



# VETERANS FOR PEACE

## Shooting Pool Alone at Ft Drum: Lessons for the GI Movement

By Tod Ensign

As the early successes of our military invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq soured, it became obvious that American troops were going to be deployed in those countries for years to come. Drawing on our Vietnam war experience, Citizen Soldier decided to investigate whether we could stimulate the development of a GI coffee-house movement to oppose these wars. The twenty-odd Vietnam GI projects, which operated outside every important Army and Marine base, played an essential role in fomenting anti-war opposition among rank and file soldiers. I believe that this movement, along with the heroic resistance of the Vietnamese, eventually became the catalyst which forced the US to withdraw from Vietnam.

After considering several east coast bases, we decided to launch our new project near Ft. Drum, in upstate New York. We chose this base because it's home to the 10th Mountain (Light) Division, which endures the highest deployment rate of any division in the US Army. Its training as a highly mobile and lightly armed force makes it attractive for deployment for non-conventional, counter-insurgent operations in remote and rugged terrain.

We carefully compared the US military during Vietnam to the present "all volunteer" force. The most obvious difference is that after conscription was ended in 1973, our military no longer represented a cross-section of American society. One third of the troops in Vietnam were draftees with another third being "draft induced" volunteers. Today, virtually all enlisted soldiers are from working class or poor families. Secondly, they receive pay and bonuses which in most cases are competitive or superior to what they would earn in civilian jobs. During Vietnam, many soldiers earned \$120 a month, lived in crowded barracks and took their meals in dismal chow halls. Only a few were married or owned a car. Today, over half of all Army soldiers are married and most of these are also parents. You won't find many soldiers today who don't own a cell phone, a lap top computer as well as a car or a truck. They use this mobility to escape the base whenever possible, often travelling hundreds of miles.

After renting a 1,500 square foot space in a downtown shopping arcade in Watertown, N Y we opened the doors of our "Different Drummer Internet Cafe" in October 2006. We immediately set out

to spread the word about activities and counselling services that we were featuring at the Drummer. We went on-line with our "DifferentDrummerCafe" website to provide regular updates on cafe events. We also hooked up three computers which passersby were invited to use free of charge. (We were five years too late as most soldiers at Ft. Drum already had access to the internet.) Due to Watertown's heavy reliance on Ft. Drum as an economic engine, we feared being "blacked out" by local media. These fears proved

unfounded as both the local daily newspaper and the base paper "The Blizzard" were happy to accept our advertisements. The local TV news shows (as well as the *New York Times* and the *Syracuse Journal Standard*) were happy to report on issues or soldier's cases that we publicized at our cafe. Whatever caused Drum soldiers to ignore us, it wasn't due to any lack of media attention.

Another difficulty was recruiting a cafe coordinator who possessed both a knowledge of the issues facing soldiers and their families at Ft. Drum as well as political organizing experience. We first

hired the wife of a retired career NCO and later another wife of a soldier who had been deployed to Iraq. Neither of these women were able to outreach to soldiers and then draw them into activities at the Drummer. Many GI projects during the Vietnam war attracted civilian volunteers who would commit six months or a



Politicking Inside the Drummer

Shooting Pool Alone continued on page 19

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## Goldshlag and Williams Join BOD



### Nate Goldshlag

I became a radical political activist in college in 1968 and was kicked out in 1969 for accidentally getting my picture plastered on the front page of the *New York Times*, *Life*, etc. as we escorted a dean out of a building we occupied at Harvard, protesting ROTC and the Vietnam War. I was drafted in late 1970. I didn't do things to avoid the draft and went into the army to organize against the war. The fact that I avoided the stockade probably meant I wasn't that effective, but we started a GI paper in Germany. They had just stopped sending grunts like me to Vietnam a few months before, although I would not have gone. I went back to school and had two kids who I helped raise as a half-time single parent. I worked as an electronics engineer and retired a few years ago. I do volunteer and VFP work now.

I was active in the Smedley Butler brigade in Boston in the 1980s around Central America issues, but then lapsed until 2005. I'll never make that mistake again. As Smedley coordinator, I helped plan the event that got 18 of us arrested on Veterans Day 2007 for being excluded from the American Legion event, and was one of those arrested. I coordinated the effort that raised \$70,000 nationally for Winter Soldier. I hope to make a difference in VFP by serving on the Board.



### Pierre Williams

The Rev. Pierre L. Williams is a native of St. Petersburg, Florida and joined the Marine Corps in 1965. He is a survivor of the Khe Shan seige. Pierre recieved his Bachelor of Arts degree from Eckerd College in St. Petersburg, Florida and his Master of Divinity Degree from Virginia Union University in Richmond, Virginia. After being awarded the Master of Divinity degree, he also completed pastoral residency at Johns-Hopkins Hospital located in Baltimore, Maryland. He curently serves as Staff Chaplain at Harbor Hospital, Baltimore. He is an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church.

Pierre is an authority on federal equal opportunity and minority business enterprise programming. Formerly, he served as Equal Opportunity Officer and Manager of the Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration's Minority Business Enterprise Program. He is an active and contributing member of Baltimore United For Peace and Justice, the Phillip Berrigan Memorial Chapter for Veterans For Peace and the National Alliance For the Mentally ill, where he serves as a "community ambassador."

Pierre has been awarded numerous awards for his advocacy for minority rights in the areas of housing discrimination and developing business opportunities for minority and women businesses. In Baltimore, he is particularly sensitive to the plight of homeless veterans.

## Leadership Transition at IVAW



Alex Bacon

Kelly Dougherty has left her position as IVAW's Executive Director, a post she held since 2006. As a founder of IVAW, Kelly provided strong leadership and outstanding vision for the organization, and oversaw IVAW's massive growth - the organization quadrupled in size during her tenure. Kelly led and organized IVAW's strategy development process in 2007 that laid the groundwork for successful actions like our Winter Soldier: Iraq & Afghanistan hearings, Operation First Casualty street theater actions, and three successive GI

Outreach tours to military bases throughout the country. While Kelly is stepping down from the Executive Director position to focus on her personal life, she will remain a committed member of IVAW.

We are very pleased to welcome our new Executive Director, Alex Bacon. Alex has joined the national staff from Seattle, and brings with him extensive experience in nonprofit management, fundraising, and administration. He holds a B.A. in Labor Studies, and as the former Administrative Organizer for Washington State Jobs With Justice, he spent the last three years helping organize strategic direct actions and

*IVAW Leadership continued on page 20*

# El Salvador: A New Struggle Begins

By John Grant

The inauguration of Mauricio Funes as the FMLN President of El Salvador on June 1st was an emotional milestone for Salvadorans, as it was for many members of Veterans For Peace who, like me, felt they had participated in some small way to be part of the excitement.

The North American media, typically, ignored the story. But for many Salvadorans the Funes inaugural meant the war was finally over. This was clearly the consensus of the 80,000 joyous Salvadorans crowded into the Cuzcatlan soccer stadium to celebrate the Funes inaugural with flag-waving and impromptu salsa dancing.

VFP members have been involved with El Salvador from the beginning of the war. Wayne Wittman along with a host of members including Will Sjblom, David Silk, Larry Goodwin and Ernest Jenkins have been election monitors



FMLN commandante Chano Guevara and his mother embracing at an FMLN lunch in Suchitoto.

in numerous elections. A friend Francisco Acosta recalled the deceased Dave Silk warmly for the great work he had done; he also mention Brian Willson and Charley Liteky. Lane Anderson has been involved in El Salvador for years. In the late 1980s members like myself were involved in the repatriation movement as refugees returned from Honduras and resettled. VFP members, at home, took to the streets and wrote their Congress members to oppose the war.

It worked the other way as well. Salvadorans came north to speak and to meet with VFP. In 2005, for example, a delegation of FMLN combatants led by Victor Zuniga Rivera attended the VFP convention in Dallas. In the jammed stadium on June 1st I ran into Zuniga, and we reminisced about Dave Cline who he remembered.

In the inaugural celebratory mood, few were dwelling on the chronic

*El Salvador continued on page 17*

## Executive Director's Report

# This Is The Time For Us To Do Our Best Work

The June 16 passing of the \$106 billion war supplemental in the U.S. House of Representatives should tell us a great deal about the challenges we face as peacemakers and the importance of Veterans For Peace in this period. Democrats voted overwhelming for the bill with a majority of Republicans voting against it. However, their nay vote



Michael T. McPhearson

was not to stop further funding rather it was to protest \$5 billion added to the bill for the International Monetary Fund. Responsibility for the occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan and the widening war in Pakistan now belong to both Democrats and Republicans with very little opposition.

In the April 2005 Newsletter I wrote, "The long-term challenge is to sustain the momentum to fight for change. The current administration's outrageous actions fuel the present movement. But what happens when things return to 'normal?' How do we take the discomfort created by the current crisis and turn it into dissatisfaction with the status quo?"

I believe today that challenge stares us squarely in the face. Since the election

of Barrack Obama, there has been confusion and soul searching. For now, the urgency and outrage of the occupations have subsided and there is uncertainty about what to do. Obama's campaign and eventual ascendancy to the White House has sucked much of the apparent energy of the peace/anti-war movements and now it seems that

many are sitting back and waiting to see what will happen next, or believe President Obama will take care of everything.

