



Exposing the True Costs of War
and Militarism Since 1985

VETERANS FOR PEACE

Organized locally. Recognized internationally.

VFP Newsletter

veteransforpeace.org

Summer 2020

VETERANS FOR BLACK LIVES

WHEN EVENTS SPARK MASS MOVEMENTS IN THIS NATION demanding social justice and human rights, it seems impossible not to take action, as military veterans and Veterans For Peace. The latest police murders of people of color set off reactions across the country. Many of our members stepped up to demonstrate solidarity with the movement, understanding that demands for equity and justice for all members of our society is a critical aspect of creating peace.



The work starts here. As many of our own members will acknowledge, we have a long way to go toward making VFP equitable internally. Being a veteran for Black lives entails more than holding a sign at a march or vigil. It also requires internal reckoning, not just in the current moment, but for the longhaul.

How do we honor the wisdom and expertise of our members of color, our women and young veterans? Do we actually hold space, listen to, and uplift other voices, or just seek to speak for them? We must do the internal work that creates and holds a space that upholds our code of conduct. If we cannot achieve



TULSA, OKLAHOMA

PHOTO: FRANK DECK

peace together, how can we expect to succeed at achieving peace in the larger society?

At the national office, we have dedicated ourselves to growing relationships with organizations that can help guide us so we move in accountable ways to Black leaders. We will be creating tools that can help our white members do a deep dive into learning about the systematic nature of white supremacy and ways in which it shows up in our organizations and chapters. We can never stop learning how to confront white supremacy—even inside ourselves. I have been asked by several chapter leaders to help facilitate discussions and offer material to help their members repair harm and grow their intercultural understanding. We will soon have more resources for everyone.

We have also launched efforts to pressure decision-makers to

stop the mobilization of the military against citizens exercising their First Amendment rights. I feel that one of the core beliefs in VFP is that one of the most successful ways to end conflict is if the fighters refuse to kill. We have an incredible history of GI resistance in our organization, and new leaders have stepped up in this moment and are now hosting a weekly livestream program called #StandDownLive to reach *continued on page 2...*

2020 ONLINE CONVENTION



— See page 14 for details!—



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**VFP Newsletter is published in
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VFP CHAPTER REPORTS FALL ISSUE DEADLINE

→ SEPT. 10, 2020 ←

Please keep report to 200 words.
Include the reporter's name along
with chapter #/name/location.

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wide or more works well. Please
include a caption and try to
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Veterans For Black Lives

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new veterans and current active duty
personnel with this message.

The effort to convince military
members to stand down has not changed
because troops are being activated
against our own neighbors. It does mean
that we have an obligation to assist
warriors who follow their conscience to
ensure they have access to the counsel,
support and connections that can
help ease consequences and reinforce
their courage. We are making more
connections with organizations and
individuals that offer these services in
order to grow a peer support network.
The awakening of military members is in
large part the way forward to end war at
home and abroad.

This current moment, and the
demands being offered up by the
powerful resistance we are seeing on
the streets, is globalized, with protests
in solidarity happening around the
world. One of the main oppressors of
communities of color outside our own
borders is the U.S. military, as the armed
forces often serve to enforce imperialism
and colonialism throughout the world.
Fighting for the rights of vulnerable
people outside our own nation, but not
opposing the systematic violence of our
own citizens is narrow-sighted. Fighting
for racial justice in our country but not
fighting for equity in our own organization
is hypocritical. So let's fight to end white
supremacy not just in the streets, but
in our own chapter meetings and in our
broader organization.

—Garett Reppenhagen
Executive Director

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

July 1, 2020

Dear Veterans For Peace,

Thank you so much to all of our members who sent in donations over the past few months. Your generosity has helped us begin to stabilize our financial situation during this trying time in support of our work toward peace and social justice.

We are continuing to organize in online meeting spaces and prepare for our first online convention. Our business meeting this year will also be held online, in conjunction with our convention, and that segment of the convention is **FREE** for all active members.

I know we will miss the social aspect of our in-person convention, which is so important to supporting us in our work, but we will persevere. **Please see pages 14–15 for a preview of the upcoming convention program and how to register**, and of course you can find the information online as well.

With more states and cities beginning to reopen, our members are beginning to reengage in physical spaces to organize in solidarity with communities that are saying no to racism, hatred, sexism, discrimination, oppression, and environmental degradation. We encourage members to continue drawing the connections between all of the above and war and militarism.

At the same time, we encourage all members to continue to find ways to organize that is protective of their personal health as well as that of the broader public. And remember, we don't want to get back to the old normal. **We want to continue advancing a new normal in which people are aware and engaged and woke to the societal changes needed to be a better humanity.**

Veterans For Peace is an important space. It is a space we need to protect and keep active and forward thinking while remembering our roots. **There is a balance we are always striving to achieve to ensure that all voices are given space and respect as we do this work together.** Sometimes members are asked to step back so that others can have a chance to share and grow. It is all part of the process and exemplifies what a better world might look like—giving everyone a chance to participate and to shine.

With this in mind, and knowing how important our individual voices are in making Veterans For Peace the amazing organization that it is, **I invite all members to participate in a video collage.** To take part, please submit a short video containing the following three segments:

1. **Read our statement of purpose** (as found on our website, veteransforpeace.org).
2. **Share why you joined VFP and/or what positive change you hope to see in the world** (please keep to 60 seconds or less).
3. **Close with, "Peace IS Possible" or "Peace at Home, Peace Abroad."**

We will compile these videos over the course of the next few months for release in a collage. **Videos can be emailed to: feedback@veteransforpeace.org.** We will also accept photographs, preferably with members holding a sign that makes some reference to the above.

The people united will never be defeated!

In solidarity,

**Adrienne Kinne, President
Veterans For Peace Board of Directors**



VFP PROJECT UPDATE

KOREA PEACE CAMPAIGN

JOHN KIM, CHAIRPERSON

kpc@veteransforpeace.org

VFP-KPC sends Open Letter to Korean People for June opening of peace park

Concerned South Korean peace groups finished and opened the Hyosoon-Miseon Peace Park recently, created in memory of the two young Korean school girls crushed to death by a heavy U.S. armored vehicle that was traveling on the South Korean countryside road in 2002. Photos of the park may be found at the Korean website, peaceone.org.

The opening ceremony took place on June 13, at the site nearby where the girls died (Gwangjerk-Ri, Yangju City, Gyonggi-Do). VFP's Korea Peace Campaign sent an "Open Letter to the Korean People," which was translated and read to the audience who attended the ceremony. [Reprinted below.]

Korea Peace Campaign project contributed \$1,200 toward the Peace Park project last year. Thanks to all the VFP members who contributed to our fund!

End the Endless Korean War!

Give Peace to the Korean People!



Open Letter to the Korean People

(Welcoming the Opening of the Hyosoon-Miseon Peace Park)

June 10, 2020

Dear Korean Friends,

On this historic opening of the long-awaited "Hyosoon-Miseon Peace Park" in Yangju City, South Korea, we send our warm greetings to all the Korean people who are assembled for this special ceremony on June 13. As a small contributor for the construction of this peace park, we are very pleased to hear of this ceremony and join you in spirit. In particular, we want to send our congratulations to all the Korean volunteers and the civil society groups that have worked so hard for many years to finish this important project successfully.

Whenever we think of the untimely deaths of the two Korean teenage school girls, we also feel your deep pain and sadness

over this great tragedy. As former soldiers of the U.S. military, including many veterans of the Korean War and those who served in South Korea in the post-armistice period, we would like to offer our sincere apology to the surviving family members of Shin Hyosoon and Shim Miseon as well as other Korean people who have suffered much due to the many crimes that have been committed in Korea by the U.S. military in the past 75 years.

It is very encouraging for us to see that the deaths of Hyosoon and Miseon are not in vain. Their cruel death on June 13, 2002, caused by a 50-ton U.S. armored vehicle travelling on a public road, and the subsequent acquittal of the three crew members of the vehicle in a U.S. military tribunal aroused justified anger among many Korean people—sparking a series of candlelight, vigil protests for about ten months in South Korea. This people's movement resulted in the birth of a new protest culture of candlelight vigils in South Korea.

Finally, we believe that a full justice for Hyosoon and Miseon will be realized only when all the U.S. troops leave Korea. We hope such a day will come in the near future so that Korean people can live in peace at last—free from any fear or danger of the foreign forces and their deadly weapons of mass destruction. Let's work together for a permanent peace in Korea!

Long Live Hyosoon and Miseon at this peace park!

End the Korean War Now!

In Solidarity,

Col. Ann Wright (Ret.)

Coordinator, Korea Peace Campaign

Veterans For Peace, USA

VFP assists WCC with video project for 70th

The World Council of Churches (WCC) contacted VFP's Korea Peace Campaign to ask for help in finding three veterans of the Korean War to interview, in connection with a video project timed to coincide with the 70th anniversary of the war this year. John Kim introduced Stan Levin, Jack Doxey, and former Rep. Pete McCloskey to the journalist working for WCC, and the three veterans agreed to be interviewed. Our committee will receive a copy of the video when it is finished, and we may post it on the KPC site after we review it.

KPC allied with others working for peace on the Korean Peninsula

VFP Korea Peace Campaign is part of the NGO Korea Peace Network alliance, and also works in collaboration with Women Cross DMZ, a global movement of women mobilizing for peace on the Korean Peninsula. These two groups hosted a webinar on "Korea: the Unknown War" presented by Prof. Bruce Cumings on June 25, 2020. Future activities for peace on the peninsula may be found at www.womencrossdmz.org.

VETERANS JOIN THE CALL FOR A GLOBAL CEASEFIRE!



VFP Member and UN Liaison Ellen Barfield



VFP Member and Advisor Matthew Hoh



VFP Board Member Josh Shurley

“The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war.”

—Secretary General Antonio Guterres

by Ellen Barfield

These are the words United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres used when he issued a bold world ceasefire call on March 23, 2020, in the face of the looming COVID-19 pandemic. *Well, glory be!* I said to myself, the UN is *finally* implementing its foundational aspiration to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war!

Now is certainly the best time to try to call a halt, even temporarily, to shooting and bombing, to try to save each nation's own soldiers at least. War is certainly *not* an essential activity when all are threatened by a new virus.

Though worldwide activists rightly excoriate the UN for failing to even mention war very often, much less prevent or resolve it, the UN was in fact carefully designed to never have that ability, with the powers that won WWII making themselves firsts among “equals” building the UN system. The UN General Assembly (GA) is all nations together equally, but the GA does not deal with war. The Security Council does—with five permanent members, the U.S., Russia, France, UK, and China, and ten other nations in rotating seats with no real power. Rightly, but problematically,

the richest nations owe the highest UN dues, so the U.S. has outsized economic coercion on the UN too.

So representing VFP's specifically antiwar stance at the UN is not easy. UN NGO's are expected to focus on charitable good works, centered in publicizing the Development Goals, to reduce poverty, pollution, illiteracy, etc. But since the UN is the obvious alternative to war, VFP remains affiliated. So when Guterres's ceasefire call came out, I contacted VFP President Kinne and Executive Director Reppenhagen (also VFP Representatives to the UN) urging VFP to create an appeal to send to U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Kelly Craft.

Response to the ceasefire call by warring entities has of course been mixed. Early on, 12 parties to armed conflicts seemed willing. The Afghan government and the Taliban agreed to a three-day ceasefire for the Eid celebration at the end of Ramadan, which had only ever happened once before during 19 years of that war. In Africa in late May, armed groups in Cameroon, Sudan, and South Sudan had declared unilateral ceasefires, and the African Union's 2020 theme is “Silencing the Guns: Creating Conducive Conditions for Africa's

Development.”

