



# Exposing the True Costs of War and Militarism Since 1985

# VETERANS FOR PEACE

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VFP Newsletter

[veteransforpeace.org](http://veteransforpeace.org)

Winter 2020

VETERANS FOR PEACE FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY RESPOND TO IRAN CRISIS WITH THE MESSAGE

# NO MORE WAR!



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**VFP Newsletter is published in  
Winter, Summer, and Fall.**

## SUMMER DEADLINE

{ JUNE 10, 2020 }

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**Please keep to 200 words.**

Include the reporter's name along  
with chapter #/name/location.

**Photos must be high resolution  
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VFP Director Garett Reppenhagen and Jane Fonda

## Veterans For Peace warmly welcomes JANE FONDA to our Advisory Board!

Veterans For Peace is honored and excited to  
announce and to welcome Jane Fonda onto our  
Advisory Board!

Jane has exemplified the passion and urgency  
our members feel about the mission to end war.

Many of us identify with Jane because we also  
have been accused of being traitors by fellow  
veterans and citizens. But, our conviction to our  
mission and the knowledge that peace is patriotic  
is unbreakable.

As former service members who came home to  
organize for peace, we open our arms and hearts  
to Jane for living up to her principles and never  
backing down, despite the criticism from war  
hawks and nationalists.

Jane Fonda has always had our veterans' and  
service members' backs, from the FTA tours in  
Viet Nam to the Fire Drill Friday protests in D.C.  
that highlight environmental impacts of militarism.  
Here is her statement:

*"I support Veterans For Peace because it  
is an organization of service members who  
understand the horrors of war and now work to  
bring awareness to the destruction caused by  
unjust violence around the globe, and organize  
to challenge the root causes of military conflict,  
and work to create a culture of peace. I accepted  
a position on the advisory board of VFP after  
witnessing the dedication of members to engage  
in civil disobedience to end climate destruction.  
They put their bodies on the line to serve their  
country in uniform and now sacrifice again to  
serve humanity."*

**Welcome to our ranks, Jane!**

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



VFP Executive Director Garrett Reppenhagen flashes his bracelets for the camera after being arrested with others in a Fire Drill Friday nonviolent disobedience action in Washington, D.C.

It's been a whirlwind of activity the last few months at Veterans For Peace. The Trump Administration's recent escalation of tensions with Iran has caused a resurgence of activity and interest in the antiwar movement. We haven't seen a national debate about foreign policy and war at this heightened level in a long time. The ways in which U.S. military forces are used and projected around the globe are being challenged directly as a result of current events.

Such moments have always called us to respond with a strong message against war and to challenge the fear-mongering narratives that dominate our headlines. These times also present important mobilizing and movement-building opportunities. We are hearing from many organizations working on domestic issues about their desire to incorporate an international lens that focuses on the elimination of war. We are hearing from many of you that your chapters are seeing a big uptick in activity. We are heartened to see a commitment in many cities to center the voices of Iranians in these moments, as well as Iraqis and others from the diaspora of countries the U.S. is waging war upon.

It's been wonderful to see so many folks taking to the streets in this moment,

but it's important we continue our efforts beyond this moment, beyond the next war, since we all know how militarism in this country is intertwined with many aspects of our economic system, society, and culture. We must embrace the folks who are being newly politicized in this moment and plug them into the long-haul work VFP is involved in to challenge the military industrial complex.

Let's make the most of this opportunity to grow our membership and to develop assets that make the movement stronger. Visible action is one of the best ways to attract people seeking a way to be part of a solution, so while meetings and speaking events are great, it's important to take our voices to the streets and to the halls of power.

Also, be sure to protect the communities you are building by checking in with each other regularly and caring for one another. It's too easy to over exert in moments of crisis and forget about the care needed to prevent burnout.

If your chapter doesn't have ongoing campaigns, Veterans For Peace has a few that could easily translate to your local community.

**PEOPLE OVER PENTAGON** is an effort that we've been working on for the last

few months that uses the opportunity of the presidential election to interject conversations about war and military spending into the national conversation.

**TRUTH IN RECRUITING** is another space in which veterans, in particular, have a special niche in this moment. We are uniquely situated to be talking to young people about military service and highlighting the true costs of wars. We are also continuing to organize around the revelations in the "Afghanistan Papers" (see p. 7) and ways in which we can hold those quoted in those papers accountable.

These campaigns are just a small portion of the longer term, ongoing work Veterans For Peace is engaged in, and in this moment, when people are hitting the streets and hungry to do more, we must take every opportunity we can to build the movement. Together, we veterans can make a real impact!

—GARETT REPPENHAGEN

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## Membership Survey

In mid-January, VFP National launched a survey to better understand the demographics and priorities of our members. If you haven't had a chance to fill it out, email [samantha@veteransforpeace.org](mailto:samantha@veteransforpeace.org) to be sent a link to the survey.

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## Resistance Online

**Courage to Resist** and VFP's **Viet Nam Full Disclosure** project continue to roll out Resister Stories and other good stuff: <http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org>

Texas Environmental Activist **Diane Wilson** (a former VFP member) won a \$50 million judgement against plastics giant Formosa in this "David-and-Goliath Story": <https://go.shr.lc/33Ud12U>

The classic *Nonviolence in America*, edited by Staughton Lynd and Alice Lynd: <https://www.orbisbooks.com/nonviolence-in-america-en.html>

**Keep space for peace!** Bruce Gagnon, coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons & Nuclear Power in Space, blogs regularly at <http://space4peace.blogspot.com/>

# HONORING THE VOICES OF VETERANS FOR PEACE



**At the first VFP Board meeting of the year, Adrienne Kinne was elected Board President and Jessie Medvan Vice President. Here is their joint message to the membership.**

**T**he Veterans For Peace Board of Directors, Executive Director, and staff came together for our first board meeting of 2020 in Las Vegas, Nevada, the weekend of January 25-26. We chose to come to Nevada because of our connection to organizing efforts to stop the expansion of Naval Air Station Fallon.

Veterans For Peace is a special place. It is a place where we, as veterans, can share our stories and rewrite our history, through our work. The work is about the past, the present, and the future all at once. It is about us taking a stand as people who have served in a system that is pitted against the common good; a system that many of us once thought was about protecting the common good, but through our experiences as service members discovered the harder truth.

Through our activism we have learned that stories are what connect us as human beings—and that this has been true from the beginning. Part of our disconnection as human beings today is that we have lost touch with our stories. Veterans For Peace needs to be a *safe place*, a space where all of us can figure out how we want our life stories told.

**W**e came to Las Vegas for our board meeting with the realization that we in Veterans For Peace have a lot of work to do to promote a healthy organization. This work will strengthen our collective efforts

to achieve a peaceful, nuclear free, and socially just tomorrow. It is necessary and never-ending.

It is incumbent upon all of us to model the vision of peace we want to realize on this big blue planet—to respect each other, listen to each other, and be kind to each other. We must have an expectation that members will treat one another in a kind and respectful manner, and we cannot be afraid to call out bad behavior.

Although we come together united in our shared belief in the VFP Statement of Purpose, we realize that, because so many of us have sustained injuries through our military service, the very act of coming together puts us at risk of re-injury. We have to acknowledge that though we're united in many positive ways, we are also united in pain. Our work as Veterans For Peace is unique, in that the ebb and flow of what we do requires constant healing care to be given and received. We believe that

acknowledging these truths can itself be freeing and healing.

We all feel the urgency of the need to stop war and its brutalities. At the same time, the efficacy of our group action is weakened when members do not allow themselves time to slow down, reflect, check in, and perform diagnostics. The fundamental health of this organization depends on the ability of all of its members to heal and grow; conversely, their ability to heal and grow depends on a caring and healthy organizational culture.

**O**ur wish for the coming year is that our work together be undertaken with the optimum health, inclusivity, and empowerment of all members in the forefront of our minds, so that our efforts will be fruitful. We honor the veterans who helped to carve out this space for us in the past. And we will work to protect a welcoming space for all veterans who share our longing for peace to join us, today and always.



**Board of Directors 2020: Front row L to R—Patrick McCann, Joey King, Marti GuyDowning, Willie Hager; Back row L to R—VFP Executive Director Garrett Reppenhagen, Mike Dempsey, George Johnson, Ben Schrader, Daniel Craig, Jessie Medvan, Adrienne Kinne, Joshua Shurley. Not pictured: Rory Fanning, who attended the meeting via teleconference, and Dave Logsdon.**

## Veterans' high-profile actions connect war and climate change



VFP members Emily Yates and Garrett Reppenhagen were arrested after blocking D.C. streets with others at the November 21st #FireDrillFriday action linking militarism, water pollution, and climate change.

Inspired by Greta Thunberg and the youth climate strikes as well as Reverend Barber's Moral Mondays and Randall Robinson's often daily anti-apartheid protests, actress and activist Jane Fonda moved to Washington, D.C., to be closer to the epicenter of the fight for our climate, and to launch an initiative called Fire Drill Friday. Every Friday for the last couple of months, Jane Fonda has led weekly demonstrations on Capitol Hill to demand that our political leaders take action to address the climate emergency we are in.

Each week, Fire Drill Friday focused on the ways in which climate affects all aspects of our society. November 7–10 focused specifically on the links between military and climate. Just as climate affects every aspect of our lives, so does war. Many Veterans For Peace members attended this Fire Drill Friday, and VFP Advisory Board member Phyllis Bennis (along with About Face member Krystal Two Bulls) participated in a teach-in titled "War and the Military."

Two weeks later, November 21–24,

Veterans For Peace Executive Director Garrett Reppenhagen took action with Fire Drill Fridays, again making the links between militarism and climate during the "Water Can't Wait" week. Garrett spoke at the rally, then joined others in an act of civil disobedience blocking off the street between the Capitol and Supreme Court buildings. The protestors demanded to see clean water protected as a human right. Over 30 activists were arrested, including Garrett and VFP member Emily Yates, for refusing police orders to evacuate the streets.

The environment has long been a silent casualty of war and armed conflict. If we are going to win on climate, Veterans For Peace knows that we all must make the connections between the environment and militarism. Continuing to raise our voices as veterans can help people uncover these connections.

Climate change and militarism are deeply interconnected. Troubling environmental issues have long accompanied U.S. militarism, from airbase water pollution, to the effects of Agent Orange, to the total destruction of communities. As global temperatures rise, there will only be more ecological disasters, more mass migrations, and more wars.

Garrett highlighted these connections when he spoke at the rally in D.C.:

*"War in general is destructive to our planet in so many ways. In Iraq, I saw firsthand total demolition of utility infrastructure. Destroyed plumbing made available, clean water scarce and further damage to waste systems contaminated water supplies. The fertile crescent was nurtured by the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, now too polluted to swim in. Today, precious few can even now count on something so simple as a safe cup of tap water."*

At the end of his speech, Garrett shared an experience that many of us can relate to:

*"When I came home I became very self destructive. I was a sniper in Iraq and because I perpetuated those crimes,*

*I felt a heavy weight of grief and guilt, and finding my way into activism started to save my life. Repurposing myself and finding a new identity in the movement to serve this country in an HONEST way and protect my community in a REAL way [is what] allowed me to start healing my moral injury.*

*"If activism can save my soul, then activism can save the soul of this country."*

**The Fire Drill Friday movement is ongoing.** On January 22 on Facebook (@firedrillfriday), organizers announced:

"After 14 weeks of #FireDrillFriday in D.C., Jane Fonda and the Fire Drill Fridays team are moving to California! We'll be doing monthly Fire Drills—on the first Friday of each month—in different locations in California, starting with Los Angeles on February 7th."



VFP members at the Sept. 22, 2019 Climate Strike in New York. Photo by Ellen Davidson.

### Climate Action Coordination

Woody Powell has volunteered to help coordinate various efforts being made by VFP chapters to address climate change.

In order to assist Woody in the effort, VFP staff created a simple survey to measure the scope and depth of what we, as Veterans For Peace members, are doing in our respective communities. Find it at: <https://bit.ly/2uylwnN>

Woody encourages members to write about their climate actions for publication on VFP's website and newsletter.

Feel free to reach out to Woody by email at [woodypowell@gmail.com](mailto:woodypowell@gmail.com), or by phone at 636-393-9603.

## THOMPSON BRADLEY

1934 - 2019



He looked like Lenin. Really.  
I've never forgotten the first time  
I saw him, fifty years ago; I had  
to do a double-take, knowing Lenin  
had been dead for nearly fifty years.

He'd pace back and forth, gesticulating  
to a classroom full of college kids  
while rolling a cigarette, explaining  
Russian Thought and Literature  
in the Quest for Truth.