Never thinking in 2001 that we would still be resisting U.S. wars in 2009, many of us have lost faith in the struggle. In the wake of the financial collapse and subsequent economic recession, much of the public is struggling to make ends meet and fear the loss of their jobs. They are addressing concerns that are closer to home and the war has become secondary. Likewise, with Democrats in control of the legislative and executive branches, our allies have decided it is time to focus on their individual issues. Single payer healthcare, environment, housing, education, the Employee Free Choice Act, equal access to marriage and so on

have moved to the front of the political dialogue pushing the occupations and war to a second or third tier issue.

What do we do? Returning to my words in 2005, "We must do two things. First, we continue to do what we do best. Tell the truth about war. Share our experiences. Speak truth to power. Second, we must challenge others and ourselves to engage and continue in the struggle for peace."

Four years later, I would change that just a bit. We must keep the wars and occupa-

*This Is The Time continued on page 23*

### VFP Newsletter

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# Letter from the President — Mike Ferner



## VETERANS FOR PEACE

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President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

May 12, 2009

Dear President Obama,

We write to you again, this time to say we are saddened to see that you now clearly believe in the tired, inhumane and unworkable assumption that violence will somehow work; that might makes right. But that is not the only thing we need to tell you.

We are not just saddened. We are angry. We are outraged by these actions, this practice of “death from above” you are ordering, causing the killing and wounding of hundreds of innocent people, as exemplified by the recent horrific attacks in Afghanistan.

When will it be enough, Mr. President? What is the number of dead and injured at which you will say “this can’t go on;” the number at which you will decide it’s time to turn away from violence and find another way? This really is the question upon which everything else will turn – how many bodies are too many? You know it is impossible to kill our way to a resolution, if for no other reason than every death and injury creates even more people willing to fight and die to remove us from their land.

We’ve been through this before, Mr. President, and I don’t mean that in a rhetorical way. We have indeed been through this all before – unlike most of the people in our country or in your administration. We have seen and heard and smelled and felt what “death from above” actually means, not in a briefing report but right there in our hands and before our eyes. We’ve seen the look in the eyes of the people we occupied. We felt their anger and their humiliation. We remember these things well, Mr. President, because they will not go away no matter how many years pass.

Veterans For Peace will continue to speak out against such crimes. We will do so along with the growing numbers of people who are telling you that by going down this road you are making a tragic mistake. We no longer face the old question of “guns or butter?” Now the question is: will we completely destroy our economy with all that means, or will we step back from the brink and do what our humanity demands of us before the slide into moral and economic ruin is irreversible?

At some point, Mr. President, you will decide to turn away from violence, to end these occupations. As we wrote before, we stand ready to assist you in any effort to find another way. Until then you will find us in the streets.

Most Sincerely,

Mike Ferner  
National President  
Veterans For Peace

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# Chapter Reports



L to R: John Cavanagh - Director of Institute for Policy Studies, Marcus Raskin - Founder IPS, Michael Uhl, Congressman Conyers, Dud Hendrick.

## Chapter 1, Portland, ME

William Ladd Chapter members have been hard at it on many fronts. Member Bruce Gagnon, better known as the Coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, along with other chapter members, spearheaded a collaborative effort to organize a Town Hall meeting in April to which state politicians were invited. Representative Chellie Pingree attended as did a senior staffer representing Congressman Mike Michaud. The chapter was well-represented as at least six members were among the 70+ who spoke out on the economy, health care, war and the environment.

The Global Network also convened its 17th annual conference in Seoul, Korea where the focus was on Asian Pacific Missile Defense. Tom Sturtevant, Korean War vet and former chapter president, attended and spoke movingly of his experiences during his first visit to Korea.

Bruce, Michael Uhl (National Board), and Dud Hendrick participated in the No Bases "Security Without Empire" conference at American University. Over 20 meetings were scheduled with Congressional staff. Wm Ladd Chapter members met with Congressman John Conyers to discuss the U.S. military empire.

On June 6th, Chapter 1 will present the 4th annual PTSD Symposium. Featured this year will be the renowned author Judith Herman, and members Michael Uhl and Rob Pfeiffer.

*Dud Hendrick*

## Chapter 10, Albany, NY

On May 1, 2009 Chapter 10 joined the May Day Celebration in Prospect Park in Troy, NY to end the wars in Iraq and

Afghanistan along with supporting worker rights and single payer health care. Dan Wilcox and Lloyd Herbert provided information and insight.

On May 2, led by Hervie Harris, Chapter 10 joined with hundreds of other activists and VFP members in north Philadelphia to protest the Army Experience Center at Franklin Mills Mall.

It was an important and successful action against army recruitment of children.

On May 5, Chapter 10 turned out to welcome Ann Wright at the annual Peace Action dinner. Ann gave an insightful and inspiring talking encouraging our continued work for peace in the Middle East, particularly working towards a resolution of the Israeli/Gaza situation.

Chapter 10 also learned about the Emotional Freedom Techniques which can help veterans in dealing with PTSD and other issues. Thank you Clay LaPorte for providing this information and your kind offer to help veterans free of charge. Our meeting also lent financial support to the Iraqi Student Project.

*John Amidon*

## Chapter 21, Northern New Jersey

VFP Chapter 21 marched on Wall Street in NYC with United For Peace and Justice on April 4, 2009. It was another march



VFP members Hervie Harris and Wendy Dwyer along with Margarita DeSantis (ctr) join hundreds of activists in protesting the Frank Mills Mall Army Experience Center.

of about 10,000 that no one saw or heard about!

We are still attending our weekly vigil in front of the Teaneck Armory. MFSO and VFP members asked the Teaneck Town Council to support a town-wide collection



From left to right, Joe Gianini, Walt Nygard, Nancy Nygard, Jim Fallon, Ken Dalton, Mike Kramer, taken at the march on Wall Street, April 4, 2009,

for the Family Assistance Center at the Armory and it was approved! The town will advertise for it and set up collection centers and youth groups from the area will pick up the items and deliver them with us. That was a big win for us in Teaneck!!

*Walt and Nancy Nygard*

## Chapter 27, Minneapolis, MN

Below is an edited version of the recent official letter from a Minneapolis Schools official granting VFP Chapter 27 the right to provide alternatives to military service, truth in recruiting, and counter recruiting information to their students. Permission

was granted after a long and strenuous effort on the part of VFP member John Sherman and VFP colleagues:

"Veterans For Peace is now certified as a community partner.

Congratulations! You will receive a certification letter in the near future.

After you have been approved as a Community Partner you should

submit your flyers to the Community Education Department, 1006 West Lake Street, room 404, Minneapolis, MN 55408, for approval.

If you have a flyer that is not meant to go home with the students, but only posted in schools, it is up to the school Principal to decide if they want to post it.

Again, please obtain approval at the district level, to review and approve the content of your materials.”

Enjoy this beautiful day!

Minneapolis Community Education”

Bob Heberle

### Chapter 31, Philadelphia, PA

Members of VFP 31 have been asking questions about Afghanistan and President Obama’s decision to escalate there, and one member had an op-ed on that issue in the *Philadelphia Daily News*. We’re also asking questions about what kinds of activism are most effective in the current political climate. Chapter members joined a protest May 2nd at the Army Experience Center in NE Philadelphia. Members ran in a race, judged a Peace Poetry Contest and constructed a Peace Wheel for A Celebration Of Youth to support youth violence prevention in the city; we will employ the Peace Wheel at future events. We tabled at Mount Airy Day in that city community. We are developing a \$4,500 fund-raising effort for three water purification systems in Iraq. Several members have spoken in high schools and college venues about peace and war issues; and we are helping allied groups pay for speakers. We are working

with the group *Veterans For American Interests in Israel-Palestine*. We have re-started our public film series. We are committed to work with the national VFP effort to cut the defense budget by 25% and to seeking accountability in the torture/detention issue.

John Grant

### Chapter 34, New York City

Chapter 34 has 170 members and conducts bi-monthly meetings in NYC. Members have participated in various events throughout the NY area, including the March 1 St. Pat’s for All Parade, March 5 Rally for NY, March 18 Combatants for Peace event at Queens College, March 21 March on the Pentagon.

Recent chapter actions include:

- Sixth Anniversary of Invasion of Iraq, March 19th - vigil in Union Square Park. Theme was “Yes We Can, Bring our Troops Home from Iraq & Afghanistan”.
- SOA Watch, April 2 - Vietnam veteran and SOA Watch founder Father Roy Bourgeois spoke at NYU Law School, cosponsored by Chapter 34.
- UFPJ March on Wall Street, April 4th - table at the Peace & Justice Fair after the march; info and VFP applications were provided.



VFP Chapter 34 marching in Queens St Pat’s For All Parade

We are planning a public education event called “War & the Economy” to address the effect of spending for the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on our rapidly deteriorating economy. We are also planning a Memorial Day observance, participation in the NYC Heritage of Pride parade June 28, and the VFP Convention in College Park, MD.

Chapter 34 members participate in five ongoing weekly peace vigils at various locations, and a monthly event in front of Grand Central Station.

Bob Keilbach

### Chapter 39, Northeast Ohio

Northeast Ohio Chapter 39, restored to consciousness a couple of years ago after a long blackout, has rung up a small victory against violent ambient militarism. VAE (Virtual Army Experience) will not grace our fair city’s National Air Show this summer!



The honored poets holding their plaques are, left to right: Robin Bey, 2nd place; Samuel Felli, 3rd place; Erica Smith, 1st place; and Jonnell Outen, honorable mention for under 6th grade. Also in the shot: VFP member judges. left to right, Thompson Bradley, President Chuck Rossi and Frank Corcoran.



John Grant and two of the kids testing their peace and justice knowledge at the Peace Wheel.