Not surprisingly, the U.S. and Russia obstructed any possibility that the UN would officially pass the ceasefire, the U.S. claiming that terrorism and threats to Israel required free waging of war, and objecting to wording in support of the World Health Organization. At bottom of this page is a link to an excellent article elaborating on how pathetic that is.

Like most UN efforts, the real power is in the moral narrative. Even though disappointing to not be passed officially, Secy General Guterres' call for worldwide ceasefire inspired many to think a little more about war ever being necessary, and at least some lives have been saved from shooting or bombing, if sadly not from sanctions. The struggle continues.

BREAKING NEWS! On Wed., July 1, Reuters reported the Security Council *finally* passed the “coronavirus truce,” with China and Trump still sniping at each other but letting it go into effect, calling for all armed forces to stop fighting for 90 days to allow humanitarian aid to flow.

Ellen Barfield (U.S. Army 1977–1981), co-founder of Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter 105 in Baltimore, MD, is VFP's Head Representative to the UN Department of Global Communication.

Recommended: <https://www.passblue.com/2020/05/10/pathetic-the-us-pulls-the-plug-on-a-un-global-cease-fire-resolution/>

LETTERS TO THE WALL

ABOUT 2500 YEARS AGO, Sophocles wrote the tragedy *Ajax* to help the soldiers that he fought with in the war between Athens and Sparta to emotionally come to grips with their war experiences. Ajax feels betrayed because he was denied receiving the armor of his cousin and friend Achilles as was the custom. Ajax went home and destroyed livestock and other parts of his home. He took his son to the top of a hill and killed himself.

After I visit The Wall and mourn the loss of everyone whose name is inscribed, like Ajax I get enraged because I also am denied receiving the armor of my fallen companions like was done in Ancient Greece. There are no arms to pass on, because the war was not just. In *Henry IV*, Shakespeare writes, “The arms are fair, When the intent of bearing them is just.” In *Henry V*, Shakespeare writes, “But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make.” This lack of just cause—produced arms to be passed on was felt when I opened the screen door to knock on the door of a small house in northern Massachusetts to tell the parents that their only son had been killed. I felt naked and fully received every blow that the mother gave me. I still feel them today, especially when I visit The Wall.

I am sorely tempted to lie to myself that the cause was just. Like Ajax, Ernest Hemingway also killed himself. In *Farewell to Arms*, Hemingway wrote, “I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice....I had seen nothing sacred, and the things were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done to the meat except to bury it.”

Unless I lie to myself, I will always be denied receiving the fair arms that Shakespeare wrote about.

Paul Appell

Viet Nam 1970–71

DEAR VIETNAM VETS — those honored here and those who returned—and your families:

I was just in grade school when my favorite Uncle Randy joined the air force to avoid the draft, serving as a navigator on a B-52. While I was most impressed with the cool presents he would send me from Thailand, even as a child what really struck me were the audiotapes he would send our family. We would huddle around and hear his familiar voice telling us about his life in Bangkok, tales from a faraway land.

But then his voice would change and he would talk about the crisis of conscience he was having dropping those deadly bombs on unsuspecting people—families, children. I can still see him talking to my parents and (then pregnant) aunt while on leave, his voice strong as ever but cracking as he struggled with how he would explain to his unborn child what he does for a “living.”

Flash forward to my first visit to the Vietnam War Memorial. After visiting the WWII memorial and placing flowers there in honor of my father who served in the Pacific sphere and fortunately returned home, I walked over to the newly opened Vietnam War Memorial. I knew it would be emotional, but I had envisioned it as a solitary experience. Instead, as I approached there were several other small groups of people, placing flowers in silent tears, others searching for names and quietly touching them as they found them. That image is etched in my mind forever.

Fast forward further to a conference on human trafficking that we organized at our university. Our keynote speaker works with an NGO attempting to address the evils associated with the huge prostitution ring in Bangkok, fallout from the massive U.S. military presence during the Vietnam war.

The Vietnam war destroyed so many people’s lives in so many ways—

Americans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Thais. We need to remember this if we are ever to achieve world of peace. Or at least a more peaceful world.

Peace be upon us all,

Linda Beck

IT WAS 1970 in Manhattan. My roommate and best friend Ruth had lost her fiancé, Jim (James Parmelee), to “friendly fire” in Vietnam in 1969. In her grieving, Ruth fell asleep every night breathing in her fiancé’s smell on one of his old tee shirts. Her grief was beyond measure.

Years later, I went with Ruth to visit the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., to look for Jim’s name on the wall. There was a huge crowd of people there also looking for the names of their loved ones. We made our way slowly through the crowd intensely and silently focused on finding Jim’s name. We both found his name at exactly the same time, which was powerful and meaningful in itself. But the mind-blowing thing that happened was at exactly the same moment, a Veteran standing on a level high above us began to play taps on his trumpet. We were blown away both with his skill and with the depth of his caring for what we felt. We experienced in that moment immense heartbreak and powerful understanding. We were deeply moved and grateful that day for the wall that honored those who died in Vietnam and for the trumpeter’s understanding of our grief.

Thank you,

Rosalind Larsen

THERE ARE MORE THAN 58,000 names up there, and I don’t know which of the 58,000 I’m talking to, but [you will know]: I’m talking to the ones who would remember Joan Duffy caring for you as you lay dying in the hospital at Cam Ranh Bay in ’69 or ’70. Or maybe you were one of the too many

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VFP CHAPTER COMMEMORATIONS

Every year, Veterans For Peace commemorates Memorial Day, not just to remember loved ones lost in wars, but to remember the true costs of war. This year, although most VFP chapters could not hold physical gatherings due to COVID-19 shelter-in-place precautions, members found new and creative ways to connect online and continue spreading the message that every death from war is an unnecessary death.

VFP urged members to take action from home by signing online petitions, flying VFP flags from their porches, and printing out signs with the messages “Veterans Call for Global Ceasefire” and “Healthcare NOT Warfare” to put in their windows.

Many VFP members wrote OpEds and Letters to the Editors of their local newspapers. Other chapters, like Will Miller Chapter 57 (Green Mountain, Vermont) and Chapter 99 (Asheville, North Carolina) sponsored ads on local radio stations.

Two of our chapters created compelling videos to share. Former VFP Executive Director Michael T. McPhearson put together a video with reflections and pointed insights from Chapter 92 members about Memorial Day. The Smedley Butler Brigade, Chapter 9 (Boston, Mass.) put together a physically distanced memorial, depicting individual members honoring victims of war at, or near, their homes.



Members of Chapter 178 gathered at the Greeley Veterans Memorial at Bittersweet Park in Greeley, Colorado. Photo: Ben Schrader.

Chapter 34 (New York City) successfully moved their annual Memorial commemoration online, attracting 150 registrants on Zoom and 30 presenters, reading statements, poems, Letters to The Wall, and playing music. Chapter 27 (Twin Cities, Minnesota), Chapter 63 (Albuquerque, New Mexico), Chapter 80 (Duluth, Minnesota), and Chapter 157 (North Carolina Triangle) also held Memorial Day commemorations via Zoom.

Chapter 14 in Gainesville, Florida, held a virtual tour of their “Memorial Mile” in lieu their annual ceremony that draws hundreds, if not thousands, each year to visit the full mile of memorial markers honoring service members fallen in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Two chapters were able to meet in person (while following social distancing rules and taking other precautions). Members of Dan Lyons Chapter 178 in Northern Colorado, who gathered at the Greeley Veterans Memorial at Bittersweet Park, and members of Sgt. Barrios Memorial Chapter 182 in Tijuana, Baja, Mexico, who gathered to read the names on a veterans mural as a reminder of the injustice and negligence with which U.S. military veterans are treated. [See photos on page 23.]

This is just a summary. A full report-back of VFP Memorial Day actions with links to videos, photos, articles, and podcasts can be found online at <https://bit.ly/VFP2020Recap>.

that she patched up and bitterly watched as you were returned to battle, only to be killed later, breaking her heart every time. She was the one who removed the stitched-on LTJG bars on her uniform and replaced them with images of Snoopy! You probably wouldn't be surprised to hear that she eventually became an avid antiwar activist and the most effective member of the Santa Fe, New Mexico, Chapter of Veterans For Peace—the chapter that was named for her as she, in turn, lay dying of Agent Orange-induced ovarian cancer. And you would probably agree that her name deserved to be up on that wall as much as yours.

Ken Mayers

TO: PFC James J. Stewart USMC

DEAR JIMMY,

You and I both went to grammar and high school together! We ran track for Southie High. You were fast as the wind! After graduation I went on to college as you joined the Marines! Unfortunately you were killed in action only 2 weeks after your arrival during the TET Offensive! Upon graduating from college I won the draft lottery and was sent to Vietnam. I was very lucky to have survived. The past 18 years I have been protesting the War on Terror in the Streets of Boston with the Veterans For Peace. If you lived I am sure you would

be with me! This war is the Vietnam War in the 21st Century for our country. I look back at all the fun we had in our youth! I really miss your companionship now, telling people how horrible war is.

Your classmate and Friend,
Joe Kebartas, VFP Chapter 9
Smedley Butler Brigade

LETTERS TO THE WALL was spearheaded by VFP's Doug Rawlings as a **Viet Nam: Full Disclosure** project. Two volumes of letters have been published since the first letters were laid at The Wall in 2015, and another is in the works. Find more letters under Events/ Memorial Day at vietnamfulldisclosure.org.

PEACE MONUMENTS

Creating the Sebastopol Living Peace Wall

WHY I BUILT THE WALL AND A "HOW TO"
BY MICHAEL GILLOTTI, VFP CHAPTER 71

It all started in 2012.

I was sitting in our town plaza in downtown Sebastopol, California, reflecting on how the Bush administration had managed to convince the American people and congress to go to war with Iraq. The war mongering had been building for several months until a consensus formed that Saddam Hussein was an imminent threat to our survival and war was inevitable.

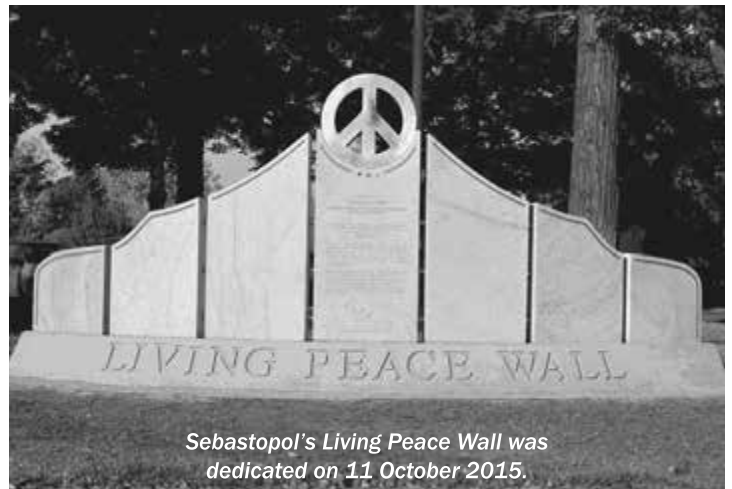
Cable news networks interviewed ex-generals and war hawks on a regular basis. Rarely if ever did I see any advocates for peace or hear any serious discussion of nonviolent alternatives to resolving the conflict. It was all “shock and awe” for television viewers, with little concern for the Iraqis at the other end of the shocking and awing, voices of “peacemakers” again drowned out by the constant drum-beating of the hawks.