What Lenin took for truth, I've  
no idea, but through the years  
I came to know that truth meant  
justice, peace, honesty and fairness,  
decency and generosity to Tom.

You name the issue, Tom was always  
on the side you wanted to be on:  
wars in Asia, the Americas, the Middle East;  
civil rights, prisoners' rights, women's rights,  
gay rights, the right to live with dignity.

He looked like Lenin, but he lived  
a life that Lenin would have envied,  
or certainly should have. If Tom had led  
the Revolution, I'd have followed him  
to hell and back and right on into heaven.

—W. D. Ehrhart

Tom Bradley was a lifelong antiwar activist and a member of VFP Philadelphia Chapter 31. Poet W. D. "Bill" Ehrhart, editor-at-large of the *VFP Newsletter*, is also a member of Chapter 31.

Bill notes: "I first encountered Prof. Thompson Bradley, who had been a 1950s Army draftee, when I arrived at Swarthmore College, post-Marine Corps, in the fall of 1969. We found we had much in common. Tom was a dear friend for 50 years and a vital member of our Philly chapter."

## NEW YEAR

*Merry Christmas, Boys*—greeting on a wreath at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial of Baltimore County

In the winter dusk, I round the corner  
of the courthouse and there it is—  
that block of granite carved with the names  
of so many boys of my generation,

same as ever, but graced now with snow.  
I remove a glove and touch one name—a boy  
I might have fumbled toward in the dim light  
of the CYO, a boy I might one day have kissed

but for a certain number in the draft.  
I take a photograph. I don't know why.  
I see myself reflected in polished stone,  
bundled against the cold, camera blocking

half my changed face. Oh, dear boys,  
all these hometown years, these Christmas wreaths,  
Easter lilies, paper flags on Memorial Day  
and the Fourth of July—I don't know what

to bring, but here I am. My kids are older  
now than you were when you kissed your  
weeping moms and flew away to Nam.  
My kids have children of their own.

—Madeleine Mysko

Madeleine Mysko was a nurse on the Burn Ward at Brooke Army Medical Center during the Vietnam War. This poem was previously published in the collection, *Crucial Blue* (Cherry Grove Collections, 2019).

[EXCERPTED FROM]

### THE COMPLAINT OF PEACE

*Querela Pacis*

Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, 1517

#### Peace Speaks:

"As Peace, am I not praised by both men and gods as the very source and defender of all good things? What is there of prosperity, of security, or of happiness that cannot be ascribed to me? On the other hand, is not war the destroyer of all things and the very seed of evil? What is there of prosperity that it does not infect? What is secure or pleasant that it does not undermine? No greater enemy of goodness or of religion can be found. Though nothing is more odious to gods and harmful to man, yet it is incredible to see the tremendous expenditure of work and effort that intelligent beings put forth in an effort to exchange me for a heap of ruinous evils."

Submitted by Robert Heilman  
VFP Chapter 181, Douglas County, Oregon

## Big news on Nellis expansion

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

In December, the coalition received some exciting news. Senator Catherine Cortez Masto from Nevada introduced the DNWR and NTTR (Nevada Test and Training Range) Withdrawal and Management Act—a bill that pushes back on the military’s proposal to take over huge chunks of the DNWR. While the bill is not perfect, it’s a great starting place and it is remarkable that both senators and almost every Nevada congressional representative signed on to a bill that *significantly* pushes back on the military and its rapacious appetite for land.

Veterans For Peace continues to work with the coalition to ensure that the base expansion is kept at bay and does not take over important tribal cultural sites and protected wildlife habitat.



*Because of our work on the Nellis expansion, we've been asked to sign on to an effort led by the Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe to restrict the expansion of Fallon Air Force base in northern Nevada. Stay tuned for ways to help in that effort!*

## Veterans demand accountability for Afghanistan Papers

Veterans For Peace and About Face: Veterans Against War have convened a working group made up of veterans of the war on Afghanistan to continue to bring attention to the gross incompetence and ongoing U.S. crimes revealed in the “Afghanistan Papers” published by the *Washington Post* in December. In case you missed it, you can read the statement written in response to the Afghanistan Papers, by veterans of the ongoing war on Afghanistan, on our website:

<https://bit.ly/2HcPp05>

The statement makes these demands for accountability:

- immediate withdrawal of all U.S. troops;
- immediate release by the military of all the names of those 300 personnel quoted in the Afghanistan Papers;
- Congressional hearings that include perjury trials for all those officials who knowingly lied in official Congressional testimony, including closed-door session of the Armed Forces Committee;
- a special Congressional committee to investigate fraud, waste, abuse and mismanagement for the war in Afghanistan;
- a Congressional tribunal allowing Afghanistan veterans to testify about their experiences;
- repeal of the AUMF (Authorization for Use of Military Force Against Terrorists)—and requirement that any subsequent AUMF have a sunset clause;
- recognition of “Moral Injury” as a legitimate diagnosis;
- reparations to each Afghanistan family who has lost a family member.



*Tarak Kauff and Ken Mayers took part in a panel discussion at the World BEYOND War conference in Limerick, Ireland, Oct. 6, 2019.*

## Home from Ireland at long last

Tarak Kauff (NYC Chapter) and Ken Mayers (Santa Fe, NM, Chapter) finally got their passports back and returned home in early December, nearly nine months after their St. Patrick’s Day action at Shannon Airport last year.

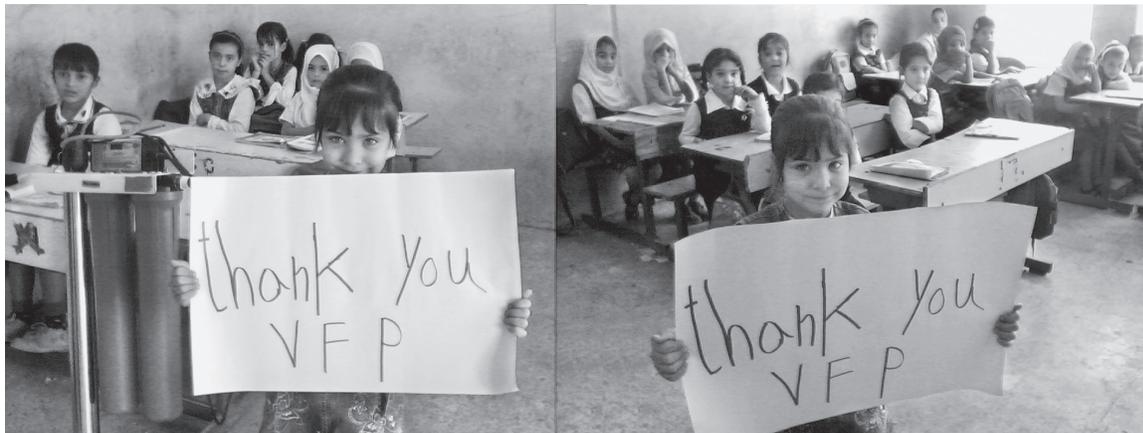
Ellen Davidson expressed gratitude to supporters for their “solidarity, activism, letter-writing, postcard-sending, consulate/embassy-visiting, phone-call-making, and general hell-raising for peace.” Since returning, the two veterans have reactivated with their respective local chapters. Their trial date is still pending.

Meanwhile, the struggle continues. On Jan. 28, VFP Ireland’s Edward Horgan was quoted in the media, saying that by greeting U.S. troops at Shannon Airport, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence had not only committed “a very serious breach of diplomatic protocol,” but gravely insulted the Irish Government and people.

# VFP PROJECT UPDATES

## IRAQ WATER PROJECT

LEE VANDER LAAN



Early in 1999, while I was staffing the desk at VFP's National Office in Washington, D.C., a call came in regarding the new Iraq Water Project. VFP members Fredy Champagne and (the late) Edilith Eckhart of Garberville, California, had just formed a group intending to help Iraqi victims of the "sanctions," the blockade of goods and services to the country of Iraq.

Among the restrictions that America's "leaders" were promoting was a complete cessation of supplies and spare parts for water treatment plants, including chlorine and other chemicals used in providing clean drinking water for Iraqi communities. This severe shortage was having an effect on the health of children and adults, leading to many situations of illness, cholera, dysentery, and communicable diseases the country had, for many years, dealt with and eradicated.

The Iraq Water Project (IWP) was born, and soon became a national project of VFP. National projects were determined to be autonomous, self-funding, and aligned with VFP's statement of purpose—in this case, seeking justice (in the form of relief) for victims of war. In return for sponsorship, a percentage of project funds raised would go to VFP to offset expenses related to administration of the project, for example keeping donation records and transferring funds to independent NGOs assisting with the upkeep of installations in Iraq identified as being in great need.

Two organizations with "feet on the ground" in Iraq that provided assistance

in the early days of the project were LIFE for Relief and Development, headquartered in Southfield, Michigan, and later, Muslim Peacemaker Teams. Six major plants were rebuilt in Iraq with the lion's share of funding coming from VFP donations. Three teams of VFP members and concerned civilians went to Iraq over the course of several years, at their own expense, to visit the area and see the plants.

An important aspect of the IWP was to help Gulf War and other American veterans heal from war trauma by giving them an opportunity to provide humanitarian assistance in a war-ravaged land. Equally important was the mission to bring awareness and to educate the American public on the devastation and unconscionable effects of war, including the unnecessary suffering caused by ten years of unjust economic sanctions.

Sadly, some of the water plants that IWP helped repair were subjected to additional ruination by American warring in Iraq. It is still impossible to know how or whether the rebuilt plants survived the onslaught of the war machine since the subsequent 2003 invasion. The Iraq Water Project was in hiatus for a few years as a result.

When it became evident around 2007 that humanitarian assistance was needed more than ever, a new plan was hatched by then-IWP Chairman Art Dorland, to continue assistance on a smaller scale. Through our friends at Muslim Peacemaker Teams, it was decided to

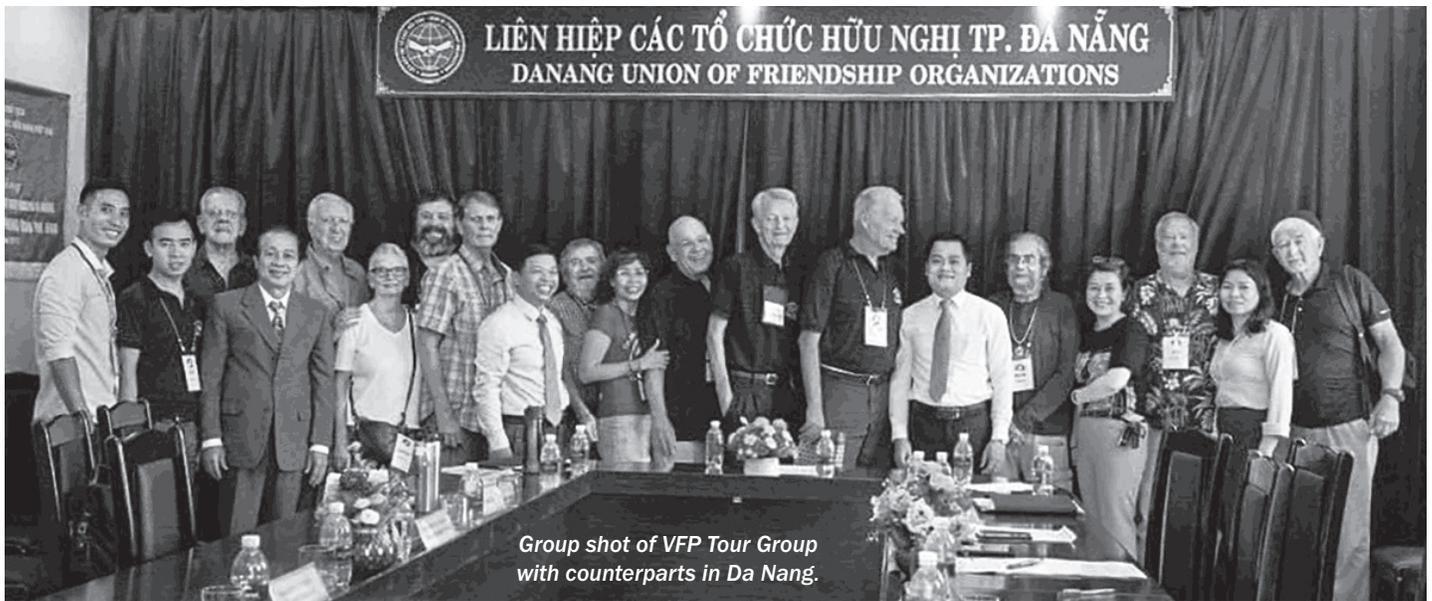
send monetary assistance to supply small clean-water units to local schools and medical clinics. These self-contained units filter water with reverse osmosis (RO) and sedimentary filters, and can often be hooked up to existing plumbing, again providing a safe and clean water supply for those in need.

