unjust and illegal occupation” by the United States.

“As we enter the sixth year in Iraq, the voices of veterans and service members must be heard,” said Dougherty, who served as a military police officer in Iraq in 2004. “We represent a legacy of service members speaking out against policies that hurt our country and our military.”

Organizers said that as part of the event they will make public photos, videos and documents of deteriorating conditions in Iraq and possible war crimes committed by U.S. troops under orders. That information has been corroborated through interviews with speakers' fellow troops and via military documents, they said.

Jason Hurd, an Army medic who served in Iraq in 2005, said his unit was routinely instructed to fire on Iraqi cars, buses and civilians to keep them away from explosive ordnance disposal teams, even if they posed no real threat to the U.S. bomb squads.

“My unit began firing randomly at civilians who were outside our 50-meter bubble,” he said. “They’d come back bragging about how they fired into the grills of cars and watched radiator fluid explode all over the place. And that kind of behavior was encouraged.”

Organizers at Vets for Freedom, which claims 11,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans as members, called the IVAW event full of lies and “propaganda for the enemy.”

They said their tour was planned because too often stories of positive work in Iraq — schools being built, neighborhoods becoming safer — aren’t well-covered.

“This is really something that hasn’t been done yet,” said Pete Hegseth, an Army National Guardsman and executive director of the group. “We want to bring these stories of sacrifice directly to the American people, and emphasize to them that their military is committed to completing the mission.”

The bus tour will feature a handful of Silver and Bronze Star recipients from Iraq operations appearing with local veterans from each city in hometown TV interviews, town hall meetings and debates on college campuses.

Retired Army Lt. Col. Steve Russell, whose battalion captured Saddam Hussein in 2003, said many civilians he speaks with about Iraq are surprised to hear the positive news from his travels and contacts there.

“Ninety-nine percent of our military want to stay and want to succeed in Iraq, but people don’t always hear that,” he said.

“No one cares for the Iraqi and Afghan people like we do, because we’ve served side-by-side with them. And we see that a better future is possible for them.”

Vets for Freedom organizers hope the tour will encourage citizens to push lawmakers away from plans for a rapid drawdown of forces overseas.

IVAW is asking citizens to support an immediate withdrawal of all troops from Iraq and reparations for Iraqi citizens harmed by the U.S. occupation.

Winter Soldier: America Must Hear These Vets' Stories

By Penny Coleman

AlterNet

Saturday 15 March 2008

If America listens to what they say, the war would be over tomorrow.

I missed the Winter Soldier Investigation in 1971. At the time I was married to a vet who desperately wanted to put his war behind him - and he wanted me to help him do it. We were supposed to pretend it had never happened. It didn't work.

Daniel refused to talk about Vietnam. "Talk to your old lady? No fucking way," his friend Bobby Lanz shot back when I said I thought that maybe Daniel wouldn't have killed himself if I had been able to get him to talk about whatever it was that was causing him such pain. "With other vets, you can say, 'shit man, I did all this horrible stuff. You're not going to believe the stuff I did', and someone who has been there will say, 'Yeah, so did I, so did we all.' But with your woman? You start to talk about having fucked some folks up bad, doing awful things, killing people, maybe, and she starts to cry and you don't go there again. You think, Fuck me, man, I don't need to hurt her. This is psychological abuse, so I am going to shut up."

Maybe I wouldn't have understood. Completely. But not knowing was far worse. For decades, I took responsibility for his death. I thought it was my fault. And even if I hadn't been able to understand exactly what he was talking about, I would have understood that he was in a kind of lethal pain. Whether it was that he thought he deserved to die or that he deserved to be put out of his misery, either way, execution or euthanasia, I would have understood that he had been injured in the war. And I would have known where to focus my grief and my rage.

What I kept thinking today, listening to all those who testified at this new Winter Soldier investigation sponsored by Iraq Veterans Against the War at the National Labor College in Washington, DC, is that so much grief and pain for the past 30 years has been mis-directed, so much energy wasted, blaming ourselves and the soldiers we loved for the injuries that we couldn't see. Joyce Lucey, the mother of a soldier who took his own life after returning from Iraq, said that when he left he gave her a coin and told her to hold it like an amulet to keep him safe. She did, but she now understands that even though her son had been returned to her, his soul had been destroyed. "I should have been holding that coin after he came home."