This particular recruiting tool, which invites participants as young as 13 to sit in Humvees and fire at simulated human targets, has no place at an “air” show, especially one that promotes itself as “whole-some family entertainment”.

A letter/phone campaign last year, coordinated by Chapter 39 and involving people of many backgrounds and disciplines, targeted air show organizers and sponsors who were clearly not prepared for our juggernaut. We like to think it no coincidence that the US Army announced it is “too busy” with other heavy-breathing engagements to bother with Cleveland in 2009. Cleveland Congressman Dennis Kucinich has also requested the House Armed Services Committee to suspend all funding for VAE.

*Bob Bemer*



Peace poetry contest winners ready to read their poems.

Photo by Duke Ellis

## Chapter 41, Cape Cod, MA

Chapter 41 headed toward 2009 by co-sponsoring a well-attended December event featuring Pdraig O’Malley, PhD, distinguished professor of public policy at UMass Boston and veteran peace negotiator of the conflicts in Northern Ireland, South Africa and Iraq. He emphasized that truly effective peace negotiations must involve every last one of the parties to the conflict, no matter how difficult that is to bring about.

Then in January it was time to kick-off our 14th annual Peace Poetry Contest with invitations to all schools on Cape Cod and the general public. This year’s contest yielded 551 entries and culminated in late April when the 63 youth and adult winners read their poems at the Awards Ceremony honoring the poets as well as their teachers

and families.

In February, our own Max Money was honored with the Annual Human Rights Award by the local chapter of Church Women United for his central role in the VFP Peace Poetry Contest as well as his other humanitarian work including his initiation of an overnight shelter program at his church which supplements the beds at the local shelter. Max also represented the Veterans of Cape Cod at the major school-based Memorial Day Observance in the town of Barnstable.

Billie Stewart and Bob Silverberg continued to work with the Barnstable Soldiers Memorial Committee on several projects including planning the largest Memorial Day Program on the Cape (which always includes poetry reading by some of our contest winners), interfacing with a local housing program for homeless vets and, as always, bringing our message of peace, justice and reconciliation to other veteran groups and the wider community.

*Duke Ellis*

## Chapter 47, Southwestern PA

We are still striving to keep the chapter alive, and with several new members, including an IVAW member on board, we are hoping the new blood will give us a transfusion.

The chapter was represented in 6th anniversary vigils and actions here in Southwestern Pa. and in D.C.

We recently hosted former Marine Capt. Chris McIntosh, working on behalf of Veterans for American Interests in Israel-Palestine (VAIIP), a project of the American Association for Palestinian Equal Rights Foundation (AAPER Foundation). Chris gave us an education about current U.S. policies toward Israel and Palestine and mobilization in support of policies that advance America’s interests and ideals.

A Memorial Day Chapter Meeting was called where, after recognizing the sacrifices that have been made, it is planned to address a proposal to name the chapter in honor of Seneca Chief, “Cornplanter” a.k.a John Obail, the Native American who may have been the first to give back his medals to the U.S. Government in contempt. An invited guest from “Fight for Lifers” and

hopefully one of our senior members who is in that organization too, is going to give us an update on the current plight of the 163 veterans serving life sentences in Pa. Prisons. In light of President Obama’s apparent pardon of serious crimes committed by high ranking officials it seems only fair that decorated veterans also receive some type of pardons for their crimes. Perhaps a call for a “General Pardon” for conscientious objectors, resisters, awol, deserters, etc. will come out of it.

*Davide Thomas*

## Chapter 54, Santa Barbara, CA

Here in Santa Barbara we have made a successful transition to a new schedule for the Arlington West memorial. From November 2003 to February 2009 this

### SOLDIERS OF PEACE

We watch.  
We do not help; we watch.  
People are trying to stop the fighting.  
But we don’t help, we watch.

We forget, too often, why they are there.  
They promote peace and love.  
Yet we stand on the sidelines;  
We just watch.

They fight for freedom,  
For peace, for love.  
But what do we do?  
We watch.

They keep us safe;  
They protect us.  
We, too, can protect others,  
But, no, we just watch.

America, we can’t keep watching,  
Support is not enough.  
We need to promote peace and love,  
Yet, we just watch.

They do their job. We need to do ours,  
To spread kindness and love throughout  
the land.  
They do their job; they protect us from  
harm,  
But we just stand on the sidelines and  
watch.

We look to them as soldiers to keep peace.  
But we have it all wrong,  
We are all soldiers for peace.  
But we don’t do our job; we watch.

Peter Hartnett, Hyannis MA  
First Honors Winner Grade 6  
Chapter 41 Cape Cod  
14th Annual Peace Poetry Contest  
April 2009

memorial of white crosses was set up every Sunday on the beach. In February, we decided to move to a monthly schedule on the first Sunday of the month, with additional set-ups on special occasions. The first of these will take place this Memorial Day, Monday May 25.

In the interest of providing care for returning veterans, we are now working with Noah's Ark, a non-profit group seeking to



**NH VFP Conducts "Penny Poll" at Manchester Central High**  
Photo Will Thomas

provide transitional housing and counseling services. This effort has been spearheaded by VFP member Babatunde Fodayemi. Other veterans organizations in the area are also joining in this effort.

VFP member Dr. Gil Robledo continues his Recruitment Education activities at Santa Barbara City College, including a monthly War Moratorium and Teen Memorial project which has garnered wide

attention in the community.

Our members look forward to participating in the forthcoming regional meetings of VFP and the national convention this summer. Dr. Al Holtz, our resident expert on Depleted Uranium issues, hopes to offer a workshop on this vital topic.

*Shirley and Jim Kennedy*

## Chapter 62, Southern New Hampshire

Chapter 62 continues to broadcast on our local public access TV (MCAM 23, Manchester, NH) as we have had informative guests such as a Palestinian woman, an Iraqi vet who joined VFP and IVAW, and the Ex.

Director of NH Peace Action. NH VFP collaborated with Peace Action, AFSC-NH, and other groups to sponsor a two-

day conference titled "Building a Culture of PEACE & NON-VIOLENCE at Home and Abroad." Noble Peace Prize nominee Kathy Kelly was our keynote speaker. On Saturday, workshops were offered, including "Truth in Military Recruiting."

Following the workshops, we had a Peace March & Demonstration in the state capital to mark the 6th anniversary of the Pentagon's attack on Iraq.

Recently, NH VFP conducted a "Penny Poll," in Manchester's three public high schools whereby students and faculty had a chance to designate where they wanted their federal tax dollars spent. Not surprisingly, the three schools voted to spend 29% on Education, 22 % on the Environment, 21% on Health Care, 13% on Housing, and Military Spending received only 14%! We continue to table in the schools and offer students literature, buttons, bumper stickers, copies of the enlistment document, and to answer any questions about the military and militarism.

The AJ Muste Chapter is preparing to march in the state's largest Memorial Day Parade as we have in the past. Last year, one of our members, Will Hopkins, an Iraq vet, was allowed to speak following the Veterans Day Parade, and did so with tremendous power and meaning. NH VFP has asked, again, to have one of us speak at the post-parade ceremonies.

*Will Thomas*

## Chapter 87, Sacramento, CA

Chapter 87 has been fairly busy. We sponsor two monthly anti-war demonstrations. One is a sign-wielding, sometimes candle-lit, street corner vigil in the heart of Sacramento's "Second Saturday" evening art walk. We are usually well received by the surprised gallery visitors who pass by. The other event is our "Demand Peace Now" demonstration at a busy intersection during the afternoon of every third Sunday.

Recently our chapter president, John Reiger, testified before a California legislature sub-committee against bills that would require San Francisco schools to reinstate



**Iraq body count exhibit in front of California State Capitol organized by Chapter 87, Sacramento.**



**Protesting an Army recruiting video tournament — Sacramento VFP 87.**



Junior ROTC. John was able to testify as a VFP member and also as the grandparent of a JROTC granddaughter.

In December we demonstrated for 3 days at the site of the Army's weekend-long recruitment effort, which was disguised as a video game tournament.

Chapter 87 members turned out for the local Rachel Corrie Day demonstration, for two war-anniversary demonstrations, and for a candlelight peace ceremony at the Unitarian Society meeting hall.



**Mother's Day Event celebrates true origin and intent of the holiday: A Call to Peace and Non-violence on Saturday, May 9th, 2009 at 2pm at the Broome County Court House in downtown Binghamton.**

During the past couple of years we have gained local publicity for various other actions. On Veterans' Day 2008 we demonstrated in front of a large local shopping center. With news cameras rolling, some of our members marched into the Sears store to demand that they stop marketing Big Red 1 (1st Infantry Division) logo clothing to teens and children.

On Memorial Day weekend 2008, Chapter 87 members organized an impressive and thought provoking display of the Iraq Body Count exhibit near the State Capitol building. In a seven-block grassy median strip, local Sacramento volunteers put out 120,000 small red and white flags to represent US soldiers and Iraqis who have died during the occupation.

*John and Debra Riger*

### **Chapter 90, Broome County, NY**

Broome County Veterans For Peace spearheaded a coalition of ten organizations to celebrate Mothers Day for Peace. Binghamton actor Patricia Donohue offered a dramatic reading of Julia Ward Howe's classic proclamation. The crowd of over 50 enjoyed listening to Colleen Kattau, a

multi-talented bi-lingual singer-songwriter who performed some specially chosen music for this occasion.

We have had a busy spring. We tabled at Earth Fest, and joined with over 50 environmental and community groups. We partnered with our local Peace Action to welcome Col. Ann Wright back to Binghamton for a special eyewitness account of her trip to Gaza with amazing photos of the devastation.