But what if peacemakers’ voices had been heard? What if they had been featured on cable news daily? What if, instead of being vilified and marginalized, they had been offered a seat at the table? What if their opinions had been considered as seriously as those of generals and other purported “experts”? Perhaps we wouldn’t have rushed into one of the greatest tragedies of our lifetimes, resulting in enormous suffering and death and the destabilization of an entire region.

Iraq seemed like another Viet Nam.

Though I had initially planned to join the Marines and fight communism in Viet Nam, I had a transformative experience during my sophomore year in seminary college. One of my classmates had been to Viet Nam and shared what was really going on there. What I learned from him and other sources led me to believe that what we were doing there was immoral. I wanted nothing to do with it—with all the killing, maiming and destruction. I simply would not put myself in a situation to either kill or be killed. So I filed for Conscientious Objector status with my Iowa draft board. I also began doing draft counseling at my college and helped organize and lead antiwar demonstrations.

Friends of mine fought in Viet Nam. Some didn’t come back. Others came back with physical or mental injuries. When the Iraq war started, all I could think about was how this generation of young soldiers would end up dead or traumatized just like Viet Nam vets were. Deep in my heart, I searched for a way to prevent this from happening in the future. That search led me to the concept for the Living Peace Wall.



The project began with a visualization.

As I sat in the Sebastopol Plaza that day in 2012, I hit upon the idea of a peace wall and began to visualize what it might look like. I saw a peace symbol mounted in the center of a wall that radiated out to the right and left like the wings of a dove. The entire concept unfolded from there.

There would be an inscription in the center, below the peace symbol, stating its purpose: to honor the peacemakers. There would be quotes from Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and Cesar Chavez.

It wouldn’t be a static monument to peace. Every year we would infuse it with life by adding names of peacemakers to the wall and holding a ceremony to honor them. Since some of the people would not be well known, we would maintain a website with the names and bios of the honorees. And finally, we would get the community involved by having them send in nominations each year for who we should honor. I would form a committee to review the nominations and choose the honorees.

It took time, money, and buy-in from the city.

Most war memorials are located in town squares or plazas. Because in some ways I saw the peace wall as a counterbalance to all the war memorials and monuments, I felt it important to place it in a central location—perhaps in our town plaza—where it would be seen by the community. Placing it in a more obscure location, in my mind, would have represented more marginalization of peace activists. The whole reason for the wall was to give peacemakers a voice; to enable them to be seen and heard and respected.

I knew the wall would require approval from the city. I had no idea how to go about this, so I reached out to an old friend, Viet Nam combat veteran Richard Retecki, for help. He knew Sebastopol City Councilmember Sarah Guerny, and introduced her to me. She became our ally with the city and Richard became my partner in getting the peace wall built. There were many hurdles to clear, but after a nearly two-year process, the City Council finally did approve the peace wall. It was worth

the wait, because as a result of the delays we ended up with a better design and a better location.

It was important to me that the monument be a beautiful work of art. I considered going more economical, making it out of concrete for example, but decided against it both for aesthetic reasons and a practical one—namely, we needed a hard stone to inscribe the names on. In addition, because the intention was to elevate peacemakers, I felt the monument should reflect a high level of honor and appreciation. So I went the extra mile and expense to create something that would evoke pride of association. In the end it cost \$20,000, plus hundreds of hours of labor donated in kind by myself and others.

Our mission is simple.

The Living Peace Wall mission is inscribed on the front central panel of the wall:

“We honor the peacemakers, whose names are inscribed, who have during their lives worked for peace and against war, for justice and against injustice and for nonviolent resolutions of conflict and against violence, and for the common good and against selfishness and greed.

“By honoring these outstanding individuals we also honor all who share in the collective desire to rise above differences of race, religion, nationalities and ideologies to that place where we are all brothers and sisters, where we share a common humanity and a common desire to live in peace with all the people of the world.”

Our goal is to help create a more loving, kind, and peaceful world. As I mentioned, peacemakers are rarely taken seriously. More often we are ridiculed and marginalized. People who have worked for years for peace may be disheartened by how little has changed and question if they’ve made any difference at all. Our job is to let them know that they have made a difference, and continue to make a difference. We want to honor them, encourage them to continue their work, and to inspire others to get involved and take up the torch for peace and justice.

It was an interesting process.

This was a hands-on project for me. I did rough sketches, built full-size and scale models for different purposes, and sought out the materials that would elevate the monument in people’s minds. I am happy to share my process of sourcing the granite, bronze, concrete, and the professional help needed to create the peace wall. One detail you will appreciate: At various fundraisers we had collected “Personal Prayer for Peace” forms filled out by attendees, and during the concrete pour, we embedded several of these prayers in the concrete pedestal,

thus creating a “foundation of peace” for the wall.

The Sebastopol Living Peace Wall was installed in 2015; not in the plaza, but just across the street, in a spot with good public visibility. Every year since its installation, we have chosen four individuals per year to be honored in a September “Induction Ceremony” at the wall—at this rate, the panels will be completely filled, front and back, in approximately 100 years.

From the beginning, it has been my hope to inspire others to do something similar in their own communities. It may not look the same, but something to honor the many peacemakers in our midst who are lighting the way toward a more peaceful world.

I encourage anyone who wants to learn more about the Living Peace Wall to check out the eight-minute documentary film on our project website, sebastopolivingpeacewall.com. Also look for the photo gallery, “Making the Peace Wall,” to see some interesting visuals of our process.

Growing Peace in Gardens

Veterans Peace Garden in Arcata

For years, a small flower garden fronting a busy sidewalk near the town plaza in Arcata, California, has been maintained by Rob Hepburn of Humboldt Bay Chapter 56. A small sign identifies the spot as a peace garden maintained by veterans.

Propagating Peace Trees in Evansville

Evansville, Indiana, Chapter 104 member Larry Miller has grafted viable cuttings from the International Peace Tree, a linden planted in northern Vanderburgh County in 1918 to commemorate the Armistice, and the chapter hopes to present one or more of these young trees to the city as a living symbol of their community’s desire for peace.



Peace Park Sheboygan

In Wisconsin, Chapter 114 is a partner-sponsor of Peace Park Sheboygan, a small, triangle-shaped park located near Sheboygan’s lakeshore. Phase One, which includes a Peace Patio, a Hydration Station, and Sister City Peace Gardens, was completed in the summer of 2019. Plans for 2020 include planting flowering pear trees along N. 3rd Street, installing a permanent sign at the south end of the park, and connecting the up-lighting around the Peace Pole. VFP is helping with the creation of the special stone path honoring heroes of peace and justice. The first five of some 34 stones will be engraved and dedicated this summer. Names will include the well-known such as Martin Luther King, Jr., John Locke and Eleanor Roosevelt as well as the less famous like Eugene Debbs, Paul Robeson and Rachel Corrie.

Gardening as Therapy for Veterans

BY CHERIE EICHHOLZ

After ten years in the non-profit sector, including four years in the VFP national office and three on the VFP national board, in 2015 I decided to go back to school in order pursue a different kind of calling. In those ten years alongside tremendous activists, I advocated for peace, disarmament, environmental protection, and human and equal rights. After ten years I decided I wanted to try to advance change in a more tangible and personal way, and so went back to school to earn a Masters in Social Work (MSW) and more recently a Doctorate in Social Work (DSW).

As part of the doctoral program includes authoring a dissertation, and as I have witnessed first hand the healing power of gardening (by watching my husband and longtime VFP member Frank Corcoran toil in our yard), I chose to focus my research on the use of gardening as a “healing tool.” As part of this research I attempted to assess the breadth of



Cherie Eichholz's husband Frank Corcoran is one of those veterans who has experienced the therapeutic benefits of getting his hands in the soil.

gardening programs operationalized at VA facilities across the country, and my findings, while not earth shattering, signify the extraordinary healing potential gardening holds for many veterans.

In part, what I found is that a number of VA facilities (while not mandated nor usually robustly funded) have implemented gardening programs to address a range of health ailments. These programs—geared for everything from physical and work therapy to PTSD to long-term care—are offering veterans an opportunity to engage with a different kind of therapeutic modality and veterans are reaping the benefits.

As I surveyed and interviewed staff at VA facilities, I also sought anecdotal reflections of facilities' programs and I believe the following succinctly captures the spirit of why gardening is beneficial for veterans, while also offering a justification for broader implementation of gardening programs:

The Gardening Group focuses on the intrinsic relationship between gardening and hope. We teach our Veterans that the very action of planting a seed in the soil requires hope. We try to encourage, I dare say impose, a

sense of hope to our Veterans to facilitate their journey of recovery. A lot of our Veterans struggle with hope and oftentimes find little to hope for. Encouraging them to participate in activities based on the practice of hope is highly therapeutic and also provides countless physical, cognitive and social benefits.

I invite VFP members to review my dissertation which is dedicated to the members and work of Veterans For Peace: “Therapeutic Horticulture as a Healing Tool for Veterans,” at https://repository.upenn.edu/edissertations_sp2/142/. I welcome feedback at cherieleichholz@gmail.com.

I AM A VETERAN FOR PEACE

I am a Veteran For Peace.

Most people don't know who we are;
they thank me for my service.

I tell them that I was part of the Viet Nam War,
that I didn't serve, I was used.

That I have served my country and the world more
since I became an activist for peace and justice
than I did in the years I wore a uniform and carried a weapon.

We are Veterans For Peace.

Once we used force to protect the rich and powerful.
Now we use words to defend the lives and rights of the
oppressed.

Once we used rifle butts and bayonets to suppress dissenters.

Today we carry protest signs to confront injustice.

Once we dropped bombs on people, homes and schools.

Today we work to support education, brotherhood and
disarmament.

Once we sprayed chemicals that poisoned the land.

Today we plant organic gardens and trees.

Once we shot people to bolster corporate profits.

Today we practice civil disobedience; speaking truth to power.

Once we obeyed the chain of command.

Today we question those in authority.

Once we were proud to be patriotic Americans.

Today we consider ourselves citizens of the world.

I am a democrat with a small d.

I am a republican with a small r.

I am a Veteran For Peace.

I practice atonement every day of my life.

—Tom Contrestan

Tom Contrestan is a member of VFP Chapter 114 in Sheboygan, Wisconsin. He wrote this poem in June, 2020, during the Black Lives Matter demonstrations.

Creating Symbols of Peace in Public Spaces

Deported veterans turn the Tijuana/San Diego border wall from a symbol of hate to a symbol of peace, justice, hope, and friendship.

BY ROBERT VIVAR

Since the leaders of the United States have been bent on constructing a Border Hate Wall, we who are passionate for Peace and Justice have turned this wall into a message of Peace, Justice, and Hope.

Our Sunday Border Church is a testament of how, regardless of color, culture, or social status, we can all live in peace, side by side. Our Last Sunday Border Church/Border Mosque is a clear example of how this is being accomplished. As visiting Rep. Rashida Tlaib, said, *“From Palestine to Mexico, these walls must fall!”*

When President Trump decided to build his prototype Border Walls, several peace and justice organizations, headed by Friends of Friendship Park and VFP/Sgt. Barrios Memorial Chapter #182 along with several other organizations such as Military Families Speak Out and Orange County Peace Coalition, decided to send President Trump a message on the primary Border Wall in front of his prototype walls (see photos at right).