But, she continued, "His voice is silenced. Ours is not." And she quoted Edmund Burke: "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil in America is for good men to do nothing."

Everything I heard today spoke to that challenge, to the challenge of channeling our combined grief and rage into a focused fight that will really, finally make a difference. Clifton Hicks began his testimony by saying that all of the men he served with in Iraq were there for love: love of country, of ideals, of comrades, and "for that they are beyond judgment. I am here," he added, "to judge the war itself."

One after another, veterans told conflicted stories, some with tears, some with rigid control, some with visible shakes, but all with hard-won moral courage and deep sorrow. John Michael Turner began his testimony by telling the audience that as far as he was concerned, "Once a Marine, Always a Marine" was history. For him it is now "Eat the apple and fuck the corps." Then he tossed his dog tags into the audience saying, "Fuck you, I don't work for you no more." Turner's first confirmed kill was on April 18, 2006. He shot an Iraqi boy in front of his father. It took a second shot to kill him. He had a photograph of the boy's open skull. Turner was personally congratulated by his

commanding officer, who proceeded to offer a four day pass to anyone who got a kill by stabbing one of the enemy. Turner ended with, "I am sorry for the hate and destruction that I have inflicted on innocent people. I am sorry for the things I did. I am no longer the monster that I once was."

Hart Vigas told of having an insurgent, armed with a rocket-propelled grenade, in his sights during a firefight and not being able to pull the trigger. He was frozen by awareness that the fear and confusion he saw on the Iraqi kid's face was exactly what he imagined was on his own.

Adam Kokesh enlisted in the Marines not because he agreed with the war, but because he "wanted to help clean up the mess." Instead of the schools and water facilities his President had promised he would be helping to build, he found himself policing a wanton project of human and social destruction. He manned "snap" check points where Marines in camouflage at dusk shot unsuspecting drivers who had failed to see them. He described feeling "funny" when he had to decide whether or not to pose with the trophy remains. "I wasn't the one who killed this guy." Kokesh was ordered to shoot at Iraqi police and firemen who were out after curfew putting out a fire that had been started by American rounds. That one he managed to stop with his "little bit of Arabic," but Kokesh wasn't optimistic about our prospects in Iraq. "We care so the American people don't have to. As soon as you choose looking good over doing right, you lose."

Clifton Hicks talked about free fire orders in city neighborhoods and the indiscriminate, often vengeful, targeting of cars and civilians, and about riding through the gates of their compound one night, aware that the humvee in front of his had run over a civilian. No one said anything because it had been a long hard day. They had all been in country long enough to feel that the bigger deal was "being separated from your cot" for the hours it would have taken to fill out the paperwork.

Jason Hurt, a medic from East Tennessee, said, "I am a peaceful person, and I drew down on an 80 year old woman. I hate guns. They should all be melted down into jewelry." And he added, if this were happening where he lives, if some foreign occupying force came into his part of the world, "every self-respecting citizen would come out of the hills with a shotgun to defend their country."

Vincent Emanuelli was appalled by the way American soldiers treated Iraqi dead. "Standard operating procedure was to run over them or take pictures."

Sergio Corrigan said that all an Iraqi needed was a heavy bag and a shovel to become a target. And looking back, with a "clear mind and not so much anger," he wanted to "apologize to the people of Iraq."

James Gilligan struggled to tell about the night he saw a flash on a mountainside and tried to call in for fire. But he took his compass reading too close to a machine gun and the heavy metal threw he reading off. An Afghani village was decimated and he will never be the same.

As Adam Kokesh put it, they were all struggling all the time because their morals were at odds with their survival instincts.

These new Winter Soldiers look so young to me. They are my son's age. My daughter's age as well. The last time young soldiers like these tried to get Americans to listen they

were ignored. And that can't be allowed to happen again. The message of Iraq Veterans Against the War came through clearly in every tortured testimony. This is an illegal war. It has cost us our peace of mind. The longer we are there, the more of us will be injured. Bring our troops home now.