In its twentieth year, the Iraq Water Project continues to find more potential projects than can be adequately funded. Supplies, filters and RO units are being purchased locally in Iraq, as IWP continues its support of local communities who endorse our actions in Nasariyah, Najaf, Karbela, Basrah, and Baghdad.

You can help VFP's Iraq Water Project continue its mission to provide relief and support to children and their families in war-torn Iraq by going to our website, [iraqwaterproject.com](http://iraqwaterproject.com), and clicking on "Contribute." We are grateful for any and all contributions! Please consider being a monthly sustaining donor or a chapter sponsor. Check our website for recent activities and actions, along with photos of grateful kids! (Access our archive of past work at [iraqwaterproject.org](http://iraqwaterproject.org).)

A special thank you to VFP Chapter 104 in Evansville, Indiana, whose members raised \$1500 for IWP with their annual John Lennon tribute concert in December 2019. "GIVE PEACE A CHANCE!" Yes! We agree wholeheartedly!

*IWP Chair Lee Vander Laan is a lifetime member of VFP and a founding member of Samantha Smith Chapter 45 (in 1990). He resides in Essex, Mass.*



## VIET NAM PEACE TOUR 2019 *BOB NEUMAN & CHUCK SEARCY*

Hosted by Ha Noi (Ex-pat) VFP Chapter 160 from September 8 to 23, the 2019 tour was our eighth annual tour of Viet Nam. With 11 participants, the delegation was smaller than usual, but we had a very good group of veterans, auxiliary members, peace activists and supporters, which included one U.S. veteran of the war in Iraq—the first time we’ve had someone from the younger generation of veterans.

Our itinerary was pretty much the same as previous tours, north to south—from Ha Noi to central Viet Nam, ending up in Ho Chi Minh City. The one major addition was an overnight on a luxury tour boat in spectacular Ha Long Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The donation pool was smaller than in some past years, due to the small size of the group, but Chapter 160 topped up individual donations from a reserve fund we have set aside from past trips and donations, and three tour participants added to the total for targeted projects, which brought the total disbursement to \$27,000 USD divided among six projects that we visited and saw first-hand.

### **Six groups benefitted from tour:**

- The Friendship Village in Ha Noi, a Vietnamese veteran-run, internationally supported residential care center for

Agent Orange victims, both children and veterans (\$4,000).

- The Da Nang Center No. 3, which is operated by the Vietnam Association of Victims of Agent Orange/Dioxin (VAVA) in Da Nang for children affected by Agent Orange/dioxin (\$4,000).

- Project RENEW, which cleans up bombs and mines and helps UXO and Agent Orange victims in Quang Tri Province (\$7,000), including \$1,000 each from John and Ed Meagher directed to the Blind Center supported by Project RENEW, and \$1,000 from Betty Munson directed to the RENEW Prosthetics and Orthotics program). The tour group’s consensus was that Project RENEW will be requested to focus all the funds on those two project components.

- Chua Duc Son Buddhist Pagoda in Hue, which takes in orphans and disabled babies and older children, including Agent Orange victims (\$4,000).

- Hearts for Hue, which provides funds and training to families affected by Agent Orange, to raise cows, pigs, or other livestock for income security (\$4,000).

- Tu Du Hospital’s Peace Village in Ho Chi Minh City, which cares for orphans who are seriously disabled from Agent Orange or other causes, many of whom are abandoned at birth (\$4,000).

The funds have been disbursed and acknowledgements received from the beneficiaries. We asked them all to provide us with a brief report during the next year of their progress and success in applying VFP 160 tour donations to their program needs, and we will share that information with you.

### **Veterans For Peace awarded Viet Nam’s Medal of Friendship**

During our delegation’s roundtable hosted by our friends at the Viet Nam Union of Friendship Organizations, two members were singled out for special recognition by the Vietnamese. Then—VFP Board President Gerry Condon was presented a Friendship Medal in appreciation of Veterans For Peace’s role in supporting friendship, understanding, and reconciliation between the U.S. and Viet Nam; and Paul Cox was given a Friendship Medal for his long-time personal service in the same vein—in particular his work in bringing about cooperation between the two countries on the issues of unexploded ordnance and Agent Orange, and for encouraging greater support and assistance for the families in Viet Nam who have suffered so much from Agent Orange.

*Submitted by Bob Neuman on behalf of Chuck Searcy and VFP Chapter 160.*

## GOLDEN RULE A BIG HIT IN HAWAII

FUNDS URGENTLY NEEDED FOR PEACE BOAT'S PACIFIC VOYAGE TO HIROSHIMA, JAPAN

In 1958, the *Golden Rule* and her intrepid crew sailed from Los Angeles to stop U.S. atmospheric nuclear weapons from being exploded in the Marshall Islands. Under orders from the U.S. government, the Coast Guard stopped the boat in Honolulu; captain and crew were arrested and spent 60 days in jail.

Now, 61 years later, with Veterans For Peace as her sponsor, the *Golden Rule* and crew plan to leave Hawai'i in late February and sail to the Marshall Islands and then on to Hiroshima, Japan, for the 75th commemoration of the horrific U.S. atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945.

The six months that the *Golden Rule* has spent in Hawaiian waters has been a terrific experience for all involved, and the educational mission has been very successful. The peace boat visited five islands, staying on the Big Island, Maui, Oahu, and Kauai for one month each, and on Lanai for one week. *Golden Rule* spokespersons Helen Jaccard and Zoe Byrd have given over 50 presentations to Quaker gatherings, Buddhist temples and missions, Unitarian congregations, Rotary Clubs, peace groups, and students.

The *Golden Rule* received fantastic press coverage in Hawai'i from the beginning: In Hilo, on the big island of Hawai'i, there were radio interviews, front page articles and photos in the *Herald Tribune*, and some on TV! The *Maui News* covered the *Golden Rule* in four articles, one featuring a front page photo, and again, there were a few radio interviews. In Honolulu, the *Golden Rule* received major TV, radio, and newspaper coverage, with the biggest Hawai'i-wide media, the *Hawai'i Star Advertiser*, *Hawai'i News Now TV*, and Hawai'i Public Radio.

### Challenging Nuclear Madness and Militarism in the Pacific!

At all of its port stops, the *Golden Rule* and her crew tell people about the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear

Weapons (TPNW), which was passed by the United Nations General Assembly with a vote of 122-1 on July 7, 2017. As a result of the *Golden Rule*'s presence, Honolulu joined dozens of other cities in urging the U.S. Government to ratify the TPNW. The resolution of the Honolulu City and County also welcomed the *Golden*

nations—have suffered greatly from the presence of U.S. bases, war games, and bomb testing. Marshall Islanders continue to suffer from high rates of cancer, the result of 67 U.S. nuclear bomb tests in their islands. There are serious problems on Guam and Okinawa as well, and growing resistance.



On Kane'ōhe Bay in Oahu, ninth graders sailed with us on both the *Golden Rule* (left) and the traditional Hawaiian sailing catamaran, Kānehūnāmoku. The mostly Hawaiian natives were from Halau Ku Mana, a charter school that emphasizes native Hawaiian culture.

*Rule* to Hawai'i and affirmed the *Back from the Brink* principles:

- **Take away the President's sole, unchecked authority to launch a nuclear strike.**
- **Declare a no-first-use of nuclear weapons policy.**
- **Take the ICMB nuclear missiles off of hair-trigger alert.**
- **Stop funding the \$1.7 trillion nuclear "modernization" program.**

*Golden Rule* crew members have also been learning about how the Indigenous cultures and environment of the Hawaiian Islands—and many Pacific island

To show our respect, the *Golden Rule* asks for permission from Indigenous leaders before arriving at any port. Those leaders often welcome us with moving words and ceremony. As reported in the last issue of the *VFP Newsletter*, Ann Wright, Helen Jaccard, and Gerry Condon were honored to be received by the Hawaiian *kapuna* (elders) at the sacred volcano Mauna Kea, and to present them with the flag of Veterans For Peace.

One of the most meaningful events in Oahu was sailing with ninth graders on both the *Golden Rule* and the *continued next page...*

# NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT

## NOT JUST ANOTHER ROADSIDE ATTRACTION

GATHERING SUPPORT FOR THE INTL TREATY ON THE PROHIBITION OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS

Driving a bus through rural Minnesota with ABOLISH WAR painted on the back of it can turn heads. Ask Steve Mckeown. Steve is a Vietnam veteran and one of the leaders of a collaborative effort between Twin Cities VFP Chapter 27 and Women Against Military Madness (WAMM) to collect signatures from residents of all 851 incorporated Minnesota towns on a petition to ban nuclear weapons globally.

Armed with a clipboard and map of Minnesota mounted on cardboard, Steve drove around the hinterlands to sign up folks he'd approach in small towns or at county fairs. He kept accurate tallies and was careful to put stickpins on the map to show where he'd collected signatures.

McKeown believes most people he talked to supported nuclear disarmament, even if they didn't think it likely. A surprising number of people were willing to talk with McKeown about his concerns—and theirs. (The issue of military benefits came up frequently and it became apparent that rural residents

not only joined the armed services because of area job shortages; they kept re-enlisting to keep medical benefits.)

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2017 for bringing awareness to the horrific consequences of nuclear warheads, while pioneering a global plan to get rid of them. In the same year, the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was endorsed by 122 countries at the United Nations.

The agreement seeks to prohibit nuclear weapons worldwide and becomes international law when it's signed and ratified by 50 nations. So far, 34 have provided signatures and ratified the treaty.

WAMM spearheaded the Minnesota campaign in support of the treaty. They have asked U.S. Senate and House members to weigh in on the proposed nuclear weapons ban, organized discussions, and mailed out information, while combining forces with other peace and justice groups to gather petition signatures.

By late October 2019, over 22,600 residents from all 851 incorporated Minnesota towns had signed the petition. Mckeown obtained the most signatures by far. For more information about the campaign, contact Steve Mckeown at 612-869-2040.

*Excerpted from an article submitted by VFP Chapter 27 member Craig Wood.*

### VFP members testify at hearing in New York City

The New York City Council held a "mind-blowing and historic" open hearing Jan. 30, 2020, on legislation that would require the city to divest its pensions funds from any trafficking in the production of nuclear weapons, and call on the U.S. government to sign and ratify the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW)." VFP members were among 60 who testified. See: <https://worldbeyondwar.org/new-york-city-takes-action-on-nukes/>

### GOLDEN RULE

*...from previous page*

traditional Hawaiian sailing catamaran, *Kānehūnāmoku*, in Kane'ohe Bay. Students from Halau Ku Mana Charter School are mostly Hawaiian natives in a school that emphasizes Native Hawaiian culture. The *Golden Rule* really puts smiles on people's faces!

The vision of the VFP *Golden Rule* Committee is to continue our Pacific voyage on to the Marshall Islands, the original destination of the Quaker crew in 1958. To then sail on to Guam and Okinawa, two island nations that have been devastated by fighting in World War II and the dominating influence of U.S. military bases to this day. And finally, to sail on to Japan, in time for the 75th anniversary commemorations of the U.S. nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, August 6–9, 2020.

### Please help us complete this historic voyage for peace

We are poised to make this historic voyage. We have a solid boat and a great captain, who have proven themselves in the 20-day voyage from San Diego to Hawai'i. We have a mission that is being well received wherever we go. We have made contact with key people in the Marshall Islands, Guam, Okinawa and Japan, who are eagerly awaiting the arrival of the *Golden Rule*.

The story of the *Golden Rule*, her sister ship the *Phoenix of Hiroshima*, and the Japanese fishing boat, *The Lucky Dragon*, are well-known in Japan. The Japanese people will be very happy to see the *Golden Rule* sail into Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This is a remarkable opportunity for Veterans for Peace and other organizations and individuals to lift up our voices for nuclear disarmament.

### We need YOUR help!!!

We need to raise \$30,000 to cover expenses for the *Golden Rule's* Pacific voyage. These funds will cover our safety inspection haul-out in Hawai'i, insurance, airfare for the captain and crew, captain's pay, docks, fuel, food and other logistics.

**If we don't have at least \$30,000 by March 1, we may not be able to continue.** We have been raising money as we go. We have no corporate sponsors or deep-pocket angels. We do have many dedicated supporters like you who have made mostly modest donations to help us continue this unique mission for peace.