After having a great article and photo in our local paper about the Mothers Day event, we followed up with a VFP guest viewpoint published in 3 local newspapers, in Binghamton, Elmira, and Ithaca. We have already received several inquiries from that!

We will be visiting local high schools in late May & June, and hosting several showings of a new film about the life of IAW member Jimmy Massey .

*George McAnanama*

### **Chapter 91, San Diego, CA**

SDVFP Chapter 91 has been busy since the new year. Several members began 2009 by attending The People's Ball sponsored by Activist San Diego. The yearly event brings the hardworking peace community together for some downtime fun.

Early February found many of us participating in a CCP training course. Mid-month, SDVFP members attended a house party featuring VVAW National Coordinators Barry Romo and Marty Webster as speakers.

Cindy Sheehan joined our march and rally to mark the 6th anniversary of the War Against Iraq on March 21st. In April we tabled and sold water at San Diego's Earth Day event, the world's largest.

Barry Ladendorf has been working to establish a Veterans Diversion Court here in San Diego while Jan Ruhman's focus has been to prevent the deportation of non-citizen veterans. Under Jack Doxey's leadership, visits are being made to all of our local congressional offices. SDVFP also continues to support war resister Robin Long and to collect food for military families.

Chapter 91 provided security for Winter



**Featured Speaker Cindy Sheehan at March 21st Rally marking 6th anniversary of the Iraq War in San Diego's Balboa Park. Young man wearing purchased VFP tee shirt looking on.**

Soldier Southwest on May 9th, will commemorate Memorial Day with an Arlington West display, and is looking forward to its first Regional VFP Conference.

*Deb Schneider*

### **Chapter 93, Washtenaw/Ypsilanti, MI**

Chapter 93, located in south central Michigan, continues to award scholarships twice a year to students enrolled in a peace studies, or conflict resolution, curriculum. The scholarship fund is boosted every year by an annual October concert on John Lennon's birthday. The chapter is also participating in a local drive to raise funds for the national VFP Iraq Water Project and has an annual Peace Pole dedication on Mothers Day to bring local attention to the peace history of that day. For more on the chapter's activity, visit [www.vfp93.org](http://www.vfp93.org).

*Bob Krzewinski*

### **Chapter 99, Asheville, NC**

Chapter 99 in Asheville, NC observed the sixth anniversary of the Iraq invasion with a traveling road show. Ken Ashe rigged his flatbed truck with safety rails, a sound system, and a mockup commode mounted over the cab (to graphically demonstrate that the war is flushing away billions of dollars). After the rig was properly outfitted with banners and flags, eight chapter members climbed aboard for a moveable feast. Stopping at various spots around town, we distributed The War Crimes Times (published by our chapter—see <http://war-crimestimes.org/>) and broadcast public service announcements about the costs of war. We concluded the day's activities at our



**Distributing the War Crimes Times on March 19th in front of local newspaper offices. Photo by Clare Hanrahan**

peace park where we updated our billboard message, "Impeach Bush," by overlaying "Impeach" with "Indict."

*Kim Carlyle*

### **Chapter 102, Milwaukee WI**

Counter-recruitment work we did last summer, with help from the national VFP and Peace Action-Wisconsin, apparently has paid some dividends.

The Army has announced that its Virtual Army Experience, which entices young people by making killing into a life-sized video game, will not return to Summerfest, Milwaukee's lakefront music festival, this year.

In 2008, protests sparked by VFP forced the Army to close the exhibit, which had allowed children as young as 13 to fire from a Humvee at life-sized human video targets. It was replaced with a traditional stationary target shoot, minus the Humvee and with age levels raised to 16.

This year's exhibit will be greatly scaled back, with a Humvee, an Army race car, and a dog tag machine, the Army said. The age limit will be 16.

Our goal remains a policy of no military recruiting on the festival grounds, and we will continue those efforts while celebrating this progress.

The chapter is also taking part in a Bring the Guard Home campaign to pass state legislation challenging the legality of federal National Guard callups, and continuing its major effort to find and help homeless veterans in the shelters and on the streets of Milwaukee.

*Bill Christofferson*

### **Chapter 109, Olympia, WA**

The Iraq Memorial to Life (<http://portland.indymedia.org/en/2009/03/388277.shtml>) began its national tour in Olympia, WA on March 19, 2009. Representing the desire for peace and reconciliation, the Memorial presents markers for the Iraqi civilians whose deaths have been documented to be a result of the U.S.-led invasion that began March 19, 2003. If you would like to help with this project or

schedule a visit to your community, please contact: [peace@iraqmemorialtolife.org](mailto:peace@iraqmemorialtolife.org) (VFP109 supported this project with planning, financing, making markers and the ANW-style layout [facing Mecca].)

IVAW has opened the only coffee house for active duty military in the U.S., within a stone's throw of a military base (Ft. Lewis, WA), with help from individual members of chapter 109, a financial pledge from our chapter through 2009, plus support from other area chapters and the NW regional meeting. COFFEE STRONG provides active duty military with access to G.I. Rights, including info on C.O. status, stop-loss, PTSD counseling and more. [www.GIVOICE.org](http://www.GIVOICE.org)

*Terrence Zander*

### **Chapter 111, Bellingham, WA**

For the first time in six years, Chapter 111, along with Evergreen Peace and Justice and Seattle's Chapter 92, was unable to set up the Memorial Day Arlington NW commemorative at Peace Arch Park - [http://www.veteransforpeace.org/files/Image/memorial\\_day\\_2008/Arlington%20NW1.jpg](http://www.veteransforpeace.org/files/Image/memorial_day_2008/Arlington%20NW1.jpg) - on the US/Canadian border. Due to construction restricting access to this venue, along with unavoidable absences of principal participants, this moving tribute was noticeably missing at this congested border crossing this year. Sadly however, Obama's Iraq policy should mean even more markers and a more breathtaking tribute next year.

On a positive note, Chapter member Ash Woolson, OIF, has created Vetretreat.com, a website dedicated to veterans deployed and returning home, not only to facilitate a re-connection but to emphasize support using YouTube vignettes. "The website [www.vetretreat.com](http://www.vetretreat.com) is trying to become a bridge... increasing knowledge and compassion with each other," according to Woolson, IVAW Chapter 32 President.

On Saturday, May 16, Chapter 111 co-sponsored the Bellingham Peace Walk, an event hosted by the GI Sanctuary City Movement and also co-sponsored by the Whatcom Peace and Justice Center to show our strong opposition to on-going Occupations and to support the GIs with the courage to resist. A rally featuring speakers and music followed the march.

*Gene Marx*

### **Chapter 112, Ventura/Oxnard CA**

VFP Chapter 112, together with the Center For Constitutional Rights and Poets of Ventura, presented "Poems From Guantanamo", featuring Vincent Warren, executive director of CCR, poetry performances and group discussion. A similar poetry reading, again featuring Mr. Vincent Warren, is being planned for October at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Chapter 112 has been invited to participate at Ventura High School's annual "Peace Week". The Santa Barbara Iraq War/Afghan War teenage headstone memorial display will be featured. Over 300 mock headstones will be displayed representing the 18 and 19 year old GIs dying in those wars since 2001.

IVAW Southwest Winter Soldier's speak-out event took place May 9th at Pasadena City College (CA) with VFP and



**Arlington NW 2008 at the Peace Arch.**

VVAW asked to provide security. Chapter members were also invited to join with other regional area VFP, IVAW, MFSO and allied vet groups at the VFP Southwest Regional conference in Oceanside, CA. May 29-31.

Chapter 112 has planted its second peace tree (a fig), this time at a remarkable Oxnard community garden event on church property, the location of our chapter's monthly meeting. Our community garden has been named Community Roots.

Finally, we closed the current high school year giving five scholarship award presentations and enjoying laudable VFP successes at our lunch time on-campus tabling.

*Michael Cervantes*

### Chapter 114, Sheboygan, WI

Greetings fellow activists: Much of our focus since last fall concerned the production of our fifth anti-war concert, as far as we know the oldest, largest such event in the Mid-West. We used new graphics in our posters and booked a larger venue. Always held during the anniversary week of the invasion of Iraq, Saturday night, March 21st saw fourteen acts on stage entertaining and raising people's consciousness about the two wars we are still engaged in. Once again, we welcomed Peter Tracy, VFP from Santa Rosa, CA. For the first time, humorist John Heckinlively brought his alter-ego Dr. Billy-Bob Farright, distinguished political pundit from Liberty University who praised the wit and wisdom of Rush Limbaugh and warned us of the liberal excesses of Barack "Hooosain" Obama. As usual we read a number of fact statements between acts covering such topics as DU ammunition, the SOA at Ft. Benning and the Wall in the

Palestinian territories. We considered the night a success, collecting four pages of signatures on a petition to bring our Wisconsin National Guard home from Iraq.

We marched, perhaps for the last time, in our city's Memorial Day Parade. Under new, more conservative management, our members were asked not to carry a flag draped coffin bearing the number of Americans killed in Iraq and Afghanistan as we have done in years past. We were told that it was too depressing and controversial for our citizens. God forbid we take their minds off of beer, brats and feel-good flag waving . . . on Memorial Day!

We look forward to our Peace Lantern-Float remembering Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August as well as the VFP national convention out East. Have a great summer!

*Tom Contrestan*

### Chapter 115, Red Wing, MN

Chapter 115 from Red Wing, MN and the surrounding area are well into our planning for the seventh annual Pigstock event to be held on July 18th. We have an exciting group of speakers starting with Chris Hedges, a 2002 Pulitzer Prize winner. Chris Hedges is a well know author and journalist.