We believe the messages prompted a review of the murals along the San Diego/ Tijuana Border, because not long after that, we received a call from Department of Homeland Security, requesting Unified U.S. Deported Veterans Resource Center remove a mural located at Friendship Park with an upside-down flag. While the mural does incorporate names of many Deported Veterans, we are not the copyright holders of the mural artwork, and therefore are not authorized to alter it. These events attracted media attention from CNN and Stars and Stripes.

Robert Vivar is Co-Director of Unified U.S. Deported Veterans [uusdepvets.org] and a member of VFP Sgt. Barrios Memorial Chapter 182. For more information about Friendship Park, visit friendshippark.org.



Top right: Some of the peace and friendship themed paintings covering sections of metal fencing right behind Trump's prototype Border Walls. Bottom: Robert Vivar and Ruben Robles (Viet Nam/Cold War era army veteran) in front of the mural featuring the names of deported veterans.



Peace Memorial Park

A peace-pollinating garden in Portland, Oregon.

Located on a busy pedestrian and bicycle thoroughfare overlooking the Willamette River, Peace Memorial Park was established by VFP Chapter 72 in 2006 as a memorial to all victims of war. The garden has undergone several makeovers over the years. The photo at left shows its current status after a vigorous volunteer effort of trash pickup, weeding, and mowing on June 21. The park is set for another major transformation led by neighborhood organization Lloyd EcoDistrict and other community partners, and involving Portland youth. New design plans feature low-profile pollinator-attracting plantings and the addition of a sculptural element with accompanying signage designed to encourage community reflection and pollinate a culture of peace.

Bringing The Enemy's War Home

The Mountains Sing

Nguyễn Phan Quế Mai

Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill (2020)

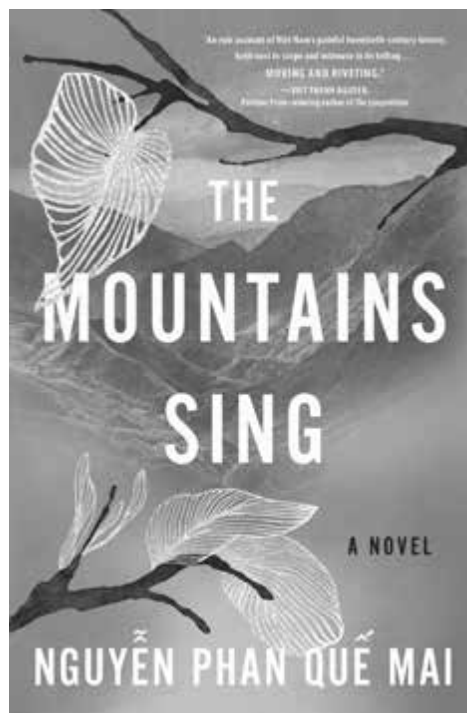
Reviewed by Matthew Hoh

I was born near New York City in 1973, the year the United States officially ended its war in Vietnam and brought home the last of its combat troops. The Vietnam War, known to the Vietnamese as The American War, was always something removed from me, even as I read history after history, watched documentaries and, as a Marine Corps officer, researched copies of wartime Marine Corps manuals.

Despite that the war waged for another couple of years after my birth for the Vietnamese people, that the peoples of Cambodia and Laos suffered mass killings and atrocities while I was a boy, and that to this day, as I am now a man in his late forties, both Vietnamese and American families, in the millions, suffer death and disability from the poisonous and lasting effects of Agent Orange, not to mention the thousands who are killed and maimed each year due to the unexploded remnants of millions of tons of U.S. bombs dropped on Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, the war had little personal effect on me. Even with my connection now to many Viet Nam veterans and my experience meeting scores of family members who have lost husbands, fathers and brothers to Agent Orange, a connection to the war in Viet Nam to my own life and my own experiences at war in Afghanistan and Iraq has been simply academic or theoretical.

The same year I was born, Nguyen Phan Que Mai was born in the north of Viet Nam. Like all Vietnamese, Que Mai would experience the American War, its distant genesis, its rancid execution and its omnipresent aftermath, in entirely personal terms. For Que Mai, the war would be directly and indirectly at the root of all things; nothing could

be composed or expressed without some substance of the war attending. The war in all things, being true for all Vietnamese, was true only for those Americans, and their families, sent to kill and be killed on the battlefield of latent colonialism and Cold War hysteria. Que Mai would work to survive as a farmer and street vendor for many years until a



scholarship program sent her to Australia to study. From Australia she would begin a career in development work to improve the lives of people not just in Vietnam, but throughout Asia. Que Mai would also begin a process of writing that would contribute equally to the healing and recovery from war, as much as the development work she took part in and led.

The Mountains Sing is Que Mai's ninth book and first book in English. It is a novel of one family attempting to survive in the north of Vietnam from the Second World War through the years following the defeat of the South Vietnamese government by the North. It is a book that has received rave reviews by a wide variety of critics such as the *New York Times*, *Publishers Weekly*,

and *BookPage*, and has 4.5 and 4.9 scores on *Goodreads* and *Amazon*, so my comments will not reflect the intense and beautiful qualities of Que Mai's prose or the haunting and page-turning manner of her storytelling. Rather, I simply want to say people in the U.S. should read this book to understand what we in the U.S. have done to so many outside the U.S.

For many years now, when asked what books should be read in order to understand the current U.S. wars in the Muslim world, I have recommended two books, neither about the current wars and both about Viet Nam: David Halberstam's *The Best and the Brightest* and Neil Sheehan's *A Bright Shining Lie*. Read those books, I say to people, and you'll understand why the U.S. is in these wars and why these wars won't end.

However, those books tell little about the people of the wars—their experiences, sufferings, triumphs and existence. As Halberstam and Sheehan do for understanding the U.S. in these wars, so Que Mai does for understanding the people pinned underneath, exploited, struck down and shaped by them.

There were several occasions while reading *The Mountains Sing* I thought of stopping. The book induced nausea and feverish panic in me as I read Que Mai's words about her family (although it is a novel, the story can be understood to have been taken in large part from her family's own history) aroused memories of the many Iraqis and Afghans I have known, many still in their home countries, most of them still living and surviving through continuing war or perhaps one of its pauses. Guilt over the wars, what I took part in, and what we as a nation did to so many millions of innocents, drives my suicidal ideation...

What *The Mountains Sing* details and explains about war, not just the details of the grief, horror, futility, trials, and meanness of it, but its lasting effects across generations, its constant requirements for sacrifice, and

ONCE, I SHOT A MAN RIGHT BETWEEN THE EYES

Following orders
on the battlefield,
it was kill or be killed
my sergeant said,
no different than
when he taught me
to thrust and parry
with fixed bayonet.
The young soldier
wore thick glasses
and looked a lot like
one of my classmates.
Sergeant claimed
Gooks don't belong
to the human race.
Don't ever feel sorry
for killing an enemy,
I can't forgive myself.
I look down at my finger,
ready to squeeze the trigger,
and hear my mother asking:
What has become of you?

—Milton P. Ehrlich

Milton P. Ehrlich Ph.D. is an 88-year-old psychologist and a veteran of the Korean War. His poems have been published in The Antigonish Review, Descant Literary Magazine, Red Wheelbarrow, Christian Science Monitor, and many other publications. He can be reached at Biffman2002@gmail.com.

COME TO YOUR SENSES

An Incantation written on the way to Freedom Park in Washington, D.C., October 6, 2011

For Dud, Rob, Jim, Henry, Peter, and Mark

Jackboots echo in the alleyways
That is what fascism sounds like
The sea sweeps onto the sand
This is what democracy sounds like
Black sunglasses hurl your face back at you
That is what fascism looks like
Dawn's first light eases over the ridge
This is what democracy looks like
Cordite gnaws at your soul
That is what fascism smells like
Your granddaughter's newborn cheek
This is what democracy smells like
They're both reaching out for you now.
Come to your senses.
Bury your tongue into
The one you love.
Throw away your shoes.
Walk out of the mall
into the streets.
Democracy is waiting for you.

—Doug Rawlings

Doug Rawlings, a veteran of the U.S. war in Viet Nam, is a founding member and former poet laureate of Veterans For Peace. He is active with VFP Chapter 1 in Portland, Maine, and with VFP's Viet Nam: Full Disclosure campaign.

The Mountains Sing

...from page 12

its breeding of political, cultural and societal extremism, is not limited to the Vietnamese experience, but extends to all touched by the force and whims of war. Surely there are elements and aspects of The Mountains Sing that are specific to the Vietnamese experience, just as there are elements and aspects to the wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen that are unique to each country. Yet even in that difference, there is a sameness, as the cause of the war, the reason for such things, is us, the U.S.

Que Mai has written a timeless book of sadness and loss, and of gain and victory. Whether conscious or not Que Mai has spoken for generations outside of Vietnam, millions upon millions of people

bombed out, put underground, forced to flee and desperate to live; people who are crazy yet lucid in their desire to not just escape and survive but to ultimately outlast and supersede the American war

WHAT THE MOUNTAINS
SING DETAILS AND
EXPLAINS ABOUT WAR...
IS NOT LIMITED
TO THE VIETNAMESE
EXPERIENCE, BUT
EXTENDS TO ALL
TOUCHED BY THE FORCE
AND WHIMS OF WAR.

machine. It's a book for Americans too. Not a mirror for us by any manner, but a window, a view into what we have done and continue to do to so many all over the world, both from before when I was young and through now as I age.

Matthew Hoh is on the advisory boards of Expose Facts, Veterans For Peace, and World Beyond War. In 2009 he resigned his position with the State Department in Afghanistan in protest of the escalation of the Afghan War by the Obama Administration. He previously had been in Iraq with a State Department team and with the U.S. Marines. He is a Senior Fellow with the Center for International Policy. This book review was originally published April 20, 2020, on Counterpunch: [counterpunch.org/2020/04/20/the-mountains-sing/](https://www.counterpunch.org/2020/04/20/the-mountains-sing/).

Human Rights over Nuclear Might

As you may have already heard, this year will be the first-ever Veterans For Peace Online Convention. To make it easier for attendees to fit the plenaries, workshops, business meeting and other events usually featured at our annual conventions into their daily routines, the “virtual” convention will stretch from Sunday, August 2 through Sunday, August 9, 2020.

This year, we commemorate the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki with the convention theme, “Human Rights over Nuclear Might.”

While it is a big disappointment for our community members not to be able to meet and connect with each other in person, the curveball thrown by the COVID-19 pandemic gives Veterans For Peace the opportunity to broaden our audience to those who have been unable to join us in person at past conventions, due to either cost or accessibility. With the exception of the business meeting, which is free to all members, access to this year’s convention does require a registration fee, but no one will have to lay out hundreds more to cover travel and lodging, expanding the possibility of participation for so many more.

Of course, the virtual nature of the online event comes with its own challenges, and we have to acknowledge there will be some who are excluded due to limited access to the internet or a hesitancy to interact via computer screen. That said, to gear up for this big online event we have invested in a conference site that contains all the information and links in one place, in an easy-to-follow format that will allow participants to access convention programs with ease.

VFP staff and convention committee volunteers have been busy making plans for an amazing array of workshops and plenaries and social times. This year’s convention will feature the work being done to address nuclear weapons as well as nuclear colonialism, and address broader topics such as what decolonizing the peace movement looks like. And as always, there will be content highlighting some of the amazing work being done within Veterans For Peace today.