It is tempting to despair, but as Logan Laituri reminded the audience, Logan who had testified that his unit unknowingly used white phosphorous for training rounds and that it had "a significant impact on the surrounding communities, what Dr. King said in 1967 is equally true for us now. He said that he opposed the War, then in Vietnam, "because I love America. I speak out against this war not in anger but with anxiety and sorrow in my heart and above all with a passionate desire to see our beloved country stand as the moral example of the world."

The Winter Soldier Hearings can be viewed on satellite TV, streamed live over the internet or can be heard on select Pacifica Radio stations. For more information, visit [Iraq Veterans Against the War](#).

*Penny Coleman is the widow of a Vietnam Veteran who took his own life after coming home. Her latest book, *Flashback: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, Suicide and the Lessons of War*, was released on Memorial Day, 2006. Her website is *Flashback*.*

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

VFP Members Outreach At Fort Dix

May 1. Near the main gate of Fort Dix, NJ, six members of VFP31 displayed a large VFP banner that said: "Know Your Options" and passed out a packet of material from IVAW and elsewhere that included information on GI Rights, the Appeal For Redress, IVAW membership and similar material. We set up at 11 AM at the last intersection before the gate, on the sidewalk next to a Wendy's that seemed a favorite lunch spot for soldiers. We passed out 50 to 60 of the information packets to active duty Army and Air Force soldiers from E-3s to a handful of AF majors at Dix to train to eventually train AF officers in Iraq.

Some soldiers declined the material, but not one of them was in any way hostile or seemed threatened by us or the material. We had great conversations with a couple of them, especially the man in the car, above, speaking with member Thompson Bradley. He had been a 20-year Marine, then had shifted to the Air Force and was very open to ending the occupation of Iraq and changing leadership in America. The only negative reaction all day was a woman who claimed what we were doing endangered her husband serving in Iraq. We explained we disagreed on that point, but that we supported her husband completely in his role as a soldier in the occupation but that we needed to begin to talk about ending the occupation, which meant we wanted to bring her husband home as soon as possible. We approached soldiers politely and identified ourselves as veterans with Veterans For Peace and told them we had material that explained their rights as

soldiers and that, while we did not support the continuing occupation policy, we supported them as soldiers who might be assigned to occupation duty. We said we understood it was controversial information and that even us being there passing it out was controversial, but we thought they were intelligent enough to read it and do with it what they felt was best for them. We encouraged them to save the material and share it. The point we took from the day was that soldiers were fine about receiving such material, and some were very open to it -- while it was non-service people and officialdom who had a problem.

After about two hours, the State Police rolled up and told us we were in violation of township rules and needed to go to the township office to apply for a permit. (Note the State Police first sergeant in the photo above seems to be flipping the photographer a bird with his right hand.) We suspected the New Jersey municipality would be more hostile and bureaucratic than was Hinesville, GA, where no one attempted to stop this type activity. So, we wrapped things up and went to the township office, where we got a copy of the ordinance and an application. We will study it and submit an application for a future date. A couple of us will attend the township meeting in where the application will be discussed.

Everyone felt it went well, given we were trying something new. The goal seems to be to establish relationships, which takes time. We're also pondering some kind of outreach effort at the National Guard stryker brigade armory in Philadelphia. We hope to work with IVAW on that.

John Grant, Chapter 31 VFP

Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

On May 1, 2008, members of North Star Chapter 146 of Veterans for Peace took up position at Fort Wainwright, Alaska. The location of our VFP / Military Member outreach outpost – which was on Airport Way east of the Richardson highway, before the Main Gate, and on Post Property – was chosen for its visibility to military members going to and leaving work. This was a good choice for visibility but proved inadequate for personal interaction and / or literature distribution due to construction activity on the roadway.

I took first watch (07:15 to 09:00) carrying a sign stating on one side "SOLDIERS - VETERANS FOR PEACE (VFP logo) SUPPORT YOU" and "END STOP LOSS (VFP logo) 457-5578 (my phone number)" on the other. The observed reactions of the troops entering and leaving post appeared overwhelmingly positive with the "END STOP LOSS" sign being clearly the most popular. Clenched fist salutes, thumbs up gestures, peace signs, friendly waves, and tooted horns vastly outnumbered any show of disapproval by a ratio of at least 20 to 1. Only one giving of the bird was observed. I was just about to count it as a negative reaction when the young soldier with arm extended far outside the window bearing the infamous salute vociferously proclaimed "Fuck Stop Loss". I registered that as a sign of approval. A few minutes later a soldier shouting "You are awesome" reinforced my belief that we are on the right track with this outreach.