Chante Wolf, from VFP, Chapter 27 will be leading a morning panel on women's issues in the military. Helen Benedict, the author of the book *The Lonely Soldier*, and a professor of journalism at Columbia University, will be on the panel along with IVAW members.

The last speaking event we have planned for the day will be Chris Hedges on a panel discussing his presentation. The panel includes Coleen Rowley, the former FBI agent who spoke to the

2005 VFP convention in Dallas, TX; Nigel Parry, a local expert on Israeli/Palestinian issues and Jeff Nygaard, author of political commentary, "Nygaard Notes".

At this year's Pigstock we hope to have an update on national VFP activities from Executive Director, Michael McPhearson.

Another activity we will be promoting is to provide free lawn and garden care to seniors and others in need. We felt this was an excellent way to provide a needed service to our communities.

*Bill Habedank*

### Chapter 125, Atlanta, GA

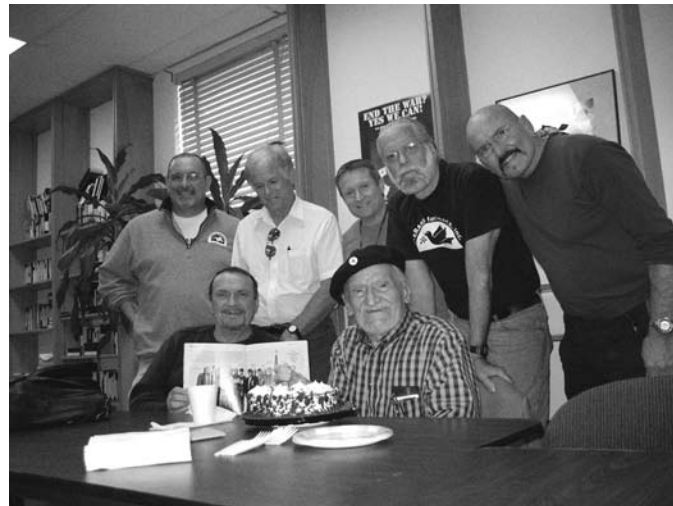
Atlanta Chapter 125 members have been working with the recently formed Georgia Veterans Alliance (GVA), which includes Iraq-Afghanistan Veterans of America, Iraq Veterans Against the War, National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS), Unitarian Universalist Veterans Alliance, Veterans For Peace, Veterans Heart Georgia, Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Vietnam Veterans of America. It's worked out to be a good partnership, and has helped breathe new life into our activism.

The DeKalb Marine Corps Institute, a new magnet school, is scheduled to open in Atlanta in August. Similar military schools exist in other parts of the country, but this will be the first one in Georgia. The Board of Education and the Marine Corps were planning this for months before the public caught wind of it. They say that it's a done deal, but we haven't given up, and opposition to this school continues to grow. At a recent public hearing VFP member and GVA founder Mike Burke told the Board that, "13-year-olds do not belong in a class with Marines."



Bread & Puppet Theater Perform at Benefit for GI Rights Hotline.

Photo by Balewa Alimayu



George Sossencko's Birthday Party — front: Mike Burke, George Sossencko rear: Mike Hearington, John Zientowski, Danny Ingram, Reid Jenkins, Tommy Unger. Photo by Tommy Unger



VFP and IVAW member Benji Lewis discusses truth in recruiting issues with students participating in PeaceJam Northwest '09.

Photo by Bart Bolger

In April, Chapter 125 members and NABVETS members took 10 homeless veterans to a Stand Down in Columbus Georgia. From May 7–10, Chapter 125 hosted the annual GI Rights Hotline conference offering many very informative workshops, including Don't Ask Don't Tell, facilitated by Danny Ingram. Danny was one of the first to be discharged under the DADT rule and is the current president of the Georgia Chapter of American Veterans for Equal Rights, an advocacy group for gay rights in the military.

Chapter 125 is in a unique position because more active duty U.S. military personnel pass through the Atlanta Airport than any other airport in the country. Every Wednesday chapter "Airport Ambassadors" go to the airport to talk to GI's and distribute GI Rights Hotline folding information cards.

Last but not least, George Sossenko, the president of Chapter 125, turned 90 so we decided to surprise him with a birthday party. At 16, George left his parents' home in Paris to join those fighting against Francisco Franco's nationalist forces in the Spanish Civil War. He signed up with the anarchists, and received a week's worth of training before being sent into combat. He fought there in two international brigades, and later fought with the Free French in World War II. George says he sleeps like a baby now because he fought for the proletariat.

Reid Jenkins

### Chapter 132, Corvallis, OR

Chapter 132 is making a difference in this community by participating in PeaceJam Northwest '09 with a Truth in Recruitment workshop that was an awesome experience and reached over 20 teens. We joined

the other three VFP chapters from Oregon at the March 15 rally/march in Salem. Many of us participated in the procession through the OSU campus & a die-in commemorating the 6th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. This was somber, poignant and full of emotional charge. On March 17th we lobbied the state legislature in support of the Keep the National Guard Home legislation. We visited nearly all 90 legislators. We are excited about how close we are to getting this passed! We enjoyed the beautiful Celtic music of three local bands during a "Second Saturdays" benefit concert for which our chapter was the beneficiary. We are now preparing for some big upcoming events. First, on May 17th, we will host a benefit concert for war resisters featuring Emma's Revolution and comments by Benji Lewis, war resister and member of VFP and IVAW. On May 27th, Cindy Sheehan is coming to speak as part of her book tour.

Rebecca Michelson

### Chapter 134, Tacoma, WA

Last December we started promoting the Peace Corp and AmeriCorp as an alternative to military service. A few of our members attended the Regional Conference in Seattle and found it moving. VFP displays are scheduled at the local libraries. Founding member Tom Dailey passed away due to serious illness, the naming of the chapter after him is still in debate. We continue to support the G.I. coffee house and internet cafe, Coffee Strong, with regular and special needs donations. We sponsored a dance at the local Amvets hall and raised \$181. Members helped set-up Chapter 92's (Seattle) Arlington Northwest Display at Greenlake Park, Seattle on April 19. The Peace Memorial Park Project in Tacoma is still in the research phase. On April 24 in Tacoma we participated in a "Walk A Mile In Her Shoes", a fundraiser and public education event for the Sexual Assault Center of Pierce County. We shed some light on Military Sexual Trauma. We have adopted the Pennies For Peace Fundraiser for children to participate in funding schools in Afghanistan. Check the website: <http://www.penniesforpeace.org>

Recently, local activists and VFP members gathered at Coffee Strong to discuss a

continued to the bottom of page 13



The Chapter 80 "No More War" float has been seen in more than a dozen small town parades by tens of thousands of spectators in each of the last two years. The float will be active again in 2009 in as many venues as we are able to attend. There has been very little negative response, a lot of stunned silence, and an ever expanding appreciation expressed by cheers and clapping. We have been denied entrance in only two venues. We are in the process of attempting to acquire a pickup truck to pull the float and, despite limited resources, are surely going to accomplish that goal.

# Confronting Army's Philadelphia experiment

## At Franklin Mills recruiting station, war is just a violent video game

By John Grant

Op-ed, Philadelphia Inquirer, May 14, 2009

The Pentagon has launched a \$13 million marketing experiment at the Franklin Mills Mall in Northeast Philadelphia. It's an effort to sell the Army as a brand, like Disney, and it could one day be replicated in malls all over America.

It's called the Army Experience Center, and it was recently confronted by 200 angry citizens from around the mid-Atlantic region, seven of whom were arrested. Their beef was the center's use of tax dollars to assemble what amounts to a sophisticated trap.

The center's violent video games and simulations of shooting human targets seduce vulnerable teenagers into an "us-versus-them" mindset. The goal is recruitment.

The Center takes up 14,000 square feet of mall space next to the Dave & Buster's game emporium. Dozens of video stations are available for adolescents as young as 13 to play a host of violent video games, such as "America's Army," which is designed around a mission involving simulated shooting at human targets with an automatic weapon.

Kids can strap into three large simulators and shoot human targets on huge, wrap-around screens. There's an Apache attack helicopter, a Humvee with seven mounted machine-gun turrets, and a Black Hawk

helicopter with four door-gunner positions. This gets excitabile boys to bond with the military mission.

Questions about the history and context of conflicts are leapfrogged over, and kids get an adrenaline high linked directly to the Army and its mission in places such as Iraq and Afghanistan. The Army Experience Center is lulling these vulnerable young



Visitors experience the Humvee simulator at the Army Experience Center at the Franklin Mills Mall in Northeast Philadelphia

minds into an acceptance of the killing of others in far-flung places.

The retired and active-duty military staff at the Army Experience Center have claimed on NBC News and elsewhere that they don't employ a "hard sell." And, to their credit, the staff is always cool, professional, and "soft" on the sales pitch. But that's the point: Instead of a used-car-salesman approach, they rely on the electronic dazzle to entice kids already immersed in video-game culture.

There's an insidious, direct link between

luring children of the video-game generation into such a facility and the rapidly expanding reality of soldiers virtually piloting armed drones against targets in Afghanistan and Pakistan. For the properly desensitized individual, it's a small leap from playing video games to shooting real people via a video monitor.

In March, members of Veterans For

Peace asked to set up a modest table near the center to pass out materials and talk with kids. We have not heard back.

The taxes that support the Army Experience Center come from a variety of Americans, many of whom - like me - are troubled by this means of recruiting young people. Society agrees that many of them are not developed enough even to drink a beer or drive a car.