*You can help the Golden Rule fulfill her destiny. You can be a vital part of Golden Rule story.*

**Please contribute today!**

—ANN WRIGHT & HELEN JACCARD

# CHAPTERS CELEBRATE ARMISTICE DAY 2019



TOP: At the Armistice Day Parade in Auburn, Wash., Seattle VFP joined forces with Seattle Peace Chorus and Seattle Anti-War Coalition. LEFT: VFP Chapter 91 members marched in the Armistice Day Parade in downtown San Diego. ABOVE: Chapter 66 members Alan Pogue and Thad Crouch presented a VFP wreath at the ceremony in Austin, Texas.

# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

## #001 – PORTLAND, ME

Portland chapter members took part in a protest against the “christening” of yet another navy destroyer at Bath Iron Works (BIW) in June. VFP members Dan Ellis, Dud Hendrick, Bruce Gagnon, and Richard Lethem were among those arrested for obstructing a public right-of-way. The charges were later reduced to jaywalking, a move by the prosecution to avoid the unwanted attention which would have accompanied a jury trial. VFP and other peace groups in Maine continue to advocate for the conversion of BIW to peaceful manufacturing.

We had a booth in the political action tent at the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Fair the weekend of September 20–22, 2019, like we do each year. This event is attended by thousands and is a wonderful opportunity to get our message out to the public.

Armistice Day in Portland once again featured a strong VFP presence at the city’s Veterans Day parade, not as participants (we’re not welcome), but as silent witnesses along the parade route. Reactions are varied, as you might expect.

*John Morris*



*Armistice Day 2019: Veterans Day Parade, Boston, Massachusetts*

## #009 – BOSTON, MA

Veterans For Peace Chapter 9 continued to demonstrate its longstanding commitment to activism throughout 2019 through standouts, marches, speaking engagements, music performances, civil disobedience, and the promotion of intersectional relationships with a variety of synergistic issue advocacy groups.

Our chapter organizes its activism through an array of diverse focus groups. Examples of these focus groups include: ending the war economy, divesting from Raytheon, saving the VA from privatization, peacekeeping training and support at protests, supporting Reality Winner, and promoting high school peace essay contests.

Our most significant recent event was an Armistice Day program on November 11, 2019, which included a parade

through downtown Boston, talks at Fanuel Hall, and symbolic bell ringing in honor and recognition of the original intent of “Armistice Day”—a day of solemn reflection on the horrors of war and rededication to the prevention of future wars.

*Robert Master*

## #016 – WASHINGTON, DC

Chapter 16 members have participated in numerous D.C. actions recently. Several of us took part in the “Impeach Trump” rallies at the White House. Chapter members were also seen at many of the Fire Drill Fridays that Jane Fonda helped organize. And a few of us attended the “No War On Iran” rally at the U.S. Capitol on Thursday, January 9, 2020.

Chapter president Mike Marceau carried an upside-down American flag to all of these actions. He was photographed by hundreds of people and interviewed by at least a dozen media outlets, including South Korea TV, Portuguese Public Radio, *Telesur*, *USA Today*, Swiss Public TV, Czech Television, and *The Washington Post*. He explained that the inverted flag is a distress signal, and that our country is in great distress due to the actions of our president and his allies in congress who refuse to hold him accountable.

*Mike Marceau*

## #023 – ROCHESTER, NY

Armistice Day 2019 found a hearty contingent of Chapter 23 members bannerering over the Rochester, New York, Veterans Memorial Bridge, ignoring the freezing cold and approaching blizzard. Flashing headlights and honking horns signaled support from the majority of passing vehicles.

Our chapter took a proactive approach to the Remove the Stain campaign [see *VFP Newsletter, Fall 2019*], generating a large number of signatures from VFP members and outside supporters.

Several members of Chapter 23 attended the Grand Opening of a new VA Healthcare Facility in Henrietta, New York, wearing “Save Our VA” tee shirts, which engendered a great deal of attention, including from the facility director. Some VA employees and veterans went out of their way to thank us for our action.

Chapter 23 members have approved the creation of a chapter website. The site will have both members-only and public sections, and will facilitate members’ access to minutes of monthly meetings and a calendar of upcoming events.

On Jan. 9, 2020, Rochester members joined a student-organized NO WAR IN IRAN rally at the Federal Building and Courthouse in Rochester, where chapter president Rev. James Swarts and member Jack Spula both spoke.

*James Swarts*

*Chapter reports continued on page 14...*

# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

## #025 – SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

For the past 11 years, David Giffey has spent afternoons in rural schools throughout the region northwest of Madison, educating students about the cost of war and letting them know about Chapter 25's Peace Scholarship. Although the hours members spend in counterrecruiting don't receive as much attention, David's commitment has endured, "hoping to let young people know that the world will be more peaceful if they remain civilians after graduation."

Chapter 25 cosponsored an event with Norman Stockwell on the 50th anniversary of the movie, *The War at Home*. The film, along with a keynote speaker and panel discussion, offered a perspective on war and antiwar history as it relates to current conflicts.

In November, we hosted a benefit for Unified U.S. Deported Veterans (VFP Ch. 182). The audience enjoyed poetry by area veterans, Madison's Poet Laureate Oscar Mireles, and music by Vets on Frets. Through a Skype call, the audience got to meet members of Chapter 182, which brought the issues home.

In addition to this small sampling of our work, Chapter 25 has conducted a letter-writing campaign to newspapers and provided chapter representation in the group United Against Hate, among many other activities.

*Fran Wiedenhoef*

## #026 – CHICAGO, IL

As the Chicago chapter kicks off 2020 with a Martin Luther King community event, it also reflects on 2019 and the work of chapter members to bring "Peace at Home, Peace Abroad."

The My Lai Memorial project is wrapping up after being exhibited in 16 cities since 2018: <https://mylaimemorial.org>.

Our efforts to demilitarize Chicago Public Schools (CPS)—"largest JROTC program in the nation"—continues. We speak at school meetings, community events and classrooms. We gather data on JROTC budgets and rule stretching, and communicate with CPS and JROTC staff. We collaborate with national groups and use our Facebook and Twitter pages to convey information to the public.

We kicked off a video project to publicize our message. Chapter events and members are videoed and put on YouTube and then shared via our social media pages.

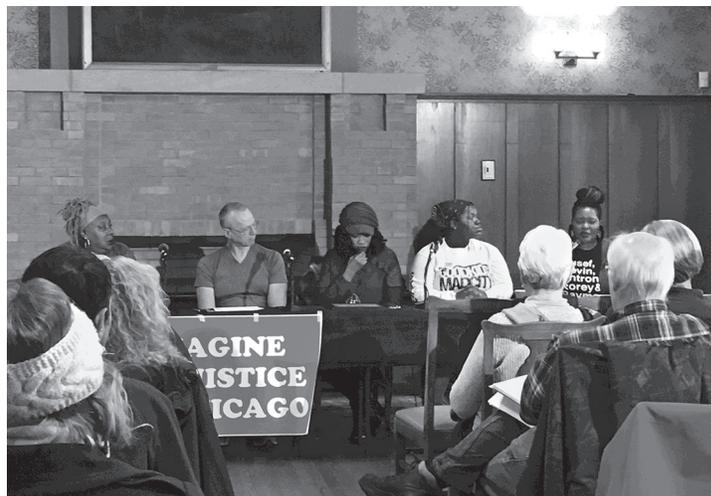
We sponsored a tour by Ventura, California, VFP member Cindy Piester. She did three community presentations in two days on the military's effect on the environment.

We organized a peace music concert, an Armistice Day event, and a Martin Luther King Jr. event.

We developed a "Join VFP" flyer featuring members near and far, and placed it on our and National's Facebook page.

We also developed a VFP window sticker for placement on car windows to promote VFP to the driving public. These are now available at the VFP store.

*Arny Stieber*



*The Chicago chapter broadened Armistice Day from a military day to a day for the community to come together and speak about the humanity this country so desperately needs. Each member of the panel gave their background and presented what their group is doing in the community to improve the lives of everyone. Panelists pictured (L to R): Valerie Burgest of Moms Demand Action, Andy Thayer of Gay Liberation Network, Carmel Brown of Chicago Children's Advocacy Center, China of Good Kids Mad City, and Natasha Erskine of VFP.*

## #027 – TWIN CITIES, MN

Our chapter hit the ground running in the new year. The urgency of the Iran–U.S. conflict got a strong response from our membership, and we participated in three events in the January cold. At the first emergency call to action, Chapter 27 Vice President Mike Madden spoke eloquently and passionately to some 500 people who braved the 20-degree weather. There has been plenty of local news coverage, with outgoing National Board member Dave Logsdon getting face time on TV news.

Dave Logsdon participated in a discussion with Medea Benjamin (Skyped in) centered around Cuba, after Dave and Barry Riesch participated in the CodePink-sponsored trip to Cuba in December.

We also played host to Tim Keegan of the Northern Michigan VFP chapter, who talked about his book, *The Good Hike*, which chronicles his walking the 2,200-mile Appalachian Trail to deal with PTS from his combat days in Viet Nam. Keegan also screened *Naneek*, a short documentary film about his return to Viet Nam and meeting with former NVA soldiers.

*Dave Logsdon*

## #034 – NEW YORK, NY

New York City VFP members participate in social justice actions throughout the NYC area and beyond. Recent actions:

During the eight months he was stuck in Ireland for actively protesting U.S. violation of Irish neutrality at Shannon Airport, Tarak Kauff spoke at numerous venues, walked miles for peace, participated in social and pub events hosted by peace groups, dropped VFP banners, and rallied in front of Limerick

Prison, where he had been held for two weeks.

Chapter 34 President Susan Schnall spoke at the Waging Peace exhibit opening at Washington University in D.C. on November 11, 2019, following a three-week Peace Speaking Tour in Japan. She also spoke at *Waging Peace* book launches at Columbia University, and UMass in Boston and Amherst.

We had great turnouts at the Climate March in New York City, the commemoration of the 74th anniversary of atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the 18th anniversary of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, and a drone protest at the United Nations. A hundred people (members and supporters) marched with our antiwar Veterans contingent in this year's Armistice Day Parade.

Some Active Projects: Stopping VA Privatization; NYC Move the Money Campaign; and Agent Orange Campaign. The latter educates about the lasting consequences of the American War in Viet Nam, and lobbies Congress to support our legislation.

Find us on Facebook @veteransforpeace034.

Bob Keilbach



VFP Chapter 35 member Charles Thomas carries upside-down American flag as a sign of distress in an antiwar demo in Spokane, Washington, on January, 4, 2020. Photo by Hollis Higgins.

## #035 – SPOKANE, WA

Greetings & Gratitude to All VFP!

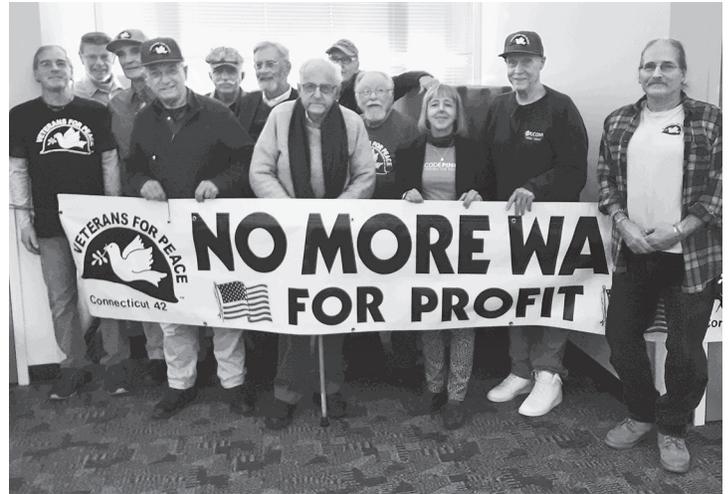
Thanks to Garrett's leadership at Fire Drill Fridays, incl. arrest! Thanks to Gerry's leadership at Mauna Kea, Hawai'i, halting telescope! Loved reading the news from *Golden Rule* peace boat in Hawai'i! Hi to Loke!

We joined an impeachment rally at the Federal Building in Spokane, shutting down an entire block.

We demonstrated against war in Iran on January 4 with Peace and Justice Action League Spokane (PJALS), and hit the streets again on January 25, the Global Day of Protest.

We'll join Women's March, Indigenous People's Day March, and MLK Jr. March, but we don't march anymore—we may stroll, saunter, or parade...

Upcoming work: Supporting an ordinance making Spokane a Nuclear Free Zone with Washington Against Nuclear Weapons (wancoalition.org). Creating A Culture of Peace with Greater Spokane Progress. Paying attention to homelessness.