Free and Open to All Current Members Annual Business Meeting

Due to the virtual nature of the VFP Convention this year, the business meeting will be conducted over Zoom. Resolutions and Bylaw amendments will be released before the business meeting for members to review and post their comments.

You do not need to register for the convention to be able to participate in the business meeting, but it is open to active VFP members only. If your dues are not current, make sure to renew your membership! Visit our website for more information.



2020 Keynote

Dahr Jamail

In late 2003, weary of the overall failure of the U.S. media to accurately report on the realities of the war in Iraq for the Iraqi people, Dahr Jamail went to the Middle East to report on the war himself, where he has spent more than one year in Iraq as one of only a few independent U.S. journalists in the country. Dahr has also reported from Syria, Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan. He has also reported extensively on veterans’ resistance against U.S. foreign policy, and is now focusing on anthropogenic climate disruption and the environment.



Collaborative Event with Pace e Bene

On Thursday, August 6, VFP will participate in the one-hour live webinar commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the U.S. atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The event is hosted by the New Mexico 75th Anniversary of Hiroshima/Nagasaki Committee and Pace e Bene, and will feature Evelyn Naranjo of the San Ildefonso Pueblo, Jay Coghlan of Nukewatch.org, Roshi Joan Halifax of Upaya Zen Center, Rev. John Dear of Pace e Bene, and a keynote by Dr. Ira Helfand, M.D., a member of the International Steering Group of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize.

Register today!

<https://bit.ly/VFP2020Convention>

Plenary Sessions

Being the seventy-fifth year since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, this year's Opening Plenary focuses on **NUCLEAR WEAPONS**. A variety of speakers will address different aspects of the personal, community and environmental impacts of nuclear weapons, in Japan and in New Mexico.

With the release of the Afghanistan Papers late last year and the war still ongoing, a second plenary delves into **AFGHANISTAN**—the current situation, the complexities of the U.S. occupation, the importance of centering Afghan voices, and where we go from here. This panel features Afghan activists as well as veterans who served in the war on Afghanistan.

We are still in the process of finalizing our featured speakers for these events, but you can look forward to three additional plenary sessions: a panel discussion of the effects of current **U.S. SANCTIONS**; an examination of the increased **MILITARIZATION OF OUR BORDERLANDS**; and a panel that takes a deep dive into **UNDERSTANDING DECOLONIZATION**.

Workshops

By the time you receive this newsletter in your mailbox, the full workshop schedule will be up on our website, along with all the descriptions and presenter bios!

We are excited to be offering the following 15 workshops, proposed and hosted by our members, which will be scheduled throughout the week of the convention:

- Save Our VA: A National Call to Action
- War Tax Resistance: Methods and Consequences
- The Two Faces of Nuclear: From Hiroshima to Fukushima
- Exposing Contamination at a Base Near You
- Podcasting 101
- Discussion Panel: Incarcerated Veterans
- Resisting Nuclear War and Militarism in the Pacific
- U.S. and Israeli Violence Toward Palestine Continues
- Working for Peace on the Korean Peninsula
- Deported Veterans Advocacy Project; Border Operations and Community Activism
- Pivot to Peace with China and the World
- Voices from the North: Building Momentum for an Arctic Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone
- Veteran Homelessness: Challenges to Solutions
- Vietnam: Journey to Forgiveness & Agent Orange
- Full Spectrum Counter-Recruitment

Calling all poets!

Sign up for this year's "Poetry and Song Soirée" and share your poem or lyrics for the 2020 chapbook... Look for the sign-up link under Special Events on the VFP Convention website.

THE BLOATED DEPARTMENT

by Steve Morse

The U.S. Defense Department does not live up to its name; instead, the acronym BLOATED describes this behemoth well: Bombers' Lobbyists; Overseas Atrocities; Terrible Environmental Destruction. We the people have needed defense, but the trillions of dollars poured down its rat-hole do not defend us. Billions in expenditures have bought us:

- almost 1,000 US overseas military bases;
- endless wars;
- a nuclear arsenal;
- an impressive array of bombers and battleships.

These purchases have benefited few people in the U.S. or the world, apart from BLOATED arms manufacturers and merchants, BLOATED military contractors, BLOATED generals, BLOATED politicians, and those in the high echelons of BLOATED corporate power. The BLOATED Department did not even defend against a military attack on its own headquarters on September 11, 2001. Nobody in the Pentagon lost their job over that "failure."

THE DEFENSE WE NEED

- We need a strong, universal, free-of-charge public health system to help defend us against COVID-19 and other health challenges that plague our society; the BLOATED Department squanders resources that could provide this defense.
- We need defense against Wall Street predators. When home ownership was stolen from millions during the 2008 economic meltdown—especially people of color and the working class—the BLOATED Department offered no defense.
- Defense against sexual harassment, assault and domestic violence. The BLOATED Department not only offers no defense, but exacerbates the problem since military culture promotes sexism, and since the military protects the sexual predators of women (and men) within its ranks.
- Veterans who have survived the endless and earlier wars have needed help to heal from physical, emotional and moral injury. The BLOATED Department has offered inadequate and often inappropriate help; its continuous promotion of war and militarism tends to exacerbate veterans' trauma.

TRUTH IN LANGUAGE

Toward the goal of ending war and militarism, let us have truth in language. Let us also stop using the term defense expenditures when referring to the gigantic costs that do nothing to defend human beings from real problems that we face. Military or war expenditures are accurate terms. Changes in language in our writings, speeches, conversations and on social media, can help change thinking and help lead to right action.

Steve Morse is a combat veteran of the American war in Viet Nam and a Life Member of Veterans For Peace.

VFP CHAPTER REPORTS



Chapter 99 members vigil safely in Asheville, North Carolina. L to R: Jim Brown, Rusty Sivils, Cindy Heil, Bob Feldmann. Photo by Gerry Werhan.

#001 – PORTLAND, ME

Since the Tom Sturtevant Chapter membership is made up of mostly retired, older veterans, the COVID-19 pandemic has taken its toll on collective activism. However, our individual voices have not been silenced. Each one of us still does what she or he can, given our limitations. Peter Morgan continues to work on initiatives with Moms Demand Action; Peggy Akers continues to work with the homeless and veterans; Richard and Rita Clement have kept the VFP flag flying at our capital's demonstrations; and Seth Berner is on the streets in Portland.

Dud Hendrick was there when Trump arrived for a photo op in a northern Maine swab-manufacturing facility—and a full day's supply of swabs had to be tossed because #45 wouldn't wear a mask. Peggy and Doug Rawlings got in on the NYC Memorial Day video conference call.

Our chapter continues to hold meetings each month via Zoom.

Doug Rawlings

#013 – TUCSON, AZ

The Tucson chapter has met virtually for the past three months. Because of COVID-19, personal distancing is the norm. A vibrant young part of our Chapter has made three highway

clean-up runs since March. We are pursuing a national petition campaign demanding the values of Veterans For Peace be implemented (details to follow).

An in-person group planning session for Critical Mass Tucson (CMT) was postponed indefinitely, due perhaps to existing worldwide critical mass factors: the COVID-19 Pandemic; the abuse of power by police departments specifically, and military actions generally against civilians (nuclear and nonnuclear threats); and the fact of global climate change dramatically changing the planet where planning for our current generation's great grandchildren is not adequate.

Chapter 13 members have been involved in distributing toilet paper and services to Tucson residents. On May 30, six of our members demonstrated for George Floyd by invitation through Ron Austin. We look forward to presenting a workshop during VFP's 2020 virtual conference illustrating how Critical Mass Tucson can be adapted for other VFP chapter cities.

Cara Bissell

#021 – NORTHERN NEW JERSEY

In January, Northern New Jersey Chapter 21 joined together with New York City Chapter 34 for a holiday brunch at a Chinese restaurant, where a good time was had by all. Then, COVID-19 struck and our activities came to a halt. We recently had our

first Zoom chapter meeting and plan on having more in the future.

As the Black Lives Matter movement gained steam, our chapter members, who are scattered throughout northern New Jersey, attended many protests and rallies. From Jersey City and Newark to Hawthorne and Teaneck to Newton and Phillipsburg, everyone reported that these gatherings were diverse, inspirational, and spirited.

Wendy Fisher

#023 – ROCHESTER, NY

While the COVID-19 Pandemic has taken a toll on in-person activities, the Rochester chapter has continued to be engaged in peace activities and issues of vital to Veterans For Peace. Chapter 23 President James Swarts joined a coalition of 20 New York State VFP representatives, and other peace advocates, on phone conferences with the staffs of U.S. Senators Kirsten Gillibrand and Charles Schumer, organized by Broome County VFP President Jack Gilroy. Participants demanded the Senators commit to a massive reduction in the defense budget, with Swarts calling for the closing of foreign bases and funding to be redirected to domestic needs. As part of a follow-up statewide effort, letters were attempted to be delivered to both senators' Rochester, New York, offices on June 10. As of this writing, neither Senator has responded to the questions posed to their staff representatives.

Chapter 23 has been actively engaged in Black Lives Matter rallies and demonstrations, led by the efforts of chapter member Marybeth Knowles. While the Poor People's March scheduled for Washington has been canceled, Chapter 23 continues to support that campaign locally, especially in conjunction with the BLM campaign.

Our chapter webpage is up—veteransforpeacechapter23.org—thanks to the work of Bruce Freeman. And our Facebook page is continuously updated by Mike Wells—[VFPchapter23](https://www.facebook.com/VFPchapter23). We invite you to check out our activities.

Rev. James L. Swarts

#026 – CHICAGO, IL

Like most organizations, the Chicago chapter is continuing our in-reach and outreach electronically. We're functioning well...and we've found that sheltering in place has advantages. With no travel required, more members are getting involved and our audience has no geographical limits.

In May, at the urging of Natasha, we donated \$500 to the Greater Chicago Food Depository. The Scholarship Committee, led by Burrell, also awarded a scholarship to a magnificent student at DePaul University. Ed formed a committee to stop gun violence. Bruce formed a committee to Save Our VA. Mac, who developed and traveled the U.S. with the My Lai Memorial exhibit, found a permanent location for the exhibit at the University of Mass., Amherst.

We have four ongoing projects as well as the two committees mentioned above: Demilitarization of Chicago Public Schools (led by Natasha and Libby); Scholarship (led by Burrell); Video Outreach (led by Kevin and Libby); and Environment (led by Dave and Andy).

Upcoming is a forum on the impact of U.S. military on Somalia, led by Burrell. Chapter 26 members are involved with the national groups Moms Demand Action, Everytown, Black Lives Matter, and the Poor People's Campaign, as well as many local groups. Natasha continues her whirlwind actions within and outside of VFP.

Arny Stieber

#027 – TWIN CITIES, MN



Twin Cities Chapter 27 held a ceremony in Minneapolis in response to the killing of George Floyd. Photo: Mike McDonald.

Chapter 27 has been in the eye of the hurricane during the aftermath of George Floyd's murder by Minneapolis police. We have had a presence almost every day at the site of his murder. In the Longfellow neighborhood (home of the third precinct that burnt to the ground), neighborhood artists painted a huge peace sign with the names of those who lost their lives at the hands of police interwoven in the sign. Sixteen members of our chapter held a bell-ringing ceremony for the neighbors there. Associate member Larry Long sang his original song about George and urged neighbors to sing along. After Mike McDonald and I spoke briefly, Larry sang "Last Night I had the Strangest Dream" to conclude the program for the 80 neighbors in attendance.

Dave Logsdon

#034 – NEW YORK CITY

In January, many Chapter 34 members spoke at the New York City Council's Public Hearing on Nuclear Disarmament.