This is not an argument against defending ourselves, or against employing violence when it's necessary. This is an argument for giving kids the information they need to make the best decisions for themselves. One thing we can do is instill in them a much more rich, complex, and cooperative view of human life on the planet - not the good-guys-blasting-bad-guys dichotomy drilled into them by the Army Experience Center.

John Grant is a Vietnam veteran and member of Veterans For Peace who lives in Plymouth Meeting. He can be reached at [grantphoto@comcast.net](mailto:grantphoto@comcast.net).



public display to "Stop Stop-Loss" resulting in the planning of a rally at Freedom Bridge at I-5's exit 122. It was scheduled for the Saturday before Mothers' Day, May 9th, Noon. We also discussed support of the coffee house and support of a local sanctuary for servicemen and women who are looking for a way out of the upcoming deployments.

Ray Nacanaynay

### Chapter 917, West Virginia

I'm not currently involved with other members of the West Virginia chapter, as I'm completely tied down with commitments in my neck of the state, but I have been able to do something for the cause in the past month, which is to organize a panel of three women veterans who spoke to the Marshall University community here in Huntington, WV on April 1. Ann Wright, Ellen Barfield, and IVAW D.C. President Chantelle Bateman all spoke to a packed

crowd of over 100 students and faculty about their journeys from warriors to resisters and they were very well received. All three women commented that they had never done a speaking event of this sort where three women veterans came together to deliver their message. The crowd especially liked the fact that the group represented three different generations and backgrounds as well.

Christopher White





# P O E T R Y

## THE BONE

The festive crowd underneath a sea of umbrellas  
 Filled the beach and lined up all along  
 The wide boardwalk for the Jones Beach Air Show  
 Filled with vendors hawking their genocidal wares  
 Army, Navy, Coast Guard, Marines National  
 Guard and the mighty Air Force  
 Amid an extravaganza of corporate displays

In giddy exaltation roars of approval  
 From the crowd of 443,000 or so souls  
 Cheered each display of martial skill  
 Golden Knights parachuting, Navy Seals scuba diving  
 Special Ops repelling from black-black Blackhawks

But the most solemn, neck-craning, mouth-open slack, vacant-eyed  
 Adulation was reserved for a huge Air Force airplane  
 That thunderously roared by not once nor twice  
 But thrice to the fevered commentary of the announcer,  
 Blaring from mega-decibel loudspeakers accompanied by  
 A rousing, bass-pounding rendition of "Bad to the Bone":

*"Yessiree, Ladies and Gentlemen, the BIB Bomber, aka the Bone. The Backbone of America's nuclear arsenal. Carries the largest payload of guided and unguided nuclear weaponry ever. More firepower than 200 WW II bombers. Look at that baby. Here it comes. Aren't you proud to be an American on Memorial Day? There it goes. Doesn't the sight of that thrill you? Listen to that roar. That's The sound of freedom."*

Marching with a solemn little band of 40 or so Peacemakers  
 Marking the true meaning of Memorial Day,  
 Carrying a string of Code Pink ribbons for each  
 Fallen American soldier, some 3452 ever mounting  
 Thinking of the hundreds of thousands  
 Of Iraqi civilians casually genocided  
 I was disgusted, saddened by memories  
 Of my quagmire forty years ago in jungle

For comic relief, to ward off a plunge into keening despair  
 I visualize scores, thousands of Raging Grannies,  
 Code Pink ladies, Pax Christi nuns, Cindy Sheehanistas  
 and us aging Vets for Peace  
 Falling down, writhing on the Boardwalk  
 In frenzied ecstasies of simultaneous orgasms

*Thomas Brinson  
 May 28, 2007  
 Long Beach, NY*

## FREE SPIRITS WILL ALWAYS ESCAPE

Its me, Lindy, the one who helped you peck your way  
 From the cell so many years ago.

I have come, so you may take flight again.  
 I was your co-conspirator then and I call you now,  
 My hummingbird, my jailbird, my escapee.  
 Hover about in the garden. Check the flowers.  
 Peer in the window from time to time,  
 Then flit on, as you will.

I'm here to remove our secret "bar of soap."  
 Here's my hand, Brother, step up.  
 Wiggle through the hole to freedom.

I have come for you.  
 When the guards turn their backs,  
 I'll give you the signal, and once you're gone,  
 I'll replace the bar to mask your retreat.  
 Free Spirits will always escape

*This poetic tribute to Lindy Blake, one of the Presidio 27 mutineers, was written by his friend and comrade Randy Rowland (who, along with Keith Mather, told the story of the Presidio 27 in Sir! No Sir!). Lindy died recently at his home in Canada, where he has lived since escaping the Presidio stockade in 1968.*

## PYLON

*And the young ones?  
 In the coffins.*

—Miguel Hernandez

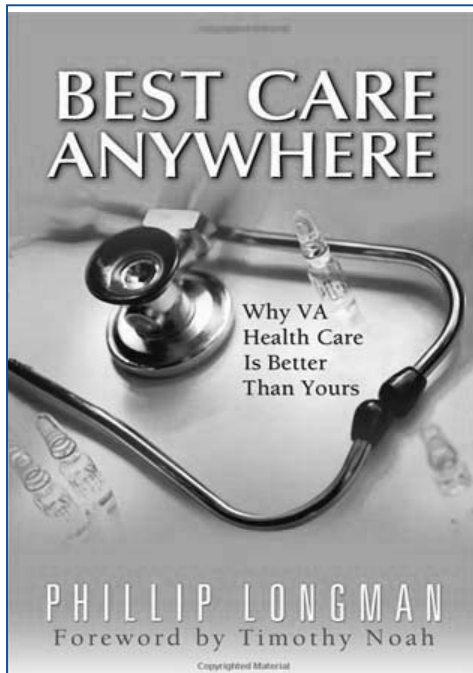
At night,  
 aluminum boxes  
 slide down steel rollers  
 out of the belly of a plane.

Names from a new wall  
 count off a kind of cadence,  
 marking time  
 no one hears.

Trucks wait to upload  
 their cargo.  
 Shadows edge the airstrip,  
 a greasy rain begins to fall.

*Reprinted from Trouble Light, West End Press, 2008,  
 by permission of the author, ex-Marine & VFP  
 member Gerald McCarthy.*

## BOOK REVIEWS



### **Best Care Anywhere: Why VA Health Care Is Better Than Yours**

by Phillip Longman

158 pages, \$14.95 paperback

PoliPointPress

www.p3books.com

by *Will Shapira*

Despite the occasional headline-making screw-ups of VA health care, with its system of electronic record-keeping and its strong emphasis on providing efficient, quality care, it's way ahead of most other systems, can be used as model for universal health care and—perhaps of most interest to VFPers—holds great potential for veterans and their families, says author Longman.

He asserts that “all veterans should have access to all the VA health care benefits they deserve and were promised when they enlisted”. But, “...as of Jan. 7, 2003, the VA, having failed to receive the funding it needs to make good on the health care promised to millions of veterans, has restricted new enrollments either to those who can meet a strict means test or to those who have ailments directly and demonstrably related to military service.”

However, Longman continues, “according to an estimate by the Congressional Budget Office, restoring full eligibility to the VA health system for all veterans starting in 2007 (the year this book was published), would save Medicare a total

of \$29.5 billion through 2015. Savings to the Medicaid program would come to \$4.8 billion. Gains to society, though not calculated by CBO, would be much higher as millions of veterans escape the dangers of being uninsured or of being subjected to the fragmented care and overtreatment they currently receive outside the VA.” [On June 15, 2009, the VA welcomed back nearly 270 thousand more veterans into its healthcare system. Ed]

Longman further advocates “to assure veterans, both young and old, that their spouse and dependent children can also join an expanding veterans health care system....It would also go a long way toward improving the quality of their care... Extending access to the VA system to veterans’ family members would bring substantial savings in Medicare and Medicaid spending while also improving the quality and cost-effectiveness of their health care.”

As for the VA system and the hot topic of universal health care, Longman says serious consideration should be given to providing “all Americans access to the VA model of care, which...outperforms any other U.S. health care delivery system in quality, cost-effectiveness, and patient satisfaction.” He calls it VistA Health based on the VA’s innovative software and electronic record-keeping system. Its motto would be “Health for Life.”

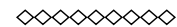
(On April 9, Pres. Obama ordered the VA and DOD to work together to create and install an electronic record-keeping system that would serve current military personnel and vets, according to “The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer” April 9, tpt.org and other media. Whether the president, his cabinet members and his advisers were influenced by Longman’s book was not immediately known. But April 10, Longman told VFP by e-mail that he had been told a policy advisor last year had given candidate Obama a copy of the book.

Whether Obama has borrowed from the book or not, “early indications are that the administration has committed to an open-source platform for unified records, which is huge,” Longman said. “What this means for the future of VistA is unclear, but at least the administration is not going to give away the business to proprietary software makers” which, he said, created a huge mess during the Bush administra-

tion. “The advance funding commitment will also vastly improve management of the VA,” Longman added. “Previously, it had to scramble every year to win discretionary appropriations which made long-term and even short-term planning very difficult.”

Longman sums up his book by declaring “...the health care crisis is solvable. We need only to overcome our ideological preconceptions and personal biases and commit ourselves to the all-American solution the VA model of care provides.”

There is much, much more. I urge VFPers to read this book and to recommend it (and perhaps share this review of it) with your elected public officials at all levels, right up to and including the president and his cabinet, and your local media.