Medea Benjamin of CodePink stands with members of Connecticut VFP Chapter 42 at Middlesex Community College in Middletown, at the *Retooling the Connecticut War Economy* conference.

We'll present a Peace Pole to Lewis & Clark High School in gratitude for the Sunrise Movement's help at the 2019 Convention. We support 350 Spokane in climate emergency actions, as well as keeping track of activities by Extinction Rebellion.

Chapter 35's website is undergoing updates. Check it out at [spokaneveteransforpeace.org](http://spokaneveteransforpeace.org). We're determined to produce a newsletter with help from new friends.

Care 4 Peace 4 All!

Hollis Higgins

## #042 – CONNECTICUT

On November 9, 2019, Chapter 42 joined the Connecticut Peace and Solidarity Coalition to present a conference at Middlesex Community College in Middletown, entitled "Retooling the Connecticut War Economy." Medea Benjamin of CodePink was the guest speaker. Presenting were Miriam Pemberton, Research Fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies in D.C., activist and broadcaster Dave Ionno (a chapter member), and former U.S. Marine Mitch Link, climate activist and member of 350.org Connecticut. The panel discussed the impact of a \$738 billion military budget and the resulting drain on resources from Connecticut's inner cities and military fossil fuel use as one of the leading causes of climate pollution.

Chapter 42 is sponsoring its latest associate member, David Perli, a junior at Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. As a participant in the college's Border Studies Program, David will be staying with a host family in the southern borderlands around Tucson, Arizona, this semester. The host family has come to the area from Mexico, and still has family on the other side of the border. David says, "In this age of militarization, there is no greater time for the practice and implementation of peace." We gave David the VFP banner and two Veterans For Peace shirts to display and hand out while he is there.

Jim Brasile

Chapter reports continued on page 16...

# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

## #046 – MONTEREY, CA

Chapter 46 had a great start to the year. Once we received VFP National's endorsement of the antiwar protests planned for January 9, 2020, we helped organize a public protest on a busy Monterey street. This nationwide event was powered by About Face: Veterans Against the War, through MoveOn. That evening, nearly 60 people gathered for peace. The crowd was made up of local citizens, political candidates, and many veterans, including a young Air Force veteran who had formerly served as a Pashto linguist. Some new comrades stepped up to hold the banner of VFP without even knowing who we were as an organization. We invited the press, and a popular local radio news station, KAZU 90.3, interviewed Chapter 43 President Justin Loza. KAZU aired the story the next evening and featured it on the front page of their website. We will follow up with the new potential recruits and have plenty of opportunities in 2020 for them to lead the VFP activities that they care about.

*Justin Loza*

## #055 – SANTA FE, NM

The Joan Duffy chapter continues to meet each month with members of the Albuquerque chapter to plan for the 2020 VFP annual convention to be held here next August. Meetings with Pace Y Bene are ongoing to coordinate our joint commemoration of the 75th anniversaries of the nuclear bombings of Japan. A wide range of activities held in Los Alamos on August 6 and 9 will be offered for convention attendees.

Despite cold weather, Chapter 55 members and supporters marched in Santa Fe's annual Armistice Day parade.

On November 20, 2019, our chapter sponsored a screening of the documentary film, *An Endless War: Getting Out of Afghanistan*, at a local theater, The Screen. The audience was enthusiastic during the lively Q&A session afterward, with film director Bob Coen skyped in from Paris and the film's expert witness, Matthew Hoh, from North Carolina. Hoh is an Iraq war veteran and a member of the VFP Advisory Board.

Chapter support for the youth movement YUCCA (Youth United 4 Climate Crisis Action) continued through November at weekly vigils outside the Roundhouse, New Mexico's Capitol Building in Santa Fe. The initial demonstration in September had strong turnout of local high school students and members of our chapter.

What's in your heart builds the world you're in.

*Ruth Sabiers and French Leger*

## #057 – GREEN MOUNTAIN, VT

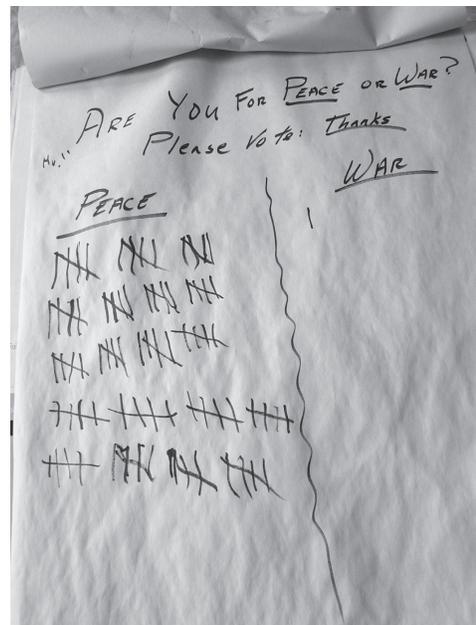
On November 3, 2019, Will Miller Green Mountain chapter members spoke at all three Vets Town Halls located across Vermont. These yearly events are based on Sebastian Junger's book, *Tribe*.

On Armistice Day, two separate Op-Ed pieces by Chapter 57

members were published in Vermont media: "Armistice Day Remembered" by Andrew Schoerke and "What Happened to Armistice Day?" by Richard Czaplinski.

Chapter 57 members participated in a nine-week event during which, every work day, two persons appeared at Vermont Senator Leahy's office to read (and tape for YouTube) excerpts from the Air Force official record, called the "Administrative Record." The readings showed how the process that the U.S. Air Force used to determine where to base the F-35 aircraft was manipulated to select the urban area of Burlington over the site preferred by the U.S. Air Force.

Our chapter struggles to recruit new members. In our recent monthly meetings we have been focusing on this challenge along with the overall issue of how to be most effective in our work of fostering peace given our limited resources.



Lastly, responding to the U.S. march to war in Iran, on January 4, 2020, Chapter 57 members co-sponsored and spoke out at a protest in Burlington. In Montpelier, we spent two hours engaging people in conversation at the post office with the question "Are you for War or Peace in the Middle East?" [See Richard's story on page 27.]

*Richard Czaplinski*

## #063 – AUBUQUERQUE, NM

On Tuesday, January 7, 2020, members of the Donald and Sally-Alice Thompson VFP Chapter participated in the National Day of Action to prevent a U.S. war on Iran. Albuquerque members demonstrated at the gates of Kirtland Air Force Base from 7:00am until 2:00pm, their main message delivered with a banner reading, "ONLY CONGRESS CAN DECLARE WAR—EVER." The chief organizer was VFP Chapter 63 Secretary Bill Tiwald. Others taking part were Herb Hoffman, chapter president; Charles Powell, former chapter president; Ravi Wadhvani, chapter



**Austin chapter member Hart Vigés greets a student at Texas State San Marcos. Hart arrives highly prepared with games to attract the students as well as all kinds of information on how to obtain a higher education without joining the military. Photo by Alan Pogue.**

communications coordinator, and members Laura Martin and Mike Gallagher. Their efforts were well received by the passing public, which included airmen as well as Sandia National Lab employees.

*Charles R. Powell*

## #066 – AUSTIN, TX

The Neil Bischoff Chapter saw a year of education and demonstration. Hart Vigés kept up his tabling at high schools and colleges. We sponsored a Hiroshima/Nagasaki memorial gathering and were invited to Methodist and Unitarian gatherings. We participated in the Veterans Memorial Day parade to great applause from the onlookers. We demonstrated early and often against war with Iran, Yemen, and Iraq. VFPer Thad Crouch formed a coalition with several other groups to sponsor a free screening of *A Hidden Life*, a drama about an Austrian farmer who refuses to fight for the Nazis during World War II.

2020 will be an active year as the pro-peace/antiwar movement in Austin, Texas, has sprung to life.

*Alan Pogue*

## #069 – SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Three members of Veterans For Peace were arrested at Creech Air Force Base in October along with seven other peace activists during CodePink’s “Shut Down Creech” biannual week-long demonstration to bring attention the human carnage that is rained down on the Middle East at the push of a button on this Nevada desert base. Thirty of us gathered there, people of conscience from as far away as Maine and Florida. For two days we stood beside the road in front of the gate with our banners, reading STOP KILLER DRONES and the like, for the edification of the troops driving in and out. Ten days before the demonstration began, 30 Afghan pinenut gatherers were killed by a drone strike intended for an ISIS hideout. Unintentional killing

of civilians has been a common occurrence in aerial attacks, a primary tactic of war since World War I. The three VFPers arrested were Don Kimball of Portland, Maine, Michael Kerr of Bay Point, California, and Denny Riley of the San Francisco chapter. We paid little consequence. We did it to bring attention to the cause, but, unfortunately, no attention was paid to our arrests in the desert.

*Denny Riley*

## #072 – PORTLAND, OR

Chapter 72 was honored to welcome VFP Executive Director Garrett Reppenhagen to town and have him speak at our Armistice Day commemoration in downtown Portland. A number of other attendees shared reflections and poetry, and chapter president Dan Shea read a proclamation encouraging all residents “to celebrate peace by divesting from war, to work for peace at home and abroad, and to uphold values of justice, freedom and democracy for all.” Afterward, the Executive Director of the Oregon Historical Museum treated us to a tour of a special display on the African-American experience of WWII.

Chapter 72 lost two beloved members later that month. Air Force veteran Jamie Skinner passed away from cancer at the age of 61 on November 15, 2019, just four days after reading his wonderful poetry at the Armistice Day event. A Quaker who strongly identified with the Christian gospel of love, Jamie worked as a pilot for Horizon Air. Will Pool, a WWII veteran and retired history teacher specializing in Russia who often spooled out important history lessons for us off the top of his head, passed away on November 22, at the age of 93. Both veterans had been regulars at our meetings, and will be sorely missed.

In January, member Nancy Hill’s beautiful photo essay, “Combat Veterans Tell Us What We Need to Know about War,” was published online by YES! [<https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-justice/2020/01/08/war-veterans-military/>].

*Marion Ward*

*Chapter reports continued on page 18...*



**A good number of veterans and friends gathered at Director Park in downtown Portland, Oregon, on Armistice Day 2019, to ring bells and share thoughts—including VFP Executive Director Garrett Reppenhagen! The day was blustery but dry. Photo by Mike Hastie.**

# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

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## #087 – SACRAMENTO, CA

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One of our most successful tactics for getting out the VFP message has been handing out back issues of *Peace In Our Times* newspapers at the Sacramento Veterans (Armistice) Day parade. At the 2019 event, we distributed many dozens of the newspapers to folks waiting for the parade to start. It was very heartening to see how willing people were to accept a “Veterans For Peace” newspaper.

We continue our long-standing, weekly Peace Vigil near the California State Capitol, reminding evening commuters that the wars are not over and that the military budget is killing us.

When possible, we endorse and support Palestinian rights rallies, the Poor People’s Campaign events, and Black Lives Matter demonstrations by marching and flying the VFP flag.

*John C. Reiger*

## #090 – BROOME COUNTY, NY

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The past year was the busiest ever for VFP Stu Naismith Chapter 90. It began with the January 2019 annual luncheon and conversation (via phone) with Suzanne Gordon of San Francisco, the outstanding advocate for protecting our VA from privatization.

Memorial Day found our members in Elmira, New York, at the grave site of Civil War veteran and avowed anti-Imperialist, Mark Twain, where we enacted Twain’s War Prayer. Our first annual Children’s Peace Fair, organized in collaboration with the local Peace Action group, took place on August 6, and was a big success. [See *Ch. 90 report in VFP’s Fall 2019 newsletter.*]

VFP member Mac McDevitt drove his rig from Chicago to Binghamton to install his amazing, museum-worthy My Lai Exhibit in the entrance hall of the Broome County Library just prior to Armistice Day. The exhibit enjoyed good attendance and media coverage.

For the third Armistice Day running, our members set up a symbolic cemetery along the parade route of the Veterans Day Parade—100 tombstones representing the ratio of the number of Vietnamese, Afghanistan, Iraqis killed to one American. Once again, local television media helped us spread the truth of the immorality and stupidity of our wars.

*Jack Gilroy*

## #091 – SAN DIEGO, CA

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The Hugh Thompson Memorial Chapter had a active fall, as usual. Chapter members stood publicly with union nurses at the La Jolla VA Hospital in opposition to continued privatization and union-busting efforts on the part of the current administration; supported and won gun show restrictions at the Del Mar Fair; worked with individuals and groups supporting the refugees waiting in Mexico for a hearing; and supported VFP’s new Tijuana chapter of deported veterans.