Chapter activities have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, with more frequent chapter meetings (online), and

Chapter reports continued on page 18...

VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

Chapter 34, New York City,
continued...

significantly increased member participation. Ella Richardson has done amazing work, making over 700 protective face masks for VFP members and shelter residents.

Recent meeting speakers included Chaplain James Yee, Nick Mottern, Doug Rawlings, Paul Cox, Jack Gilroy, Jim Swartz, and Counselor Nabi Sonboli, a researcher at Institute for Political and International Studies in Tehran.

On May 6, we celebrated the 45th Anniversary of Reunification of Vietnam with poetry, veterans' stories, and videos of Viet Nam. The event was filmed by the Vietnamese News Agency and shown on Viet Nam TV.

Chapter 34 hosted a powerful Memorial Day observance, with well over 150 attendees from around the country. The program featured poetry, Letters to the Wall, and music, along with personal testimony, expertly coordinated by Susan Schnall and Ellen Davidson.

Active Chapter 34 projects include Stopping VA Privatization; Move the Money; Stop Sanctions; and Agent Orange campaigns. We are a co-sponsor of the new publication, Peace & Planet News, along with the Viet Nam: Full Disclosure campaign. The first two issues have enjoyed excellent reviews. Keep up with us on Facebook @veteransforpeacenyc034.

Bob Keilbach

#035 – SPOKANE, WA

Greetings to all our peace pals in VFP.

We're sheltering in place, with only our Board of Directors meeting during the pandemic. Individual members have stayed active by participating in rallies for Black Lives Matter, sending letters and petitions to elected representatives, and submitting Letters to the Editor of various newspapers. We've gained interest in membership from four new people. Lots of e-communication overwhelms us, along with Zoom conference calls and webinars. We opted to let other organizations fill in the gaps; they are doing so regularly. We send out e-blasts on important topics, generating four e-issues of "News From Spokane VFP." Just learned today we are allowed to meet in person again, in our meeting space, so I expect we'll be back up and running in July.

One good thing: The 80th Annual Armed Forces Torchlight



Frank Stearns, a veteran of the U.S. War in Viet Nam and past president of VFP Chapter 34, marched in NYC's St. Pat's For All Parade on March 1, 2020. Frank was hospitalized a few weeks later and passed on April 3, due to complications from COVID-19 and AO-related cancer.

Parade was cancelled this May, and again in July; the pandemic did what we have wanted to accomplish for years!

On June 10, George Taylor learned that an appeals court ruled 2-1 against his right to use the necessity defense for blocking train tracks back in 2016. His pro bono attorney intends to take this case to the Washington State Supreme Court. The Zinn Fund donated to help this case get where it is today.

Hollis Higgins

#041 – CAPE COD, MA



John Hopkins, Presente!

Photo: Jim Canavan.

A valiant, years-long struggle with illness ended on Valentine's Day back in February, when we lost one of our most spirited and devoted members, John Hopkins, at the age of 71. John grew up in Nantucket and was a Viet Nam vet, joining the army when the town police gave him the choice to volunteer or be arrested. "He was a bad boy," his activist wife Debbie said.

John returned with his share

of combat stress issues, struggled successfully with them with the help of healers and friends, and for the rest of his life fought for peaceful change. In 2006, after visiting George W. Bush's ranch encampment protesting the war in Iraq, he led the effort to create "Arlington East" on Coast Guard Beach in Eastham—2700 wooden crosses, stars and crescents were constructed in John's barn in Truro, Mass., where his contracting business was located. This memorial to those killed in the war, both military and civilian, was visited by crowds of people from all over the region. John's energy, his depth of soul, and his justified anger over injustice, wars, and domestic militarization were always there when we needed a push to be creative and courageous in our actions as a chapter. He will be remembered when we need it in the future. Besides being an activist and a contractor, John was also a farmer and an artist. John Brewster Hopkins, Presente!

This winter we organized our 25th annual "Poetry for Peace" Contest for kindergarten through high school and adult poets on the Cape and Islands. The contest usually culminates in an awards ceremony and reading in May, but with the COVID-19 pandemic, the whole thing was up in the air. Then contest coordinator Nina Tepper and "Editor in Chief" Jim Canavan proposed conducting the contest online—which we did! Lots of poems came in from schools and some of the judging was done electronically as well, leading to a successful 25th after all—with recordings of the young poets' readings shared to a special

“Video Winners” space in concert with the event. Bravo to the contest team—teachers, student poets, parents and chapter members.

Our “Hidden Wounds Memorial” Project—to create a memorial to those veterans who have suffered from combat stress, PTSD, TBI, MST and especially suicide—has also progressed, with a proposal being submitted to a town on the Cape. This memorial is intended to be a place of remembrance, honor, peace and reconciliation for all those individuals and families affected by this often hidden aspect of the cost of war.

Duke Ellis

#050 – NORTHERN MICHIGAN

Although the pandemic is a nightmare for all of us, it has turned some of our old members, myself included, into technical geniuses. Doing our meetings via Zoom has allowed us to have people from all over the country at our meetings, including national VFP board member Dave Lodgsdon. Here’s what we’ve been up to lately:

- Chapter 50 donated \$1,000 to the homeless in our area to be used for bus passes.
- We had to cancel our Memorial Day event where, for the 15th consecutive year, we were to honor soldiers from Michigan who lost their lives in Afghanistan. In Iraq. Civilian casualties. And the 22 vet suicides daily.
- We are to have, in the near future, under our “Entering Traverse City” sign, a sign that announces our city as a member of “International Cities of Peace.”
- We awarded Veterans For Peace college scholarships to two students beginning fall term. Both share our mission for peace and justice.
- Members of our chapter continue to participate, whether part of a planned event or on their own on a street corner, in raising awareness and in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement. There must be change.

Tim Keenan

#057 – GREEN MOUNTAIN, VT

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced us to use teleconferencing for our work and monthly meetings. Our last event where physical distancing was not required was on March 7, the annual Vermont Veterans Summit, where Chapter 57 was present to set forth VFP information and to recruit new members. (Successful member recruitment strategies from other chapters would be most welcome.)

For Memorial Day, our effort was focused on writing commentaries and letters to the editors of local newspapers, and posting short articles about Memorial Day on the Front Porch Forums wherever members were located in towns across the State. We had many favorable comments from readers. Some readers were aghast that the U.S. has been in a state of war for 223 out of her 244 calendar years of existence, since its founding in 1776.

Will Miller Green Mountain VFP members have also continued to write letters to the Vermont Congressional Delegation on the situation in the Middle East and other issues. One member of our chapter follows the deployments of the U.S. Carrier Strike Groups as an indicator of where in the world the U.S. may take its next military action.

Richard Czaplinski

#072 – PORTLAND, OR

Portland members enjoyed their last in-person meeting in March. By May, chapter president Dan Shea had resumed monthly chapter meetings via Zoom, and member Tom Riddering also began hosting weekly Zoom sessions on Sunday mornings in order to continue the chapter’s longstanding tradition of social Sunday coffee meetups. Despite these efforts, a number of members are severely challenged by the isolation, or by the technology, and have yet to get online. Those who are more inclined have been taking advantage of a rich offering of online webinars on peace and justice topics, as well as the twice-weekly social gatherings hosted by VFP National.

One member, Mike Hastie, a self-described “outdoor cat,” has regularly escaped the safety of home quarantine to make himself useful—distributing sandwiches and water to the houseless, and helping to project provocative messages on the sides of downtown buildings. After the anger erupted over the killing of George Floyd, he has ventured out night after night to witness and photograph the ongoing protests taking place in Portland. In addition to the projected messages, Hastie and friends erected a large “Black Lives Matter” sign atop a large building overlooking the Burnside Bridge, and also had success with flying a “Defund Police” banner in the sky via kite.

Becky Luening



Mike Hastie captured a photo of this projection at a demonstration on June 20 at the Justice Center in downtown Portland, Oregon..

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VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

#075 – PHOENIX, AZ

During May, members of the Mark Von Hagen Chapter joined demonstrations in Phoenix against Trump, in support of health workers and in support of Black Lives Matter. We sent surgical masks to the New York hospitals. We joined a demonstration at the main VA hospital in Phoenix against experimentation with Chlorquinox on patients and the lack of testing available to vets.

Many of us now carry VFP flags on extendable painter's poles in our cars, so that we can join spontaneous marches and demonstrations and "show the flag."

Dennis Stout

#087 – SACRAMENTO, CA

The COVID-19 pandemic has put a real crimp in Chapter 87's activity level. With stay-at-home orders, and social distancing required when out, we have not been very active. However, we did have a presence at three car-parade protests. One involved an ICE contract at a nearby Sheriff's jail, and the other two were focused on rent relief and other issues.

The Sacramento chapter has discontinued our weekly peace vigils at a busy intersection near the state capitol until we feel safe to congregate again—which hopefully will have happened by the time you are reading this.

John C. Reiger

#092 – SEATTLE, WA

PEACE WALK! New Years Day!—around the tiny town of Index. We first gathered at the home of Kem and Etta Hunter for Etta's



Seattle Chapter 92 members at Native Park (a.k.a. Victor Steinbrueck Park), Jan. 4, 2020. L to R: Keith Orchard, Randy Rowland, Albert Penta, Marty Kunz, Allen Tlusty, Will Alleckson, and Ray Nacanaynay. Photo by Kim Loftness.



Members of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, Chapter 114 staged a Climate Crisis protest at the entrance to a local park last November.

wonderful buffet. We sang as we were graced by members of the Seattle Peace Chorus!

We participated in the No War On Iran rally and march from Native Park January 4, followed by another event at Westlake. And we never miss the MLK Jr. march!

On Memorial Day, Mike Dedrick, with his wife Mary Kay, paid a visit to WWII nurse and VFP member Bobbi Mercer, who is 100!

Last December, Mike Dedrick and Michael McPhearson started a monthly radio program on KODX Radio, 96.6 FM. Recently, members were asked for their thoughts about Memorial Day.

Here's an eloquent contribution:

"First, war is illogical. In conflict resolution it doesn't prove who is right or who is wrong. Second, war is immoral. It is the most wasteful of human endeavors and does not prove who is good or who is bad. No one really wins a war, but everyone loses a bit of their humanity."

—Ramon "Ray" Nacanaynay, USAF 1986–90

VFP92 members also attended a huge May 30th BLM protest to pay our respects. *George Floyd, !PRESENTE!*

Kim Loftness

#099 – WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA

"HONK FOR PEACE!" For those of you who've followed our reports here, you know that Chapter 99's "signature" action has been our vigil for peace held every Tuesday afternoon in Asheville since before the U.S. invaded Iraq in 2003. The chapter has made VFP and our purpose known to residents and tourists alike, uninterrupted for any reason.

In mid-March when pandemic precautions necessitated we stand down, we found ourselves a bit disoriented and disappointed to have to do so, but full of enthusiasm and anticipation of resuming the vigil. Inspired primarily by long-time member Bob Feldmann, we did resume in mid-May. Reflecting on the importance of the vigil, by its absence, this

report is dedicated to Bob in appreciation for being our rock in maintaining the consistency of the vigil and being the keeper of our vigil kit. In this photo from the June 9th vigil [p. 16], we've added "HONK FOR JUSTICE" in solidarity with the racial justice protests that have also taken place at the same spot recently. Bob acknowledges the honking with his bugle and has adapted to the pandemic by making a mask that enables him to honk through it, along with a mask for the bugle. Adapt and carry on!