Second watch (10:00 to 1:00) was taken by James Kerrigan (U.S. Army Veteran) and me. The reaction of troops leaving for lunch was pretty much the same as the morning shift. James was carrying a sign proclaiming "WE SUPPORT YOU (VFP logo)" on one side and "FULL BENEFITS FOR RETURNING VETERANS" on the other.

At one point during the second shift a soldier after passing our post put his vehicle in a hard reverse, rolled up along side of me and shouted "just how in the fuck do you support me". After about 15 minutes of conversing with the soldier I was able to surmise that he was tired of all the "We Support the Troops" signs that are prevalent on Fairbanks business establishments etc. I learned that the man was having a difficult time getting an airline ticket out to see his little girl. I thanked him for serving, told him that he had every right to be angry, gave him my contact information and asked him to call. His last words to me as he was leaving were "peace bro".

The last watch (15:45 to 18:00) was taken by Jeanne Olson (U.S. Air Force Veteran) and me (I left early @ 17:00). The shift was pretty much a continuation of the earlier effort but it appeared that troops were more interested in getting home or to somewhere to relax than to paying any attention to what we were doing.

Jeanne and her team of activists took up position across the Richardson highway from where we had been stationed. They hung huge banners proclaiming "Mission Accomplished" and "major combat operations in Iraq have ended – President G. W. Bush 05/01/03". They also carried U.S. flags and had a grill going to offer passers-by a hot dog.

All in all the day went well. I have gotten some phone calls that I am following up on. I hope that we can be of service by helping to facilitate for those who are moved to resist.

Wage Peace,

Rob Mulford, Chapter 146 VFP

Scott AFB, Illinois

Four members of the St. Louis Chapter of Veterans For Peace arrived at the main gate of Scott Air Force Base at approximately 7:45 a.m. on May 1st. In tow we had four signs: two read "Veterans For Peace Salutes YOU" and two read "Veterans For Peace Salutes Our Troops and Veterans." In addition, we had two VFP flags on flagpoles. We assumed positions on the shoulder of the incoming side of the road, where we staggered the signs and flags in order to give passersby a chance to read our message and identify our organization as we greeted them.

Around 8:15 the MPs started riding back and forth in front of us and eventually stopped. They were very friendly and even took some of the "Bring Them Home Now" bracelets; they told us that Homeland Security had been mobilized, and that though we were within our right (i.e. on public property exercising our First Amendment rights), next time we should call ahead to both the office of St. Clair County and the Public Affairs unit on base so that our presence would not scare anyone (more on this later). By this time our team was complete as our last two VFP members had arrived.

Around 8:30, the traffic really picked up with military personnel and civilians headed onto base for work; during this time we were all stationed on the incoming side of the road, approximately 20-30 feet apart from one another. At a little after 9, we left, and let the MPs know we would return for lunchtime. We headed to a coffee shop and debriefed. After about an hour, we headed back to the base and this time stationed three people on each side of the road: two signs and a flag on each.

I would be lying if I said the response was 100% positive. In the three hours we were out there, I did see **one thumbs down**. What did everyone else do? I estimate that at least 60-65% gave us some kind of positive response: a wave, a thumbs up, even some peace signs and salutes. I firmly believe that no matter what their reaction was at that moment, many proceeded to work on base and talked about what they had seen. In fact, I am sure of that because we had 17 hits on the website yesterday; 17 may not sound like a lot, but given that there are virtually no members located in this vicinity, we can be sure the action and the jump in hits are directly correlated.