Chapter 91 members walked in the November 11th parade downtown on Armistice Day, while displaying the chapter’s

Hometown Arlington West Memorial all day. Later, we worked with others to push back publicly against possible war with Iran.

San Diego VFP continued to accept public donations in 2019, enabling us to give out 740 new Coleman sleeping bag sets to the neediest homeless folks downtown. In early 2020, we jumped right into antiwar efforts in response to events involving Iran and the President, and we were honored to walk in San Diego’s Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade on January 19, 2020. We are now a recognized source for quality interviews by local TV, radio, and print press, and we are pleased to have them call us regularly when events in the world transpire.

*Gil Field*

## #092 – SEATTLE, WA

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Thirteen consecutive years our contingent has marched in the Auburn Veterans Day Parade! In 2019, we were fortunate to have folks from the Seattle Peace Chorus join us, leading us in song when possible—striking the fancy of onlookers! [See *photo on page 12.*]

Mike Dedrick, Allen Tlusty, and Will Alleckson tabled, promoting peace and handing out info to people about the Save Our VA campaign. (Mason Rhoads led monthly SOVA bannering at the VA Hospital this past year.) At our post-parade luncheon, VFP Chapter 92 stalwart, 80-year-old Filipino veteran Dr. Pio DeCano, presented, somewhat emotionally, his life story. We were also entertained by Seattle’s favorite political folksinger, Chapter 92’s Jim Page.

Our First Nations chapter president, Phoenix Johnson, spoke at a People’s Town Hall organized by Washington Against Nuclear Weapons (WANW). Then everyone joined the Seattle Anti-War Coalition (SAWC)—Chapter 92 is a member—for a rally at the Seattle Federal Building before delivering petitions to our Senators Cantwell and Murray. Many VFPers join SAWC in that location every 1st Tuesday for a rally to End U.S. Endless Wars.

Pete Schoonmaker is working with the Divest-From-War Coalition, joining the campaign to move the City of Seattle to divest from the war machine.

We’re very pleased with the diversity of young veterans joining our chapter!

*Kim Loftness*

## #093 – SOUTH CENTRAL MICHIGAN

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On October 10, 2019, Chapter 93 presented its annual John Lennon Concert benefitting Michigan scholars in peace studies programs. Since 2006, more than \$22,000 has been awarded to 23 Michigan students in programs of study promoting peace, internationally and between individuals. Most of the grantees are students at one of two Michigan peace studies programs—at Wayne State University in Detroit and Michigan State University in East Lansing.

Lennon’s widow, Yoko Ono, donated the initial endowment of \$10,000 for the scholarship fund. The annual concerts are



One of the performers at Chapter 93's John Lennon 2019 benefit concert was Magdalen Fossum [magdalenfossum.wix.com/music].

scheduled on the nearest available date to Lennon's birthday. Chapter 93 is now working toward production of a music CD with a compilation of live recordings from recent John Lennon concerts, to be sold at chapter events.

Chapter 93 members organized and presented a set of workshops/talks at Martin Luther King Day Jr. celebrations on Monday, January 20, on the theme, "What They Didn't Want Martin To Talk About: War and Militarism."

Lynn Gilbert

## #099 – ASHEVILLE, NC

VFP Chapter 99 staffed a booth at the Mountain Heritage Day festival on the campus of Western Carolina University in Cullowhee, N.C., on September 28, 2019. The event was organized by Cindy Heil, with support from Bruce Carruthers. Besides Bruce and Cindy, various other members of Chapter 99 participated throughout the day, including Ed Sacco and Ellie Halsey, Chris Berg, Gerry and Candace Werhan, Ken Ashe,



About a dozen Chapter 99 members showed up, on foot and riding in a steady rain, for the November 2019 Asheville Holiday Parade.

and Silvia Carruthers. We obtained over 200 signatures for the Save the VA Petitions, which were mailed to Congressmembers Meadows and McHenry and Senators Tillis and Burr. Ed and Ellie distributed literature on, and talked to many students about, military recruitment and service. We also distributed literature on the impact the military has on climate change that Ken Ashe brought. All in all, despite one heavy downpour, it was a very successful outing.

About a dozen Chapter 99 members showed up, on foot and riding in a steady rain, for the 2019 Asheville Holiday Parade in November.

As always, various chapter members continue to show up for the weekly vigil for peace in downtown Asheville—perpetually protesting perpetual war every Tuesday since 2003.

Gerry Werhan and Bruce Carruthers

## #100 – SOUTHEAST ALASKA

VFP Chapter 100 continues to be active in Alaska despite the winter weather. We even managed to make the front page of the local newspaper on Armistice Day. See: <https://www.juneauempire.com/news/video-on-veterans-day-juneau-group-rings-bell-for-peace/>. Our major project this year has been planning the upcoming youth congress for the elimination of nuclear weapons, to be held in Sitka, Alaska, this coming April 6–10. This is a week-long conference for 40–60 students from Alaska and nuclear impacted countries including Russia, Kazakhstan, Japan, and the Marshall Islands, providing these future leaders with the leadership skills necessary to build an enduring movement dedicated to the global elimination of nuclear weapons.

This is an ambitious undertaking for our small group, and we are actively fundraising to meet the budget goals for the congress. I encourage everyone to visit the website for the congress, which has a "Donate" link, if folks are so inclined: <https://www.akhopecongress.org/>

Craig Wilson

## #102 – MILWAUKEE, WI

Veterans' health care and nuclear disarmament shared top billing at our 11th annual Armistice Day program. Gerry Condon, then-VFP national board president, told the crowd of 100-plus about the *Golden Rule* project, sailing the Pacific to educate people about the dangers of nuclear weapons and power. Brett Copeland, executive director of the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute, warned of continuing attempts to privatize VA health-care, and the danger that poses. The event was co-sponsored by more than 20 peace and justice organizations.

We continue to collaborate with unions representing VA workers and the Milwaukee Area Labor Council to oppose privatization and harassment and intimidation of workers. We have generated media coverage, circulated petitions, contacted

Chapter reports continued on page 20...

# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

*Chapter 102, Milwaukee, WI, continued...*

our Congressional representatives, and will participate in the February Save Our VA conference in Washington, D.C.

Chapter members are taking part in weekly protests against war in Iran and intervention elsewhere. We will hold our annual meeting in late January to set priorities for the chapter for the year ahead.

*Bill Christofferson*



**Brett Copeland, executive director of Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute, was one of the speakers at Chapter 102's Armistice Day program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Photo by Susan Ruggles.**

## #104 – EVANSVILLE, IN

September 26, 2019, World BEYOND War director David Swanson spoke at the University of Evansville on the topic, "Is Peace Possible?" Many who heard his message pledged to join the movement toward nonviolent approaches to conflict, and Chapter 104 signed on as a World BEYOND War affiliate.

Our fifth annual Veterans For Peace Scholarship was awarded to high school senior Nadia Scharf, whose 54-second video was judged best in answering the question, "Why Choose Peace?" She and chapter member John Michael O'Leary appeared on a local television show to showcase her work and discuss the tenets of Veterans For Peace.

We held our annual Reclaiming Armistice Day event on November 11, a somber commemoration marked by song and speeches proclaiming "Peace is Possible."

December 8 was our 21st annual Lennon Night, a tribute to the singer and songwriter's life in words and music. The popular event raised more than \$1,400 for the Iraq Water Project.

On January 4, 2020, members of VFP and affiliated groups turned out to the Evansville Four Freedoms Monument in cold, blustery weather to urgently protest the assassination of Iran General Suleimani and the dangerous tilt toward war with Iran. Chapter president Gary May spoke about the fact that wars kill many more civilians than combatants, a fact that is "shameful and must be stopped." [In photo on page 1, VFP Member Bart Lindenschmidt addresses the crowd at the Jan. 4th rally.]

*Lynn Kinkade*

## #106 – DALLAS, TX

As part of an extended week of actions during the Global Climate Strike Dallas, we cohosted a "BlackRock: Divest from War" demo with CodePink Dallas. We also cohosted a lecture with local scientists, "Climate Change and Food: Be Part of the Solution," where we served vegan hors-d'oeuvres.

Chapter 106 braved the cold and rain to once again march in the Dallas Veterans Day Parade, preceded by our annual ringing of the bells at an Armistice Day ceremony and followed by a group lunch.

In December, our chapter held its annual toy drive for Native American children for the Holiday Season Potluck and Mini Powwow put on by Native American veterans.

We attended a local IMPEACH Rally, displaying "UNFIT" in lights in front of our Trump (formerly Cheney) bobblehead. We also lit up City Hall with a projection of "SLAUGHTER SHINGLE MOUNTAIN," referencing an upcoming court decision in which a Judge Slaughter would be presiding. "Shingle Mountain" is an egregious example of environmental racism, a toxic pile of shingles several stories high, butting up to people's homes.

We attended and tabled at the Dallas Peacemaker Awards Banquet, where Chapter 106 member Dave Jensen read a beautiful "Inspirational" written by associate member Rev. Diane Baker, who was ill. He gave a heart-warming tribute to Diane, and the 300-plus people at the banquet raised their glasses to her.

We've continued our No War on Iran Campaign, cohosting an event themed "U.S. Out of Iraq; No War with Iran," which was well-attended and covered by three mainstream TV stations, and helping to organize the local January 25th International Day of Action for Peace with Iran.

*Leslie Harris*

## #112 – VENTURA COUNTY, CA

Ventura County VFP rallied September 20, 2019, at Ventura Mission Park, for the Global Week for Future Climate Strike, the largest climate strike in world history. Two days later, we tabled at the Ojai International Peace Day event. A chapter member addressed the Ventura County fairgrounds board of directors, explaining to them that the chapter would send a letter to California Governor Newsom supporting closure of the Del Mar County fairgrounds gun shows. (He did sign a California Assembly bill afterwards that ends the gun shows at Del Mar). Chapter 112 will continue to work in coalition with other organizations recommending closure of the state-owned Ventura County Fairgrounds gun shows.

In October, we tabled at the Multicultural Festival in Oxnard, displaying our missile chart. VFP partnered with Truth in Recruitment, Santa Barbara, on the Santa Maria Summit on Youth and the Military, featuring former VFP national board member Monisha Rios (via zoom communication) and members at the Unified U.S. Deported Veterans Support House in Tijuana. Live



**Chapter 112 members Carl and Sheila Smith, George Lewis and Michael Cervantes, pose at the Multicultural Festival in front of the art piece showing government's discretionary budget for 2020. Behind Michael is the low budgeted department of education represented by a book (\$62B).**

at the summit was luminary Edward Hasbrouck, an expert on the Selective Service System.

U.S. Marine Corps veteran, VFP Chapter 112 President Joe Acebedo, represented VFP at the 18th Annual Native American Veterans Association (NAVA) Veterans Appreciation and Heritage Pow Wow in South Gate, held Veterans Day weekend.

In December, the chapter met to discuss renewal of its website.

*Michael Cervantes*

## #113 - HAWAII

Chapter 113 sponsored a very successful fundraiser for VFP's historic, anti-nuke sailboat, *Golden Rule*, which has been in the waters of Hawai'i for the past six months. As of the end of December, *Golden Rule* Project Director Helen Jaccard has done educational events on every island in the Hawaiian Islands and the *Golden Rule* herself has been to every island except Molokai, Kaho'olawe (uninhabited due to extensive bombing by the U.S. military), and Niihau (closed to everyone but native Hawaiians). An article about the *Golden Rule* was featured on the front page of the *Honolulu Star Advertiser* and Hawai'i Public Radio and one of the TV stations did a series of programs covering her voyage.

An op-ed piece by VFP member Pete Doktor on the U.S. military jet fuel tanks at Red Hill, which hold 220 million gallons of jet fuel and sit only 100 feet above the water supply of Honolulu, was featured in the *Honolulu Star Advertiser*. VFP members have attended numerous community meetings trying to convince the U.S. Navy to close the fuel tanks.

Three members of our chapter attended the Healing of Memories retreat in Honolulu, a three-day event sponsored by the Institute of Healing-North America.

*Ann Wright*

## #115 - RED WING, MN

Our chapter is busy planning upcoming events, and with recent news from the Middle East, we hope many more people will participate. We participated in the January 25th nationwide peace rally here in Red Wing, grateful that the weather was not too frigid, because that week typically brings the coldest weather of the year.

We also sponsored an event on February 1, 2020, featuring Kathy Kelly of Voices For Creative Nonviolence (vcnv.org), who spoke on Iran.