Gerry Werhan

#100 – SOUTHEAST ALASKA

Since our youth congress in April was postponed until 2021 due to the pandemic, Chapter 100 has been hosting a series of webinars instead. On 02 June, we held a webinar titled "Global and Ecological Impacts of Nuclear Testing" that drew about 75 participants from around the world. Featured speakers were from Alaska, Kazakhstan, the Marshall Islands, North Africa, and the U.S. southwest—all regions that have been impacted by nuclear testing.

The next webinar, on Friday, 12 June, was on the topic of an Arctic Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (ANWFZ). Dr. Adele Buckley of the Canadian Pugwash Group will discuss the history of movements calling for an ANWFZ and current opportunities for progress. Her presentation will be followed by an open conversation and dialog on how to move forward in this current moment. More information can be found at <https://www.akhopecongress.org/june-12th-anwfz>.

Craig Wilson

#104 – EVANSVILLE, IN

Our executive committee met with members of Nonviolent Owensboro to collaborate on bringing Paul Chappell, founder of Peace Literacy, to Owensboro in November. We also began planning for a peace workshop and related activities in July that would include events to be held at our local synagogue and Hindu temple. However, the planned activities for July are on hold due to the pandemic and the November visit may be held virtually.

In April, our members participated in a Zoom meeting with Chapter 89 (Nashville). The following week our executive committee met via Zoom to discuss how we might best function during the pandemic and keep membership engaged in VFP's purpose. Plans for non-virtual gatherings and events remain on hold given the uncertainties of the pandemic.

On May 30, member and past chapter president Bart Lindenschmidt was among more than 500 people who gathered in downtown Evansville for a nonviolent protest against racial injustice. Wearing a VFP t-shirt, Bart was approached by the media for his thoughts and later quoted in the Evansville Courier: "I'm just here to stand in solidarity with my black brothers and sisters and everybody that's been subject to injustice for centuries in this country, unfortunately."

Members have been distributing the Peace and Planet News in the community, leaving them in the "little libraries" located around town, and plan to distribute them at ongoing rallies protesting the murder of George Floyd and systemic racial injustice.

Lynn Kinkade

#112 – VENTURA COUNTY, CA

Chapter members attended the screening of new film material from chapter member and prominent Viet Nam War veteran film maker, George Sandoval, who filmed and interviewed deported veterans at the Unified U.S. Deported Veterans Support House, Tijuana, Mexico. The material additionally includes an interview with Board member George Johnson.

In January, the chapter was invited again to attend the 4th annual March and Rally (formerly Women's Day March).

We tabled at the MLK, Jr., program in Oxnard. This year it relocated to a new site and the table locations were in plain sight of the plenary program attended by hundreds of people!

Associate member Cindy Piester lectured on climate disruption in nearby Newbury Park. Title of lecture was "Climate Disruption and U.S. Militarism: A Winnable War Is No Longer Possible." Her lecture began with an exceptional video depicting the everyday lives of Afghan people with the spectacle of war all around them. In the background is the unrelenting rhythmic refrain, "we are more than skin and bones." Cindy's message: wars are continuing to be planned, with resultant greenhouse gases.

Veteran member Michael Cervantes attended Pat Elder's lecture, "What's in Your Water?" at Quaker House, Santa Barbara. This was part of Pat's California Tour—a bestseller on the national website for weeks.

Michael Cervantes

#114 – SHEBOYGAN, WI

Greetings from Wisconsin's East Coast. What was that ancient Chinese curse... "May you live in interesting times"? Well, since the COVID-19 outbreak, it's taken on a new relevance.

Since it's been a while since our last update, our report starts with the pre-pandemic days of July 2019, when our chapter decided to resume weekly demonstrations at our "Free Speech Corner" in town. So many issues! We decided to focus on one each month.

We began with "No War with Iran," then "Don't Privatize the VA," "Border Justice" and finally, "Global Warming." We stuck with that theme from October until March '20. We were out there every Friday throughout the cold winter.

We elected to dedicate our fifteenth annual March concert to the issue. Well, as you can imagine, there was no concert

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VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

Chapter 114, Sheboygan, Wisconsin, continued...



Sheboygan Chapter 114's "resident artist," Bob Fleming, created a large colorful banner with Greta Thunberg's image on it for chapter demonstrations bringing attention to the issue of Global Warming.

and no Memorial Day parade. We've been hunkering down in our respective bunkers practicing "Safe at Home" and social distancing.

In spite of these setbacks, we've got a couple of events planned. We have resumed protests on Climate Justice. Member John Koehler is organizing a gathering in Green Bay (postponed until fall) to address the effects of toxic materials disbursed by the U.S. military on people and the environment. Agent Orange continues to claim victims in Viet Nam and will for some time.

We are excited about the special stone path VFP is helping to create at Peace Park Sheboygan on the lakefront, honoring heroes of peace and justice. Short biographical sketches will help educate visitors as to the honorees' accomplishments. The park is quickly becoming a gem along the Lake Michigan shoreline. (Read more about this project on page 9.)

Finally, as we go to press, a number of young people have been gathering in town, demonstrating for racial justice in memory of George Floyd, Breanna Taylor and others murdered by white supremacists. They've got a lot of heart but seem to lack common sense (no masks, gloves or social distancing). Nevertheless, we are considering joining them and showing our VFP colors. If you're going to risk your life, it might as well be for a good cause.

Stay well out there!

Tom Contrestan

#136 – THE VILLAGES, FL

Laurent "Larry" Gilbert has agreed to be Chapter 136 Coordinator. He and AI Mytty will both serve as chapter contacts. The chapter wants to get the word out to a mega-retirement community of 130,000 people with a 17% veteran population.

Larry is participating in the VFP Social Hour calls and meeting VFP representatives from other chapters. The Florida chapters will be holding a Zoom Meeting to get to know each other and organize and collaborate. AI Mytty participated in the Southeast Region call.

A Florida Peace Alliance is being formed and The Villages VFP Chapter will be part of that alliance. The Chapter meetings are held via Zoom and coincide with the World Beyond War–

Central Florida Chapter meetings. The topic of the June 18 meeting will be, "The Danger of Neutrality."

AI Mytty

#157 – NORTH CAROLINA TRIANGLE

The pandemic, and the need for us here in North Carolina to maintain physical distancing, have curtailed many of our usual in-person activities. We've been holding our monthly meetings via Zoom, enabling those who live far from our Triangle hub to be "present." That's been a true gift.

Each year, our chapter plays a leading role in an alternative Memorial Day observation, and this, too, was held via Zoom. In addition to mayoral proclamations from the mayors of both Chapel Hill and Carrboro (both calling for an end to U.S. militarism), the program included a keynote by the Rev. Mark Davidson of the Church of Reconciliation, who implored us to remember "our brothers and sisters in the global community, our fellow human beings in Iraq and Afghanistan, Syria and Yemen, and other locations who have suffered, and are suffering, under the heavy boot of American Empire. Their lives matter, too."

The program also included a statement on behalf of Veterans For Peace by Chapter president Douglas Ryder; the reading by Vicki Ryder of two Memorial Day poems ("Ode for the American Dead in Asia" and "But You Didn't"); two songs by the Raging Grannies; and a soulful playing of Taps.

Douglas H. Ryder

#160 – "HOA BINH" VIET NAM

COVID-19 has slowed all activities in Viet Nam, but things are now coming back to normal. Hoa Binh Chapter 160 Secretary-Treasurer David E. Clark has coordinated with the Da Nang chapter of VAVA, the Vietnam Association of Victims of



VFP Chapter 160 President Chuck Searcy (leftmost in front row) meets with representatives of the Association of Ho Chi Minh Trail traditions to discuss cooperation between the two organizations.

Agent Orange, to construct and renovate the home of an Agent Orange victim family to be funded from 2019 tour donations. Chapter President Chuck Searcy is finalizing plans with the staff of the Van Canh Friendship Village managed by the Veterans Association of Viet Nam to equip a children's playground area, to be named in honor of VFP member Mike Cull who died in 2018 of cancer.

Plans for the September 2020 Peace Tour of Viet Nam are on hold; an official decision to confirm or cancel will be made and announced in July.

Chapter 160 is in the process of approving a Memorandum of Understanding with the Vietnam Association of Truong Son Traditions—Ho Chi Minh Trail, a veterans organization of 350,000 members, to cooperate on educational and humanitarian assistance projects, committed to peace, to be specified later.

Chuck Searcy

#161 – IOWA CITY, IA

We began the new year with a candlelight peace vigil on January 1, 2020, in front of Old Capitol in Iowa City. Later in January, we participated in the Martin Luther King Jr. day public reading at the Coralville Public Library.

In February, we said farewell to three friends of Veterans For Peace: Jeff Cox, Tom Jacobs, and Joe Brisben. Most Chapter 161 members fall into the “vulnerable” age category, and involvement evolved from actual to Zoom in March thru May, with many planned events canceled. We resumed weekly peace vigils at the Pentacrest in late April.

On Memorial Day, we organized a rally at a local park in cooperation with several other groups—physically distanced, in social solidarity—and then 60 folks wound their way through Iowa City in a vehicle caravan. The caravan's wonderful signs were met with good public encouragement.

It was, of course, on Memorial Day that George Floyd was murdered. Many of our members participated in a May 30th rally in his memory. We are committed to being strong allies in the struggle for racial justice, and are trying to figure out how we can best help.

We still plan to host Kathy Kelly in October, for events in Davenport, Muscatine, and Iowa City.

Ed Flaherty

#168 – LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY

The Louisville chapter has continued to produce our radio show, the Veterans For Peace Radio Hour, airing monthly on 106.5 FM WFMP-LP on the fourth Monday (1pm), Tuesday (7pm), and Wednesday (8am). Like many others we have struggled to find ways to continue our work for peace, with many of the springtime events where we would normally recruit and educate canceled. However, members Steven Gardiner and Angie Reed Garner both shared virtual

testimony for the #NoMoreNoKnocks campaign in support of #JusticeforBreonnaTaylor. We donated, as a chapter and through the efforts of individual members on our behalf, to Louisville Black Lives Matter, La Casita Center (which supports immigrants), and St. John's Center for Homeless Men in Louisville.

Radio programs have included a show by members John Wilborn and Patrick King on “Illusions of Empire,” and Steven Gardiner's interview with VFP Executive Director Garrett Reppenhagen and VFP Advisory Board Member Matthew Hoh on “ Militarization in the Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic.” Another radio program, broadcast on June 22, 23, and 24, hosted by Patrick King, dealt with the implications of climate change for our work for peace and a better world. All these shows are available as podcasts via forwardradio.org.

Steven Gardiner

#182 – TIJUANA, BAJA, MEXICO

While restrictions are still in place in Mexico, members of Chapter 182 were given the opportunity to remember and honor fallen Veterans on Memorial Day. Members read the names on this veterans mural as a reminder of the injustices and negligence with which our veterans are treated, not only deported but also denied access to vital medical treatment that would have prolonged their life. Deported Veterans, while alive, are dying.

Robert Vivar



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VFP MEMBERS LAUNCH #StandDownLive



VETERANS FOR PEACE MEMBERS HAVE LAUNCHED A NEW WEEKLY SHOW called #StandDownLive. Members Natasha Erskine, Miles Megaciph, Brittney Chantele, and Mike James have been hosting a weekly program every Wednesday at 5:00 pm (ET), 4:00 pm (CT), 2:00 pm (PT). They kicked off their first show featuring Siri Margerin from the G.I. Rights Hotline. Each week features different guests talking about all aspects of the military and the ways racism, sexual assault, and patriarchy all show up in the military and in our society. You can tune in Live on Veterans For Peace's Facebook or YouTube page, and all previous episodes are featured on our YouTube playlist: #StandDownLive.