Towards the end, one car pulled around, making a couple of u-turns and then pulled over close to where I was. A man jumped out and started yelling about us causing a ruckus. Before I had time to even begin to reply, I realized I knew this man. He was Chief Jeff Slocum, a decorated and retired airman. Chief Slocum had intended to spend 30 years in the Air Force, but because of his opposition to our occupation of Iraq, he retired last October. He signed the Appeal For Redress, making him one of the highest ranking signers and while still in uniform, he became a very outspoken critic of our occupation of Iraq. He is now a member of VFP and was thrilled to see us at the gates. He congratulated us on our action and when I told him how our response had been, he was not surprised, saying, "Cherie, they are tired."

At around 1, we called it a day. Following the action two MPs approached us with a camera and said they wanted to take our picture for the next crew and explain to the next shift how nice we were. Who knows what that picture was for and it does not really matter. What I do know is that they seemed sincere and what they said was right; we are nice and we were there in peace and support. After this, the group briefly discussed the day and several offered comments about what could be done different or better. Several wanted to carry signs next time which are a little less innocuous, perhaps "Bring Them Home" or "How Many More?" Several others thought that next time, which by the way, they want to be next week, we should stick to yesterday's message, but hit the strip mall parking lot a little harder with literature for the troops; though we had this in hand, ready to distribute it if called upon to do so, we distributed very little.

Aside from the one thumbs down and one person sarcastically yelling, "nice turnout," (little did he know that we had the number we wanted), the response was overwhelmingly positive. I would guess that we saw at least 1,000 vehicles in those hours and a majority of people reacted positively, presenting us with a reasonable picture of the make-up of this base.

Cherie Eichholz, Don Connors Chapter 61 VFP

MAY DAY IN AUSTIN, TEXAS

On May Day, four members of Veterans For Peace Chapter 66 of Austin, Texas went to the gates of Fort Hood to put the Engagement Project into action. We were two ex-Marines (Dave Offield and Doug Zachary), one active-duty Marine grunt with two tours in Iraq behind him and another coming up soon (our Vice President Michael Nordstrom), and our newest member, retired Air Force veteran (21 years active-duty) Bill Johns. Three of us were on our first pro Peace action at a military installation. While Bryan Hannah of IVAW Fort Hood Chapter 38 and Military Families Speak Out member Cindy Thomas, whose husband is on his third tour in Iraq and has already earned a Purple Heart in this illegal Occupation, hung a sign that said, "Mission Accomplished!! Sorry We Could Not Find An Aircraft Carrier", we (VFP) deployed to the gate to approach the soldiers.

On the advise of an active-duty soldier stationed at Fort Hood, we arrived at 4:45 AM, early enough to approach soldiers showing up for PT. We carried packages containing copies of "Ground Truth", membership applications for the IVAW, GI Rights Hotline cards, Right to Redress Petitions, and contact information for IVAW Chapter 38. We also distributed invitations to attend a Memorial Day cookout sponsored by IVAW Chapter 38 intended to honor the Iraq veterans and welcome them home.

We were met with a variety of responses. One soldier looked at the VFP logo on my sweatshirt and laughed. Some soldiers refused to look at us, keeping their gaze on the car immediately ahead of them. Many soldiers, although friendly in some cases and polite in almost all cases, said "No Thank You ... I'm OK."

Many soldiers took the packages and said "Thanks you." One soldier asked, "Is that 'Ground Truth'? Can I have two copies? We like that video!" Another group of soldiers in a cafe that morning responded very favorably when we approached them saying that we had packages of information regarding their rights as soldiers. We said that their Officers were not likely to share that information with them, so we, as former Enlisted soldiers, believed that we needed to do it. There were nods around the table at that statement and they took two packages.

All in all, we distributed 55 of the 200 packages we had with us that morning. We plan to revisit Fort Hood a number of times between now and Memorial Day, in an effort to draw attention to the existence of IVAW Chapter 38, to help turn out soldiers for the Memorial Day event, and to bring the Occupation of Iraq to a halt.

Doug Zachary, President VFP Chapter 66 Austin

IMPEACHMENT FAST AT NATIONAL ARCHIVES

VETERANS FOR PEACE END ARCHIVES OCCUPATION ON HIGH NOTE

"We may be back again soon," Vets add

Washington -- Five military veterans, all members of Veterans For Peace, are breaking camp from their perch on the National Archives building this morning, taking with them their 22x8-ft. banner demanding "DEFEND OUR CONSTITUTION. ARREST BUSH AND CHENEY: WAR CRIMINALS!" that has overlooked their 24-hour action on a narrow ledge 35 feet above Constitution Ave.