Plans are progressing for this year's *Peacestock* event, scheduled for July 18, 2020, in Red Wing. We are proud to announce that we have lined up two great speakers, Andrew Bacevich (via Skype) and Norman Solomon (in person). Our theme this year is, "Where's the Truth?" because we are being lied to again about Iran, and probably everything.

*Bill Habedank*

## #133 - WESTERN MONTANA

Members of Western Montana Chapter 133 met outside Montana Senator Steve Daines' Missoula office on the evening of Thursday, January 9, 2020, with 60 others, to join the national protest of Washington's Iran policy and Daines' endorsement of President Trump's actions toward Iran. Member Dexter Aspevig, speaking to the *Missoulian* daily paper, said, "I fought in Vietnam; I know what war does and I don't want to see it again." Another vet, Andrew Person, was reported by the *Missoulian* as saying, "The last thing we need now is another war in the Middle East. What do we need from our senator, Senator Daines? We need him to ask tough questions. We need him to be independent... We don't need someone just to fall in line with whatever the White House decides to do."

Chapter members met the next day, Friday, for its enduring weekly protest with Women in Black on Missoula's Higgins Avenue bridge. Chapter members have made the commitment to stand for peace at this major artery until the need ceases to exist.

*John Snively*

## #134 - TACOMA, WA

Tacoma Chapter had a good year. This summer we bannered over Interstate Highway I-5 with signs saying "No War with Iran or Venezuela," and received mostly good responses from drivers stuck in traffic! We had activities about every month throughout 2019.

We were glad to take our Arlington Northwest display to Spokane, so it could be in interface with the community during the annual VFP convention hosted by our friends in Spokane Chapter 35. Two local television stations were so impressed that they interviewed a representative and put us on the local

*Chapter reports continued on page 22...*

# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

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*Chapter 134, Tacoma, WA, continued...*

news. A closing ceremony was held with representatives of the Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities.

We marched alongside the Seattle chapter in the annual Veterans Day Parade in Auburn, Washington. A booth in our state fair reached many. We are finding a few new members.

*Dave Dittemore*



*The Swords to Plowshares Belltower, created by member Roger Ehrlich and sponsored by the North Carolina Triangle Chapter.*

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## #157 – NORTH CAROLINA TRIANGLE

As U.S. military aggression escalates, we are seeing renewed interest in VFP and have added several new members to our ranks. We welcome them with open arms. Our activities over the past few months included the following:

- Participation in the Peace Booth at the North Carolina State Fair (coordinated by member Babs Freeman), where we collected approximately 800 petition signatures calling for AUMF repeal. They were delivered to the offices of our U.S. Senators Tillis and Burr, and North Carolina Governor Cooper, by members Doug Ryder, Roger Ehrlich, and Ray McGovern.
- Hosting a reading and discussion by member John Ketwig of his new book, *Vietnam Reconsidered*, followed by a meeting hosted by member Barry Reece.
- Marching in the annual Armistice Day Parade in Raleigh. The parade route passes the North Carolina State Capitol Building where our Swords to Plowshares Belltower was again on display for ten days surrounding the holiday.

A report by member Howie Machtinger, coordinator of VFP's Viet Nam: Full Disclosure campaign, on the December D.C. meetings, and the publication of Ron Carver's new book, *Waging Peace in Vietnam*, about GI and veteran organizing against the war in Viet Nam.

We're now taking to the streets to proclaim NO WAR ON IRAN!

*Douglas H. Ryder*

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## #160 – VIET NAM

The Hoa Binh chapter of VFP has several projects planned in Ha Noi and Da Nang that will be dedicated to the memory of Mike Cull.

Proposed projects in Ha Noi are a playground at Friendship Village and a house for the family of a victim of Agent Orange.

The completion of our proposed projects in Da Nang will coincide with VFP Chapter 160's annual Viet Nam tour, scheduled for September, which we are calling the Mike Cull Memorial Viet Nam Tour. To make a donation to these projects or for tour information, visit our website, [www.vfp160.org](http://www.vfp160.org).

*David E. Clark*

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## #161 – IOWA CITY

Last year was filled with activities and friendships, lots of effort, but the war river rolled on largely unimpeded.

In February 2019, at a wonderful fundraiser concert for Chapter 161, we enjoyed great peace songs while a blizzard raged outside.

A couple Iowa City VFPers participated in Chapter 163's drone protest in March. (Was the Jan 3rd drone strike piloted from Des Moines?)

A guest column on the true costs of war from Chapter 161 was published in Cedar Rapids and Quad Cities newspapers.

Members spoke to a Mennonite congregation, five middle school classes, and Kirkwood Community college.

On April 4, we held a community serial reading of MLK's "Riverside" speech.

We hosted USS Liberty survivor Bryce Lockwood's public presentation in June. Later that month, Chapter 161 led the Gay Pride parade, and in July, we participated in 4th of July parade, tabled at the county fair, and greeted 10,000 Ragbrai bike riders with peace messages.

Our November 11, 2019, Armistice Day observance was followed by a meal and open mic, featuring Coleen Rowley and Danny Sjurson. Coleen and Danny also spoke at a University of Iowa lecture.

Chapter members marched with and spoke at Climate Strikers' events; many went to Greta Thunberg's event.

Chapter 161 members have lobbied Democratic Presidential candidates and their staffs.

The chapter sent support to Daniel Hale and Chelsea Manning.

We continue to host a Peace Rally every Friday afternoon.

*Ed Flaherty*

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## #168 – LOUISVILLE, KY

Chapter 168 members have zeroed in on exposing the role of our hometown Senator, Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, in shilling for unending war. Chapter V.P. Carol Rawert Trainer published an op-ed in the *Louisville Courier Journal* titled "McConnell and Paul Must Pass Peace-building Act that Would Save

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Lives and Money” (Dec. 13, 2019). Chapter president Steven Gardiner interviewed VFP Advisory Board Member Matthew Hoh for our November 2019 *VFP Radio Hour* show, broadcast monthly on WFMP 106.5. The topic was the never-ending war in Afghanistan and McConnell’s support for its continuation. [This and all episodes of the show are available as podcasts via [forwardradio.org](http://forwardradio.org).]

VFP member John Wilborn attended the annual Unity Dinner sponsored by the Kentucky Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression. Members Patrick King and Hart Hagan continue to call out the role of the U.S. military in climate change.

John, Patrick, and Hart—along with Steven and Carol—produce and host shows on WFMP, as well as supporting the all-volunteer station. Fourth-quarter topics on *VFP Radio Hour* included U.S. imperialism, the war in Afghanistan, climate change, and an interview with member Gregory Abati, a published author and Vietnam War Marine Corps veteran.

Gregory’s two books, *In the Shadows of the Dead*—his Vietnam War memoir—and *The Journey: The Quest for Meaning*, are both available from VFP 168. All proceeds benefit the chapter.

Finally, we had a strong turnout at the Louisville Veterans Day Parade in November, carrying the message that the event should be reimagined as Armistice Day and all that represents.

*Steven Gardiner*

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## #180 – FRESNO, CA

Since the convention in Spokane, Chapter 180 has been hard at it. On August 31, 2019, we joined with over a hundred demonstrators from Fresno’s Indian-Pakistani community to rally in protest of the actions of the U.S.-supported Modi regime in Kashmir.

In September, Afghanistan veteran Jackson Shepherd joined Josh Shurley on a local radio program to discuss the legacy of 9/11. Also in September, Eduardo Castro worked the Veteran’s Stand Down, an effort to assist and uplift the local veteran homeless population.

In October, Castro attended the naturalized citizenship ceremony of a local navy veteran who had been facing deportation for the past two years, and later that month Chapter 180 President Joshua Shurley presented a report back from his participation in an IFCO delegation to Cuba.

In November, Fresno VFP members attended a vigil to commemorate Armistice Day, and on November 16, 2019, Josh Shurley and Chris Edstrom helped familiarize a group of local college students about an experimental eco-friendly transitional homeless shelter we partner with.

Finally, on January 4, 2020, Chapter 180 rang in the new year in response to the national call to action with a large rally in Fresno where we joined with several other local peace groups in protesting the reckless U.S. attacks on Iran and Iraq. We continue to strengthen our collaborations with other activist networks and are ready for an impactful 2020.

*Joshua Shurley*



*Chapter 181 members pose with their Armistice Day banner at the County Court House in Roseburg, Oregon. Photo by Jim McNulty,*

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## #181 – DOUGLAS COUNTY, OR

Chapter 181 held a demonstration in the spring of 2019 opposing a potential war in Iran, and took part locally in a national climate change action in October. In November, the chapter marched in the Roseburg, Oregon, Veterans Day Parade for the second year, again carrying our Armistice Day banner.

We had an informational table at the 44th Annual Spring Fair held March 29–31, 2019, at the Douglas County Fairgrounds, and also tabled in September at a local grocery store. In November, Chapter 181 members voted to start a fundraising campaign to help provide housing for homeless veterans.

*Robert Heilman*

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## #1004 – JAPAN

We missed Susan Schnall, president of New York City VFP Chapter 34, and Rachel Clark so much after their Japan speaking tour. In 18 days they traveled across Japan, touching the hearts of their audience. Please read their recent report for more details about the tour and various media appearances.

The most well received information from Susan Schnall’s presentation was the fact that she had organized and mobilized so many active-duty soldiers and veterans in antiwar actions during the Viet Nam era. This is what Japan’s current Self-Defense Forces (SDF) soldiers and veterans should consider in order to galvanize and stop the deployment of Japan’s SDF Navy to the Middle East.

For this reason, our recent collaboration with VFP’s “NO WAR in Iran” campaign has been pretty successful. We in Japan Chapter 1004 translated and shared the VFP statement dated 7 January 2020, which went viral and was so welcomed, with over 20,000 reached on Facebook in a week—a record high for social media responses since our chapter was established!

*Yukiko Takei*

# MEMBERS' STORIES

## GET THE WAR RACKET OUT OF FAIRBANKS!

ROB MULFORD

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA

On October 3–4, 2019, the Fairbanks North Star Borough (FNSB—equivalent to county in lower 48) and an organization calling itself the Association of Defense Communities (ADC) held a joint conference along with representatives from the uniformed services, local politicians, bankers, and businessmen, at the Fairbanks Westmark Hotel, titled Alaska Defense Forum. The meeting was touted as providing “state and local leaders with strategies they can use to build strong military-community partnerships and rally new defense community champions at the state and local level.”

A video ad for the event produced by the FNSB starts with this quote from General Billy Mitchell: “I believe that in the future, whoever holds Alaska will hold the world.”

Being viscerally affected by the recent killing of over 30 Afghan pine nut farmworkers by a U.S. drone strike, I could not allow this attempt to further militarize our local community and its economy to happen without protest. So I decided to perform a little street theater at the entrance of the hotel.

Not blocking the entrance nor directly in front of the doors, I stood wearing a sandwich board reading GET THE WAR RACKET OUT FAIRBANKS, and on the back, WARFIGHTER WANT OUT? CALL 877-447-4487 (the number for the GI Rights Hotline). I also carried a Veterans For Peace flag, on which I attached a small but fairly high quality amplified speaker and an MP3 player loaded with Buffy Sainte-Marie’s “The War Racket.” As folks entered the hotel, I marched (danced, really) back and forth to Buffy’s awesome tune.

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AND THAT’S HOW IT’S DONE  
ABOUT EVERY THIRTY YEARS  
THE RICH FILL THEIR COFFERS  
THE POOR FILL WITH TEARS  
THE YOUNG FILL THE COFFINS  
THE OLD HANG A WREATH  
THE POLITICIANS GET PHOTOGRAPHED  
WITH THEIR NAMES UNDERNEATH  
IT’S THE WAR RACKET  
IT’S THE PATRIOT GAME

—BUFFY SAINTE-MARIE, “WAR RACKET”

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At one point, a past FNSB mayor walked by and I greeted him with, “Well, if it ain’t the old warmonger, Luke Hopkins.” He replied, “I hope you’ll be able to keep warm.” I actually took this as a show of friendly concern for my well-being; the weather outside of the covered area where I was protesting was below freezing, and a light ice fog blanketed the area. I should mention here that when Luke Hopkins was mayor, he led an effort to

have a large military-industrial drone base constructed 40 miles south of here in the community of Salcha. I and a fairly large contingent of irate Salchans squelched his, the university’s, Lockheed Martin’s, and the military’s efforts. Since then, I believe he has carried a degree of resentment. I should have taken note of the grimace on his face, for a minute or two later, hotel security approached and told me that I was trespassing. They ordered me to leave hotel property, and to take my protest out to the public sidewalk or an adjacent street.