VFP CHAPTER REPORTS CONTINUED

¡Bienvenido Veteranos Por la Paz España!

#1005 – MADRID, SPAIN

Chapter 1005 of Veterans For Peace was approved by the VFP Membership Committee as of April 2020, under the name **Veteranos Por la Paz España (VPPE)**. Since its foundation, the chapter has grown to eight members. Seven of the eight are veterans of the Spanish Armed Forces; the other, an expat of the United States, is a U.S. Air Force veteran.

The confinement circumstances imposed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic have prevented public events, in particular the chapter presentation ceremony, which we estimate may take place in the autumn.

A Facebook page (Veteranos Por la Paz España) and a Twitter profile (@VPPE) have been established, in addition to providing us with a corporate email. With these means and using teleconference communications, we have prepared our founding documents: Who We Are, Mission Statement, Statement of Purpose, Chapter Political and Organizational Principles, a preliminary communication strategy, and rules for the preparation of content and messages abroad.

Declarations of condemnation have been issued for the militarization of the repression of the protests in the United States, and against the threats of the current U.S. government against Venezuela.

Manuel Pardo

BELOW: Six of the eight members of VFP's new Spain Chapter, #1005, which is based in Madrid, shared photos for this introduction. At top, Chapter 1005 President Manuel Pardo displays the chapter logo. Below him, L to R: Alberto Romero, Jenner Lopez, Pedro Cardona, Antonio Maria, and (U.S. expat) Tim Pluta.



MEMBERS' STORIES

FRED MILANO

WOMEN OF WAR: VIET NAM

Shortly after joining the faculty of Appalachian State University in 1976, I introduced a new and highly controversial course, the Sociology of War. According to Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), it was the first such course to ever be offered at an American college or university. Our country's involvement in Southeast Asia had ended only a few years prior, so it seemed natural to focus on America's longest and most divisive war. Furthermore, the topic was relevant because many students had a family member or other close relative who had served in Viet Nam. I regularly invited veterans as guest speakers, including several from Chapter 99 in Asheville, NC.

The beauty of open discussions is the unexpected surprises that emerge. On one occasion, for example, a dozen high school history books were passed among the students. Imagine their surprise to discover that every textbook condensed the entire Viet Nam conflict to just two or three sentences. Moreover, the coverage was heavily sanitized, with no mention of vital facts such as the massive U.S. bombing campaign, the millions of Vietnamese dead, or the environmental devastation. Also missing was any reference to key issues in that war: the Pentagon Papers, the antiwar movement, Kent State, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, the My Lai Massacre, Agent Orange, the fabricated body counts, COINTELPRO and the illegal government spying on its own citizens, and so on.

A constant problem in bringing speakers to the course was the scarce supply of women veterans. In fact, this gender imbalance was the deciding factor that persuaded me to make a documentary.

Despite a clear pattern of participation in our nation's wars, many of the contributions of women have either been overlooked or minimized. In World War I, some 21,000 nurses served in the Army, and at least 400 of them died. By World War II, the numbers increased to 60,000 Army nurses and 14,000 Navy nurses. In Korea, 500 Army nurses were called to duty. Then came Viet Nam. Among the 265,000 women in the military during that time were 11,000 nurses who served in-country. The names of eight of those who perished are carved on the Women's Memorial in Washington, D.C.

This documentary is a tribute to oral history and its ability to preserve the experiences of these women. I was convinced that their stories would be more powerful and moving if told in their own words rather than in written form. Those who viewed the film would hear the full range of what these young nurses had endured: the fears and horrors, the means devised to cope with the extreme stress, the flashbacks and nightmares, the acts of self-sacrifice and bravery, the friendships formed and the camaraderie.

So how and where did I find the participants for this project? Being in a small town and a predominantly rural county proved to be a challenge. Initially I could not locate a sufficient sample,



Army nurse Amy Powlas (Saigon, 1971-72) is one of several women veterans interviewed by Fred Milano in the summer of 1989.. View the film at: libres.uncg.edu/ir/asu/f/womenvetsaccess.mp4

so I widened my search to nearby metropolitan areas such as Charlotte and Raleigh, NC. Eventually, after countless phone calls and pleas for assistance, I found four nurses and two Red Cross volunteers who had been to Viet Nam. Five of the six consented to be interviewed. One individual later withdrew after her supervisor at a VA hospital threatened her with a warning that it would be harmful to her career.

Armed with a meager, shoestring budget, the film was nevertheless completed in 1990. A few months later we all met at the home of one of the participants to watch the finished film. Afterwards I presented each of them with a personal copy to express my appreciation and to provide a lasting memento for their family history.

Fast-forward to the year 2020. With the advantage of hindsight, do I have any regrets about the film? Yes, an especially painful subject was purposely avoided. No questions were asked about physical and sexual assaults committed against them. Such inquiries seemed to me to be inappropriate and insensitive. Might it cause them, I worried, to relive the violence and trauma stemming from those brutal crimes? So for better or worse, I chose not to follow that path.

Whenever I show this film, I conclude with a suggestion to my audience. I urge them to become their own non-Hollywood version of a cinematographer. Since virtually everyone nowadays owns a cellphone, sliding into the role of filmmaker is an easy task. Simply sit down with a veteran (preferably a relative, friend, or acquaintance) and ask them to share their military or wartime experiences. My motive is prompted by demographics, the constant shifts in our population. Most Viet Nam veterans still alive today are in their 70s and beyond. More troubling is the rapidly decline in numbers of World War II veterans, with 400 of them dying each day. The last remaining members from those generations are quickly disappearing, so get out those smartphones and start recording!

Fred Milano, professor emeritus of sociology, is a longtime member of Veterans For Peace. He was a captain in the U.S. Air Force (1963-1968) during the Viet Nam era.

MUD-WALKING

The year I thought
as many words for mud
as it ladled out for boots—
slogging through two-by-two
in long ballistic lines—I prayed.
I prayed when the monsoon surrounded
the moon and tracers shimmered
over the Perfume River, like ghosts
swimming. I prayed when mud-walking
sounded like chest wounds sucking.
Rice tried to be quiet,
clustered in green columns,
like an army in ambush.

Back home the world quaked
where I stepped, unbalanced,
and someone said, "It's over, now."

But for thirty years, the flood
plain of that ghost-river has called
me, like a bell buoy through thick fog.
I've navigated its night-shade
tides. I've watched it carry people away,
like kites swelled with wind, high
over the delta, the strings strung out far
beyond any way back.
I've even seen, through the muddy, conical
glow of a Brooklyn streetlight, rain turn to rice.

—Richard Levine

Previously published in Richard Levine, *Selected Poems* (FutureCycle Press, 2019). Editor's Note: *Richard Levine served as a Marine in Viet Nam (1967–68), and thereafter taught for many years in NYC public schools.*



Viet Nam...Combat boots worn out in service, 23 May 1970.
[Photo: National Archives at College Park / Public domain.]

CLIMBING THE STREAM

Volcán Atitlán, Guatemala

A woman weaving a Mayan blanket
dangles her feet in the Stream.
A fish jumps in the pool and she
pulls tight the loom.
The sound of a man sanding
a handmade wooden dresser
mixes with water whispering
what it's seen, and you step

up the rapids by a vast hillside
beanfield where men bent over like
hairpins cling to folded rows of earth.
Further upstream, a mother and child
fill a bamboo doorway underneath
an old Coca-Cola sign. Inside
someone spreads avocado on a tostada
and you slip on a rock. You stand
to look and she smiles, offering you
the child for one thousand Quetzales.

The stream narrows, steeper
under double canopy jungle.
Spiderweb-covered waterfalls
lead you to the mountaintop clearing:
mossy ground cover with fallen wild
oranges, limes, avocados and violets.

Follow the sound of someone
chopping wood in the distance,
reach the boggy spring and a boy
in a steamy sunbeam with a machete,
sweaty, gasping, says to go back
to the village. Go home. There is nothing
here for you, all we make and grow
your country takes for free.

— Aaren Yeatts Perry

Previously published in Aaren Yeatts Perry, *Open Fire* (Whirlwind Press, 2004). Editor's Note: *Aaren Perry is not a veteran, but is fluent in Spanish, has extensive experience in Central America, and is a peace movement "fellow traveler."*

POEMS SELECTED BY
W. D. EHRHART
EDITOR-AT-LARGE

UPCOMING EVENTS



JULY 26–28, WASH., DC

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

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/>

SEPT 7–OCT. 2, CREECH AFB

Shut Down Creech

This week-long convergence is co-sponsored by VFP and CODEPINK. Nonviolently resist U.S. killer drones in the Nevada desert! Oppose the barbaric and deadly drone assassination program at Creech AFB terrorizing communities around the world. Find details at <https://shutdowncreech.blogspot.com>.

OCT 2–5, NEVADA DESERT

Nevada Desert Experience: codeGreen

Interfaith resistance to weaponized drones, militarism and nuclearism. See <http://nevadadesertexperience.org/beyond2020>.

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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!*

SAVE THE DATE! 2020 2021 VFP Convention, Albuquerque, New Mexico

All Is One: Toward a Peaceful and Nuclear Free World

The Albuquerque and Santa Fe Chapters of Veterans For Peace were disappointed when plans for the 2021 VFP National Convention, to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, were put on hold due to COVID-19 pandemic quarantine orders. A few local planning committee members are now helping plan this year's virtual gathering. But the hotel and other bookings are secured for 2021, so please plan on gathering with us in Albuquerque and Los Alamos next year. The 70th and 71st anniversaries of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki will be commemorated at the 2020 virtual and 2021 in-person VFP conventions respectively; other 2021 events to be announced as they are developed.



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



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- *Veterans For Black Lives: A timely message from Executive Director Garrett Reppenhagen*
- *Letter to VFP Members from VFP President Adrienne Kinne—including a call for members to submit videos for a video collage!*
- *Reports on Memorial Day, Korea Peace Campaign, the Global Ceasefire, and #StandDownLive*
- *Building a Culture of Peace—highlighting chapter-initiated peace gardens and memorial projects*
- *Chapter Reports—including from our NEW chapter 1005 in Madrid, Spain*
- *Basic program and sign-up information for VFP’s first-ever Virtual Convention, August 2–9, 2020*
- *Poetry, essays, a book review, and personal stories by VFP Members*



PHOTO: MARY BAHR

GAINESVILLE, FLORIDA—Anchored by VFP Chapter 14, community volunteers have worked for over a decade to transform Memorial Day Weekend into a time to remember the cost of war to service members, civilians, and the world in general. Starting in 2007, VFP’s “Memorial Mile” drew hundreds and then thousands of people each year to visit memorial markers honoring fallen service members in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The markers take up a full mile, attesting to the endless wars that our country continues to wage. Last year the City of Gainesville re-named the usual location of the memorial (8th Avenue Northwest) as “Memorial Mile,” in honor of their work. When the COVID-19 pandemic stopped the display from being installed for Memorial Day 2020, VFP created a “Virtual Tour” of the memorial showing how it has developed over the years. Visit the Gainesville chapter’s website at vfpgainesville.org to take the tour and watch a video interview with Gainesville VFP members produced by TV-20.