Tarak Kauff, 67, former Army Airborne, who provided ground support throughout, said in a phone interview, "We're always told to 'write your Congressman,' and we have. Only this time we brought a letter they couldn't miss. We've made our point writ large that Bush and Cheney are war criminals and must be arrested and prosecuted. Impeach them if we can, but we're not holding our breath for Congress to act. The kingpins of this criminal administration will be brought to justice, along with many of their lieutenants."

Elliott Adams, VFP president, by phone from his spot on the ledge overlooking the entrance to the Archives Building, said "This turned out excellent. We're very happy with the response we've gotten to arrest Bush and Cheney for war crimes. We considered staying longer this time but we are not prepared for longer than this...although we may be back again, soon."

VFP members participating in the Archives action are: [Elliott Adams](#): 61, NY, VFP President and former Army paratrooper in Viet Nam; [Ellen Barfield](#): 52, MD, former U.S. Army Sgt., full-time peace and justice advocate; [Kim Carlyle](#): 61, NC, mountain homesteader, former Army Spec 5; [Diane Wilson](#): 59, TX, shrimp boat captain, former Army medic; [Doug Zachary](#): 58, TX, VFP staff, former USMC LCpl discharged as a conscientious objector; and [Tarak Kauff](#) (ground support) 67, NY, painting contractor,

former U.S. Army Airborne.



VFP 9-23-09 archives
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CARRY ON

This history is a work in progress. Other editors will take it from here, refine it, add to it. Hopefully we will inspire those who read this to kindle within themselves the energies that account for the remarkable achievements of this relatively small group of dedicated veterans. -- Woody Powell

POSTSCRIPT EARLY VERSIONS OF VETERANS FOR PEACE

There are undoubtedly more, but these were two I could find on the Internet:

1. American Veterans for Peace was founded in 1951 to oppose American participation in the Korean War. The AVP opposed militarism, supported improved Soviet relations and a progressive social agenda. It published *Progressive Veteran* (later *Vet's Voice*). The collection includes: correspondence, ephemera, internal documents, petitions, public statements, and newsletters of the AVP and other progressive organizations.
2. The Madison Veterans for Peace in Viet Nam was organized in 1967 by veterans who advocated for peace. The organization sought to challenge the notion that dissent indicated a lack of patriotism, particularly among former servicemen, through a series of educational programs. While membership had at first been predominated by veterans of World War I, World War II, and Korea, the organization soon welcomed members who had returned from Viet Nam. Included here is a history of the organization, its constitution, an annual report from 1970, an FAQ about the group, and a set of questions and answers on the war from candidates for political office in 1970.

In Aril, 2008, another early VFP came to light in the form of the following two letters:

VETERANS FOR PEACE

P.O. BOX 4588, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60680

Office: Suite 510, 542 S. Dearborn
Chicago, Illinois 60605
Telephone (312) 922-0065

FOR VETERAN UNITY TO:

- (1) Prevent The "Next War";
- (2) Serve Veterans Needs;
- (3) Eliminate Military Waste and Overkill;
- (4) Win Full Vietnam Amnesty.

Commander A. A. "Sammy" Rayner, Jr.
Vice-Commander LeRoy Wolins
Corresponding Secretary Irving Nebenzahl
Secretary Mike Parisi
Treasurer Dorothy Mitchell

2 Nov 78

Dear Friend Burchett:

Please - help - what can you find out from French National Federation of War Veterans? They're in the Paris phone book but no one there could talk English when I called and I can't talk French. Also, please check out Serge Wourgratt, Chairman, World Veterans Fedn. 16, rue Hamelin Paris 75116. I've written to him, but am puzzled by limited past info on this organization as to how real it is.

Our information from a Soviet vet I know is that the Rome meeting is being organized from Kerina Hq. of the F.I.R. (Int'l. Fedn. of Resistance vets). I know they're real and

have written to them.

I've had 2 calls from Soviet Embassy in Washington (very positive tone) in response to letter we sent to Soviet Veterans Committee, but no written response.