I declined. “This is an advertised public event. I am exercising my human right of free speech and my political right to petition.”

The hotel security employee replied, “This is private property. Would you accept me coming onto your home property to protest?”

I answered, “If a meeting is going on in my home between the military, bankers, businessmen, and local government officials, all engaged in war racketeering, you are most welcome to protest there.”

Security then informed me that he would call the Fairbanks police. I invited him to do so. When the city police officer arrived, he informed me that I was trespassing and that I had to leave the property or I would be arrested.

I told him, “This facility is hosting a Borough advertised public meeting. I have a right to protest. Get the mayor.”

He replied, “You are trespassing. You have to leave.”

I again demanded, “Get the mayor.”

He then ordered, “You have 30 seconds to leave the property, or I will place you under arrest!”

I then sat down on the sidewalk and pressed the play button on the MP3 player. The policeman asked, “Are you going to leave?”

I replied, “I sat down didn’t I?”

He ordered me to put my hands behind my back, so I made myself go limp; falling onto my side, my hands underneath me. I remained limp as he pulled my arms from beneath me and then handcuffed them together. About this time a second policeman, who had arrived on the scene just moments earlier, proceeded to retrieve my sandwich board, VFP flag, and MP3 player still playing Buffy’s tune. I could see the second policeman’s face. Just as he lifted the flag, Buffy’s voice cried out, “*And, that’s how it’s done, and you’ve got our sons, in the cross-hairs of horror at the end of a gun!*” He appeared visibly affected; I would venture to say, quite distraught. The second policeman quickly disconnected the audio cable between the MP3 player and the speaker, and after loading my possessions into his



patrol car, he assisted the first officer in carrying my limp body and placing it thoughtfully into the backseat of the first patrol car.

As the first officer prepared to pull out of his parking spot, he explained to me that he was taking me to the Fairbanks Correctional Facility, where I would be processed, and then released upon my own recognizance. He then explained that if I was to make it to the station before 5 P.M., I could retrieve my belongings; if not, they would be sent off to be held as evidence.

On the way to the jail, the two of us made some small talk. I noted that his surname was the same as one of my most favorite jazz musicians. He asked me if I was a veteran. Turns out he was too. We shared just a little about our service. He had retired out of the army before becoming a policeman.

As we arrived at the gates of the jail, he said, "I want you to know that I respect you for having the courage to stand for what you believe."

I had to wait a few hours for the second policeman to return to the station with my protest materials. Upon his arrival later that afternoon, he politely but quickly handed me my belongings, and then took off again in his patrol car, but then circled back to return my MP3 player, which had been under his seat. In our brief interaction, again I noticed a lingering sadness in his facial expression. Although he had not told me so, I got the feeling that he, also, was a veteran.

Would I have been treated as well if I had been a person of color, say an Alaska Native? I don't know, but our history does not bear up well to that question.

I have been arraigned and charged with Criminal Trespass II, a class B misdemeanor. So far, I have filed court records announcing my intention to defend myself before a jury. I have also filed my intention to proceed with a positive defense, focused on the reasons for my actions, and based upon public records. I will start with a congressional report on the Sand Creek Massacre, and then report my personal experiences, including those I gained in Pakistan, Palestine, and Standing Rock. It is my intention to link the Doctrine of Discovery, crimes committed at Sand Creek, and the murder of over 30 pine nut farmworkers in Afghanistan. My intention is to shed light on the criminal racketeering that I was protesting. I have also declared my intention to use my protest props, including the playing of Buffy's tune, "The War Racket," and showing the aforementioned Borough promotional video in the courtroom. It is my hope to get a relatively good proportion of veterans and active duty servicemen on the jury.

On the court documents I filed, I inscribed the following statement on the signature page:

I, ROBERT STEVEN MULFORD, acknowledge that the land I occupy, known as Fairbanks, Alaska, is the un-surrendered traditional territory of the lower Tanana Dene Peoples and the Dena'ina Peoples.

*Rob Mulford can be reached at [robmulford-1979@runbox.com](mailto:robmulford-1979@runbox.com).*



## ARE YOU FOR WAR OR PEACE?

RICHARD CZAPLINSKI  
GREEN MOUNTAIN, VERMONT

"Are you for War or Peace?"

This was the question that I and a fellow veteran for peace asked folks as they entered and exited the Montpelier, Vermont, U.S. Post Office Saturday morning, January 4, 2020. We tallied up the results on a flip chart covered with plastic to keep off the melting snow.

The whole point of our being out there was to respond to the escalation towards war in the Middle East. We felt, given the wide division in the country now, it would be good to engage folks in conversation and maybe bridge the gap a bit.

As the votes for peace mounted (the final tally was 95 for peace and 1 for war), we would point to the chart and ask, "If (almost) everybody is for peace, why are we at war?" With many folks this led to some interesting comments and discussions: "It's complicated"; "There are bad guys out there"; "Congress gave away its war-making power to the president after 9/11"; "It's about economic sanctions"; "We have to protect our troops."

One person remarked, "This question is like asking, 'Are you for health or sickness?'" This got me to thinking. Why do we choose to eat all that sugar-sweetened stuff when it's not good for us and leads to sickness? Are we hard wired to go for honey? Are we hard wired to use war instead of diplomacy to resolve our problems? I don't think so!

The one person who was for war did not stop to talk, and we respected his decision to engage no further, as we did others who were in a hurry or on a mission to get their business done.

Veterans For Peace Chapter 57 is doing these kinds of actions in the sincere hope that such conversations will lead to a better understanding of why we are at war and how we—the U.S. and other nations of the world—might see ways to be more peaceful and act on them.

# UPCOMING EVENTS

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MARCH 15–17, WASH., DC

## 70 Years Too Long: National Action to End the Korean War

Join the national grassroots effort for peace in Korea. 2020 marks the 70th year of the Korean War. It's time to end the war and make it year one of peace. Join the Korea Peace Now! Grassroots Network, Peace Treaty Now and the Korea Peace Network in Washington D.C. to raise a unified voice for an end to the Korean War and peace on the Korean Peninsula. Find more details at <https://koreapeacenow.org/join-the-national-grassroots-gathering-for-peace-in-korea-in-march-2020/>

MARCH 27–29, TUCSON, AZ

## Training Day and Action Convergence: End Root Causes of Forced Migration

U.S.-led and supported state violence throughout the Americas results in the forced disappearance, forced migration, torture, murder, and devastation of our communities. We know that while our communities are under attack, it is our responsibility to organize, resist, and fight back. To further our goal of dismantling border imperialism and ending all forms of U.S.-led and supported violence, School of the Americas Watch (SOAW) is working in collaboration with Stop U.S. Arms to Mexico, No More Deaths, Alliance for Global Justice, Justice for José Antonio Coalition, and others to facilitate this convergence. Find more details at [soaw.org](http://soaw.org).

APRIL 6–10, SITKA, AK

## Point Hope: Alaska's Youth Congress for the Global Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

A week-long youth conference for a select group of students from Alaska and nuclear impacted countries, including Russia, Kazakhstan, Japan, and the Marshall Islands. The goal is to empower young Alaskans with the leadership skills necessary to build an enduring statewide

movement that can bring Alaska-specific concerns and insights into the ongoing efforts of national and international organization dedicated to the global elimination of nuclear weapons. Find more details at [akhopecongress.org](http://akhopecongress.org).

APRIL 24–26, NEW YORK, NY

## World Conference, Rally, March, and Petitions Presentations

An international coalition of disarmament, climate, justice and peace organizations is organizing a World Conference, rally, march, and petitions presentations on the eve of the U.S. Department of State's 2020 NPT (Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty) Review Conference.

The World Conference is engaging the broadest possible collaborations with nuclear weapons abolition, peace, justice and environmental constituencies, as well as with diplomats and politicians from countries which are actively and meaningfully committed to achieving a nuclear weapon-free world, a sustainable environment, and social and economic justice.

On April 26, conference attendees will rally at Union Square and then march to Dag Hammarskjold Plaza for the presentation of 10 million-plus signatures on petitions for nuclear weapons abolition.

Find more details and registration info at [worldconference2020.org](http://worldconference2020.org).

MAY 25, WASHINGTON, DC

## Memorial Day Letters to The Wall

VFP's "Viet Nam: Full Disclosure" (VNFD) campaign is all about resisting our government's attempts to mythologize and glorify the war 50 years on, for no other reason than to legitimize and bolster current and future wars. Our annual Letters to The Wall project is an important part of our resistance.

Over the past five years we have delivered hundreds of letters in a very powerful Memorial Day ceremony. We have witnessed visitors to The Wall on Memorial Day pick up these letters—left in unsealed envelopes labeled "READ

ME"—and be noticeably moved.

To get in on this year's campaign, simply email your letter to Doug Rawlings at [rawlings@maine.edu](mailto:rawlings@maine.edu) before May 21, 2020. We will print it out, place it in an envelope, and deliver it to The Wall on the morning of Memorial Day. You may sign your letter with your full name, or not. Please note that by sending us your letter, unless you explicitly opt out, you are giving us permission not just to place it at the memorial, but also to post it on the VNFD website ([vietnamfulldisclosure.org](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org)) and possibly include it in the next volume of *Letters to The Wall*.

Find more details and read past years' letters on the VNFD website: [vietnamfulldisclosure.org](http://vietnamfulldisclosure.org).

MAY 26–31, OTTAWA, ON

## #NOWAR2020: Divest, Disarm, Demilitarize

At World BEYOND War's 5th annual global conference, an international coalition of individuals and organizations will converge on Ottawa to say No to CANSEC, Canada's biggest annual weapons expo. A week of activities includes activism workshops and trainings, panel discussions, film screenings, art, music, dance, and nonviolent action. Join others in calling for conversion for a peaceful, green, & just future. Find details at [nowar2020.worldbeyondwar.org](http://nowar2020.worldbeyondwar.org).

JUNE 3–12, KINGSTON, RI

## 2020 International Nonviolence Summer Institute

History shows that the success of peaceful social transformation depends largely on individual leaders who are knowledgeable and well trained in the strategies and methods of nonviolence. This summer, participants from many countries and various regions throughout the U.S. will converge at the University of Rhode Island Kingston Campus to learn about the philosophy and teachings of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., developing the leadership skills necessary for promoting peace, nonviolence, civil resistance, and



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

### Statement of Purpose

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

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

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

*THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF  
VETERANS FOR PEACE!*

social change in their local communities, region, or globally. Find details at [web.uri.edu/nonviolencesummerinstitute/](http://web.uri.edu/nonviolencesummerinstitute/).

SEPT. 12-27, VIET NAM

### Mike Cull Memorial Viet Nam Tour hosted by VFP Chapter 160

This year's Peace Tour of Viet Nam is the ninth in a series that began in 2012. The itinerary for the nationwide tour from Ha Noi to Ho Chi Minh City covers popular tourist destinations and old battle sites, and includes meetings with Vietnamese veterans, officials, and beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance who suffer from maladies caused by UXO accidents, Agent Orange contamination, and other legacies of the American war. For further information, email Chuck Searcy at [chuckusvn@gmail.com](mailto:chuckusvn@gmail.com), or Paul Cox at [paulcox890@comcast.net](mailto:paulcox890@comcast.net), or call Paul at 510-418-3436 (leave a message).

OCT. 2-5, NEVADA DESERT

### Nevada Desert Experience

Join us for Interfaith Resistance to Weaponized Drones, Militarism and Nuclearism. Stay tuned for details at <http://nevadadesertexperience.org/beyond2020>.

*SAVE THE DATE!* 2020 VFP Convention, Albuquerque, New Mexico, Aug. 5-9

## All Is One: Toward a Peaceful and Nuclear Free World

The Albuquerque and Santa Fe Chapters of Veterans For Peace invite you to the 2020 VFP National Convention to be held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Inclusive dates are Wednesday, 5 August through Sunday, 9 August. We will hold a gathering on Thursday afternoon and evening, 6 August, up in Los Alamos commemorating the dropping of the atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima, which was done on 6 August 1945. Participants will be bused to and from Los Alamos that afternoon and night. We have invited Dahr Jamail to be our Keynote Speaker at our Saturday night banquet and he graciously accepted. Further events are in development and convention registration is pending.



*Aerial view of road to Los Alamos. [Source: atomicheritage.org]*



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Left to Right—Top: VFP Chapter 134 freeway banner being held at Tollefson Square during Tacoma antiwar rally, Jan. 9, 2020 (Kristi Nebel); news coverage of Dallas protest. Bottom: Dallas group shot from same day; Chapter 180's Josh Shurley calls out the mainstream media.