### **Come Home, America: The Rise And Fall (And Redeeming Promise) Of Our Country**

by William Greider

328 pages hardback, \$25.95

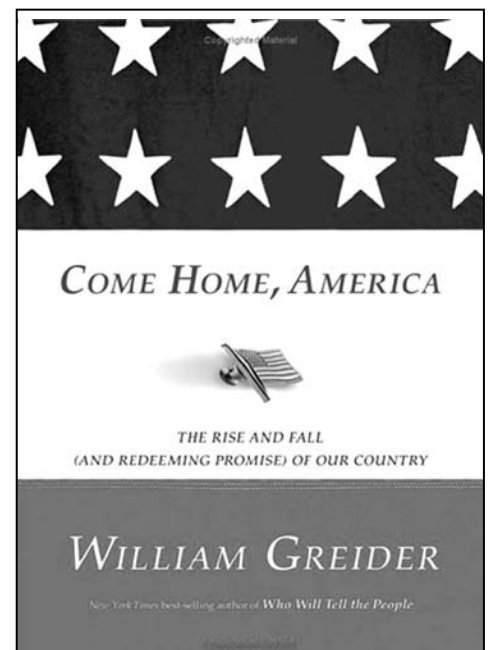
Rodale Press

Rodalestore.com

by *Will Shapira*

One of the most highly accomplished, highly-respected American journalists, William Greider, voices concerns about our future of special interest to VFPers. In a riveting chapter entitled “The Next War”, Greider asserts that “The US military, despite its massive firepower and technologi-

**Come Home continued on page 20**



# Creating A Culture of Peace In San Diego

By Deborah L Schneider, Secretary  
San Diego Chapter 91

The planning began last fall for the event which took place this February from the 5th to the 9th. Will Covert and our soon to be chapter president, Dave Wiley, felt strongly that CCP Training would not only benefit our members individually on a personal level, but would also help to improve our skills as Veterans For Peace activists. Many of us in Chapter 91 were interested in the training so Dave Wiley reached out to the San Diego Coalition for Peace and Justice and to the La Jolla Quakers (who kindly offered to host the CCP Nonviolence Training in their meeting house) and the planning began in earnest.

Janet Chisholm, founder and coordinator of the Creating a Culture of Peace training program, flew to San Diego to run our training session. Elliot Adams, VFP national board member and past president, was to be her co-trainer but family concerns called him elsewhere. Fortunately facilitators Carroll Boone and Will Covert were available and stepped in. Nine VFP Chapter 91 members and one from San Francisco Chapter 69 were among the thirty peace-seeking folks who signed on and completed the CCP training in the early spring

Creating a Culture of Peace training focuses on constructive nonviolence and nonviolent resistance and is divided into five modules: violence, active nonviolence, social change, community-building, and project planning. In a little over four years CCP training has been offered in thirty-six states and Palestine. Thousands of people have been trained to use nonviolence effectively, including three hundred facilitators.

I knew that I should participate in the CCP training given my angry response to a hostile person during a recent VFP action. Years of childhood abuse and a rape have left me with chronic PTSD and an array of triggers. Although I was a bit apprehensive, I hoped that the CCP training would give me the skills to handle such encounters in a more positive manner. Being a creative

person I was also very intrigued with the concept of creating peace. I was not disappointed.

San Diego was visited by the worst rainstorm of the year during the weekend of the training, so the warm, tranquil ambience inside the La Jolla Friends Meeting House was doubly appreciated. It was from this environment that the facilitators guided the exploration of the violence that ex-



**CCP facilitators Janet Chisholm (center at table) and Carroll Boone far right (in purple) joined by some of the newly certified trainees from SDVFP, the La Jolla Friends, and SDCPJ after the completion the four day CCP workshop.**

ists both within ourselves and throughout our society. In this peaceful place we also reflected upon the struggles, strategies, and ultimate successes of nonviolence practitioners Mahatma Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

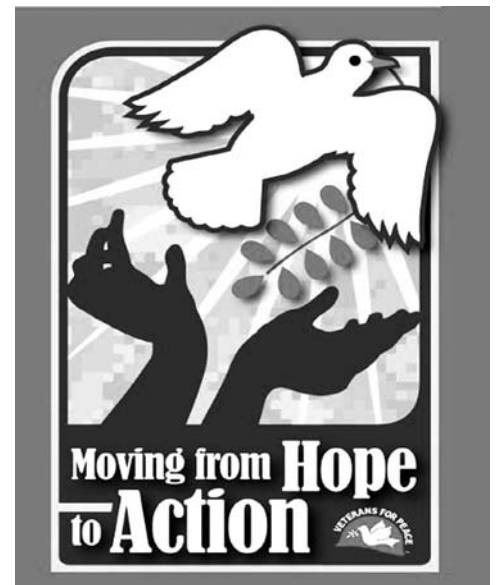
While it poured outside, the days passed and we moved through the entire training program from module to module. There were of course breaks for snacking, meals, and some down time planned in, during which contacts and friendships were made with other members of San Diego's peace community.

Many of us felt that the CCP training, which began by defining and taking an in-depth look at violence and ended with community-building and the planning of projects that would transfer into our own communities, had been an invaluable journey. When asked to describe the benefits of CCP training, SDVFP member Dave Patterson replied, "I'm on a new level of thinking on peace as a result"

Fellow SDVFP member and leader of San Diego's MFSSO chapter, Dawn O'Brien, has spoken often since the training about the need for peace activist organizations to celebrate their successes (no matter, big or small) and the need to strengthen our own organization membership by getting to know one another in casual atmospheres away from the stress of the cause.

I often refer to the CCP printed materials we were given and the notes that I took. I left the Meeting House in La Jolla ready to employ the new tools that I had been given and trained to use. The most important thing I learned from the CCP training is that these types of changes do not take place immediately but require conscious effort and practice. I have already been employing what I learned over that rainy Southern California weekend and will continue to practice.

The training confirmed for Dave Patterson something that he hadn't been able to put his hands on previously; that we are all victims of violence, and that we cannot begin to fix the damage until we join hands with others in the community to make change. Just ask Patterson about the sustainable garden project he is currently spearheading in Ramona, CA!





## El Salvador

Continued from page 3

economic justice issues facing Salvadorans. None of these problems were addressed after the 1992 peace treaty, which ushered in a climate of neo-liberal privatization and disempowered unions simpatico with an ARENA view of life. This is the harsh reality Funes and the FMLN will engage with in the years ahead.

Several years ago, the US dollar replaced the colon as the national currency, a move that hurt the poor and small business people. Glitzy malls with no customers have sprouted up in the capital, rumored to be funded by laundered drug money. Fast food franchises like Mister Donut are everywhere. Unemployment is at astronomical levels and violent crime is a problem. The rich live in gated communities, and everything is protected by security guards with pump shotguns. A third of the population live in a diaspora, much of it in the US, sending money home.

Looming over it all is a world economic crisis and ARENA elements that are not going anywhere and have lots of money. A big question is: Given a hostile history, how will the huge United States embassy relate with the FMLN regime? Will it be obstructionist or cooperative?

What's clear is the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front — the guerrilla coalition that fought the Salvadoran military and the United States to a stalemate in 1992 — is now a national political power to be reckoned with. The struggle for economic justice has shifted from armed struggle to the political realm.

It also adds another nation to the gradual shift in Latin American politics to the left. Until this month, there were three distinct hold-outs to this trend: Colombia, Mexico and El Salvador. Now there are two. It's not certain where Mexico and Colombia will go in upcoming presidential elections. VFP member Joey King, a former Army Ranger with experience in Latin America, is researching Colombian politics and working to establish contacts for VFP presidential election monitoring there in May 2010.

One afternoon I met with veterans from the National Commission of Veterans of the FMLN. Currently about 6,000 strong, they hope to organize up to 40,000 veterans in the future. They see themselves as "the backbone" of the new administration, which they see as weak, given reports that

ARENA stripped the national treasury as it left office and the FMLN is a 35 per cent minority in the National Assembly.

Due to economic realities, the organization has limited itself to political work representing FMLN veterans. A study is planned to assess the conditions of FMLN veterans across the nation; it will cost \$60,000, funds they are raising. The hope in the years ahead is to become more in-



Celebrants cheer in the heat in Cuzcatlan stadium on June 1st inaugural day.

involved in helping veterans solve their economic, psychological and social problems. The most difficult problems are unemployment and shelter.

Chano Guevara, a *nom-de-guerre*, has been fighting since he was seventeen. He became a tough commander of troops in Guazapa and, today, is a respected leader of the Commission.

He agrees the game has changed, but he fully intends to keep the pressure on the politician Funes and to work for FMLN control of the legislature and future FMLN presidents. He was wary when asked about linkages with government military veterans, though others in the group thought "conversations" with low-rank, *campesino* draftees might be fruitful.

At an FMLN veterans' reunion lunch in

Suchitoto on the Guazapa volcano, certificates were given out honoring service. Charlie Clements, the Vietnam vet who worked as a doctor in Guazapa for a year was there, as was Don North, who made a film of the Guazapa struggle. One of the many moving moments came when *Comandante* Guevara hugged his tiny, aged mother as she received a service certificate. She is famous for transporting guns past army checkpoints, under bread in the basket on her head.

When I arrived in San Salvador airport this May for the first time in 15 years, I could tell something was different. On a wide screen TV over the baggage claim carousel, edited among the tourist shots of colorful markets, smiling kids and seaside cafes, there was a segment on the El Mozote massacre site. In November 1992, I had photographed the exhumation of mostly children's bones in a small convent in El Mozote in Morazan province. The grotesque atrocity was now official history.