Please check into this whole picture. Is the 1979 meeting the same one the French vets' fedn. voted to support "the idea" of holding in 1978? Will Rome agenda be proposed with disarmament as absolutely exclusive topic? (hope not). Is there thought of an ongoing structure after Rome? (hope so).

Will invitations be universal? (China is what everyone here asks about).

You could have a real scoop in Guardian if you do your stuff now and get it into print. Please keep me informed. FIR in Vienna is at fasteletz

Gasse, 35, Vienna Austria.

Yours for Peace,

L. R. Wilson

VETERANS FOR PEACE

P.O. BOX 4598, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60680

Office: Suite 510, 542 S. Dearborn
Chicago, Illinois 60605
Telephone (312) 922-0065

FOR VETERAN UNITY TO:

- (1) Prevent The "Next War";
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- (4) Win Full Vietnam Amnesty.

Commander A. A. "Sammy" Rayner, Jr.
Vice-Commander LeRoy Wolins
Corresponding Secretary Irving Nebenzahl
Secretary Mike Parisi
Treasurer Dorothy Mitchell

26 October 1978

Dear Fellow Veterans:

We have just learned that a very important event is in development. It is to be the first world meeting of anti-war veterans, something our group has been calling for since the early 1970's. It will be held in Rome, if our information is final, from the 18th through the 20th of October, 1979. This gives US vets plenty of time to organize, but the potential of this event on a world scale and its potential for pulling together anti-war and anti-establishment vets in the USA in the course of organizing the US delegation is so great that we don't want to see any of this time wasted.

Therefore, Veterans for Peace is inviting some key anti-war vets and vets' organizations to a preliminary "think-tank" planning meeting on the most appropriate day possible, Veterans' Day, 11 November 1978. We will start gathering at 9 a.m., Saturday, 11 November, and call the meeting to order at 10 p.m. Everyone is welcome to bring a suggested agenda. Our only goal in calling the meeting is to work out a tentative plan along lines suitable to most or all of those who come for publicizing the world meeting as widely as possible in the US and building up a very large, representative US delegation, hopefully in the process developing a coalition or organization of anti-war, pro-vet vets that will be ongoing in the USA and coming out of the Rome meeting with a similar international coalition or organization. As we get the title of the Rome affair, it translates "World Meeting of War Veterans for Disarmament". We expect to have details before the 11 November meeting. No doubt US vets would think about adding other points, such as preventing US (or French, British, etc.) intervention against liberation movements.

We are suggesting spending about 6 hours in session, with lunch brought in, reaching as much agreement as possible on an outline plan for building US participation, and holding a press conference at 5 p.m. to announce the results. We are reasonably sure to get coverage as a most unprecedented Veterans Day event.

The meeting will be held in our offices at the above address, which are roomy. Although anything decided will be fairly tentative and subject to change by the more representative public meetings or conferences that would follow, your input at this meeting will be most valuable and something we're sure you'll be proud to remember in years to come. If you want to send ahead any suggestions or phone them in, please feel welcome to do so. I would appreciate your sending copies to my home address, Box 711, Pullman, Michigan 49450 of any written communications. Calls would be best made to the Veterans for Peace office at (312)-HY 3-0712 during our Executive Committee meeting on Sunday, 5 November 1978 from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Chicago time or to me at home other times at (616)-236-5880. You can call our office phone above and if no vet is present leave a message with a Chicago Peace Council person.

Looking forward to seeing you in Chicago on Veterans Day, I am,

Yours for Peace,



LeRoy Wolins
Vice-Commander

An alert member of my chapter who takes the S.F. Chronicle spotted this article. Check out the news bulletin dated October 28, 1962. Apparently VFP was originally founded in San Francisco, way back in 1962. Interesting.

WAYBACK MACHINE

Caspar Weinberger resigns post

By Johnny Miller

Here's a look at the past. Items have been culled from The Chronicle's archives of 25, 50, 75 and 100 years ago.

1987

Nov. 3: Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has decided to resign because of the deteriorating health of his wife, Jane, administration officials said last night. Weinberger's wife is suffering from cancer and severe arthritis. Weinberger, 70, has held a powerful seat on President Reagan's cabinet, enhanced in part by his long personal relationship with the president and his easy access to the Oval Office. Weinberger as Defense Secretary led an unprecedented buildup in U.S. strategic defense forces. The sheer amount of defense spending under Weinberger — jumping from \$180.7 billion in fiscal 1982 to \$274 billion in fiscal 1987 — and planned future outlays, have resulted in harsh criticism of him. The son of respected San Francisco attorney Herman Weinberger, his life in politics was foreshadowed by a childhood in Pacific Heights that included reading the Congressional Record every day when he was 12 years old. As a young man he worked as a staff book reviewer for the Chronicle and as a moderator for a weekly TV program "Profile" on KQED. He is a patron of the arts and a member of the city's most prestigious clubs, the Pacific and the Bohemian. He met his wife, Jane Dalton, on a troop carrier bound for Australia in the summer of 1942. A fund-raiser for numerous charities, Mrs. Weinberger is also the author of 11 children's books.

1962

Oct. 28: Six San Francisco war veterans last week formed a new group to be known as Veterans for Peace and announced their first official act — to march (hopefully 200 strong) in the annual Veterans Day Parade on November 11. The six agreed that marching in parades would perhaps not accom-



Jose R. Lopez / New York Times 1987

Caspar W. Weinberger (left) with President Ronald Reagan in 1987.

plish much. But it could act as a "little counterbalance to the militaristic monopoly" of parades and other civic events.

"There was a Nike missile in the Columbus Day parade," said one of the veterans.

"I think everyone who has seen war at first hand, who has been a veteran, would be a conscientious objector now," said North Beach poet-novelist Lawrence Ferlinghetti, 42, who commanded a sub-chaser during the D-Day invasion. Carpenter, 36-year-old Jay Wenk, said, "It's inconceivable to me how anyone who has seen a shooting war could fail to be against it, or how they could march with fixed bayonets in parades. It means they haven't learned a thing."

"All members will be asked to dress neatly in our official functions," said Carl May, coordinator of the group. "The public doesn't identify with beards and sandals," he said.

1937

Oct. 29: Dominic Gallo, 23, 82 Bartlett Avenue, was unloading bananas from the steamer Chiriqui of the United Fruit Line. He was in the hold when something bit him in the thumb. "No — it never happened," said Gallo.

He stuck his hand down again. Wham! Bite No. 2 on the back of his hand. "I can't believe it," said Gallo. He plunged again. Zowie.

"Doggone," said Gallo "There must be something."

The fourth time he went in with both hands and came up with a three-foot snake, snapping and yowping at him with polished nippers.

"Now what do you know about that?" he inquired.

Still hanging on to the snake, Gallo got into a taxi and went to Central Emergency Hospital.

"This thing bit me," he announced, waving the snake. Nurses screamed. Doctors gasped. Interns began running up the walls and a couple of patients got out of bed, and legged it. And then, while a doctor cauterized the wounds, Gallo let go of the snake. Instantly the doors and windows were full of departing medics, nurses, aides and whatnot. Steward Lou Porter finally corralled the snake in a pillowslip.

Dr. Geiger, city health officer, when he arrived, diagnosed the snake as a harmless baby boa. Gallo went back to work smelling of antiseptic, and the hospital gave the snake to the aquarium in Golden Gate Park, and all the doctors who had been clinging to the picture moldings slid down and returned to work.

1912

Oct. 29: One of the most delicate operations known to the medical profession was performed here to save the life of Mrs. W. F. Taylor, when two quarts of blood were transfused from the husband to the wife by means of a small glass tube connecting the right and left arms of the subjects. The radial artery in Taylor's forearm was connected with the vein in the bend of the elbow of his wife's arm. The effect on the patient was almost simultaneous. Mrs. Taylor was at the point of death as the result of a prolonged hemorrhage. The moment the fresh blood started circulating through her veins she rallied. The operation took a little less than an hour. The doctors report that Mrs. Taylor will recover. Mr. Taylor withstood the ordeal well and after a few hours was apparently none the worse. Immediately following the operation he was given hot broth and stimulants. Within an hour he was able to walk about. ■

Johnny Miller is a freelance writer.
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