In this new political climate, the facts of El Salvador's agonizing history vis-à-vis the United States don't seem to be in contention. The old ways of oligarchic oppression cannot work any more, and the charge of "communism" is a retrograde joke.

The future is open. The current world economic crisis could be a synthesis moment for El Salvador. The peasant-driven FMLN and its progressive brainpower know a lot about locally-based agriculture and other sustainability technologies. Meld that with socially responsible cash-crop farming, throw in cell phone and internet connectivity ... and who knows? I visited a fledgling university in the Chalatenango guerrilla zone that could be a catalyst for this kind of progressive movement.

Former US Ambassador to El Salvador Robert White has said, given the chance, Salvadorans are among the most resourceful people in the world. El Salvador, he says, could become a regional engine for progressive growth and change.

Veterans For Peace members have been, and will be, part of this new struggle.

*John Grant is a Vietnam veteran and a photographer. He lives in Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, and works with Chapter 31.*



# Eliminating Weapons of Individual Destruction: Landmines, Clusterbombs & Guns

By Mike Felker, Philadelphia Chapter 31

## THE PROBLEM:

There are too many weapons in the world. Weapons that kill and maim; weapons used needlessly to settle international and personal conflicts, conflicts that could be settled with less deadly means. Weapons of war, weapons on our streets - too many weapons, too many casualties.

As veterans we have dealt first hand with the consequences of these weapons and we can work to eliminate them.

- Millions of unexploded cluster bomblets, landmines, and other unexploded remnants of war litter the globe. Each year 10,000 people are killed or maimed by this deadly garbage of war.

Landmines are being laid today. These - and mines from previous conflicts - claim victims in every corner of the globe. There are tens of millions of landmines in the ground in 78 countries. The most contaminated places are Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chechnya, Colombia, Iraq, Nepal and Sri Lanka. 30-40 percent of mine victims are children under 15 years old. Vast stockpiles of landmines remain in warehouses around the world, and countries still produce the weapon. 15,000-20,000 people are maimed or killed by landmines each year. The United States is one of only 13 countries that refuses to halt production of landmines. Landmines cost as little as \$3 to produce and as much as \$1,000 per mine to clear.

Cluster bombs have killed and injured thousands of civilians during the last 40 years and continue to do so today. They cause widespread harm on impact and yet remain dangerous, killing and injuring civilians long after a conflict has ended. A total of 34 states are known to have produced over 210 different types of cluster bombs. More than two dozen countries have been affected by the use of cluster bombs including Afghanistan, Albania, Angola, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cambodia, Chad, Croatia, DR Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Grenada, Iraq, Israel, Kuwait, Lao PDR, Lebanon, Montenegro, Morocco, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Uganda, United Kingdom, Vietnam and Zambia, as well as Chechnya, Falkland/Malvinas, Kosovo, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Western



Sahara. At least 15 countries have used cluster bombs: Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, Georgia, Israel, Libya, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Russia (USSR), Saudi Arabia, Former Yugoslavia (Serbia), Sudan, United Kingdom and United States. Nearly 11,000 cluster bombs were dropped on Iraq during the US invasion, leaving behind thousands of unexploded bomblets which kill and maim Iraqis and our own troops.

With cluster bombs, landmines, and other unexploded remnants of war there is no warning – the victim triggers a sudden explosion and destruction. Tissue, bones, and muscles are destroyed, nerves severed. With horrific force the concussion thrusts fragments of the weapon, debris, dirt, and bone splinters into the body, causing several injury or death.

- Globally 1,000 people die every day because of guns. In the United States each day over 80 people, 8 who are under nineteen, die because of gun violence. There are 640 million guns in the world; 8 million guns are manufactured every year, along with 10-14 billion units of ammunition, enough to kill everyone on earth twice over. Small arms proliferation is a local and global crisis - when guns are more easily available, people are more likely to die and be injured, whether on our streets or in war. It is easy for gun traffickers to arm dangerous criminals and others due to weak laws at the state, federal and international laws.



## STEPS TOWARD A SOLUTION:

- Educate ourselves and others about the deadly consequences of landmines, clusterbombs, and small arms proliferation/guns.
- Join and support local, national, and international organizations which work to reduce the number of landmines, clusterbombs, and guns.
- Demand that our members of Congress and our Administration:
  - o Have the US join the Mine Ban, Cluster Bomb, and Small Arms Trade Treaties –

The Mine Ban Treaty obligates its participants to completely and permanently discontinue the use, production, stockpile, and transfer of antipersonnel landmines; to destroy stockpiles; to clear mines within their own territories within ten years, and to provide continuing assistance to mine survivors.

The Cluster Bomb Treaty bans the production and stockpiling of cluster bombs, millions of which lie unexploded across dozens of countries and have killed and maimed thousands of civilians.

The Small Arms Trade Treaty would regulate the arms trade to prevent weapons falling into the hands of those who

*Eliminating Weapons continued on page 20*

## Shooting Pool Alone

Continued from page 1

year to living in the base town and throwing themselves into the work with soldiers. While we were able to recruit a few local volunteers, we had no luck drawing in full time help.

In addition to weekend dances for which we hired popular local rock bands to perform, we also scheduled a series of Saturday afternoon film screenings, followed by public discussion. While the documentary films we featured such as "Sir, No Sir," "Iraq for Sale," and "Body of War" were exciting, the turnout for these events was not. If one or two soldiers turned up for a film we were lucky. Attempts to draw the few GIs out on the issues raised by the films mostly fell flat, with local peace activists dominating the discussion.

In Spring 2007, we hired a young cafe coordinator without military experience who had many ties to the punk rock music scene. He booked a steady stream of punk rock bands who regularly toured upstate New York into the cafe. Their performances drew large crowds of eighteen-somethings each weekend. Young people who were frozen out of the local bar scene seemed to adopt the Drummer as a popular social venue. However, only a small number appeared to be from Ft. Drum. We had placed several book shelves filled with free informational brochures as well as discounted war-related books around the cafe. Despite our efforts, they attracted scant attention. After many weekends with near capacity crowds, we decided that providing a raucous venue for a-political punk rockers was hindering, not helping, to advance our goal of creating a "safe space" for soldiers and their families.

The book "Bowling Alone" describes a trend in American society whereby people have steadily withdrawn from civic activities, social clubs, and fraternal organizations that were very popular not long ago. It ascribes a number of reasons for this shift, including the breakdown of nuclear families, the propensity of women to work, and television. Although the book was published before the internet revolution was completed, its effects have certainly accelerated these changes-- especially among young people. FaceBook, MySpace, text messaging and personal blogs have become the preferred mode of communicating for many. The small IVAW chapter at Ft. Drum attempted to hold regular membership meetings at the cafe, but they were often

sporadic and poorly attended. We encouraged the national IVAW leaders to commit organizing resources to Ft. Drum, but aside from a couple of "bus tour" visits, there was no sustained outreach. Some individual IVAW members tried to recruit among guys in their units. However, the economic downturn has bolstered the Army's success at winning re-enlistments. It's likely that soldiers who decided to stay in felt that becoming a member of IVAW probably wasn't a wise career move. There was also a problem with continuity of leadership since IVAW members who were discharged from the base couldn't wait to leave the area.

We did register a few successes such as co-sponsoring a picnic in a Watertown park in June 2007 which welcomed a IVAW bus



Cafe founder Tod Ensign with Cindy Mercante, the Drummer's first director.

which was touring military bases. Another success was turning the cafe into a gallery to display Nina Berman's award winning photography of wounded veterans, "Purple Hearts." This attracted some soldiers and their families as well as sympathetic citizens and media attention. The show was later transferred to the Commissary at Ft. Drum where it hung for a few hours before an Army officer spotted it and had it taken down.

Citizen Soldier lawyers were also successful over this period in defending several different Ft. Drum soldiers who had gone AWOL because they couldn't get treatment for their combat-related mental injuries. However these soldiers had come directly to Citizen Soldier and weren't linked to anything that was going on at the Drummer.

For me, an unavoidable truth presented itself when we organized our Ft. Drum Spring Festival to mark Armed Forces Day in May 2009. This event was organized in concert with several peace coalitions in Syracuse, Ithaca, Rochester, and Buffalo. About a hundred demonstrators marched

north to rally outside Ft. Drum to express opposition to these wars and to endorse healthcare for returning veterans. Advance press coverage by local TV stations and newspapers (as well as the *New York Times*) was extensive. We hired popular local rock bands which were publicized with thousands of leaflets and large ads in both the local and base newspapers. That day, the Drummer rocked with music, speeches and a strong political vibe. Yet, despite our best efforts, we had to acknowledge that we'd attracted almost no new soldiers or family members from the base. We may have dreamed of a Woodstock, but it was just that—a dream.

Other groups have recently launched GI projects at Ft. Lewis, WA ("Coffee Strong") and at Ft. Hood, TX ("Under the Hood")

Because conditions around those bases differ from those at Ft. Drum, we hope that they will be able to succeed in becoming a voice for soldiers where we could not. I believe that combat soldiers from these current wars suffer more stress and mental disfunction than even those who served in Vietnam. Their rates for PTSD, depression and suicide so far confirm this conclusion. This is partly because they are forced to endure multiple deployments in combat zones where the tension and danger never lets up. However, I've learned in my forty years of activism that the level of oppression someone experiences is not predictive of whether he or she will fight back or instead seek escape through self destructive behaviors.

One of the last sad tasks of closing our Drummer cafe was to dispose of our brand new pool table. We had bought it at the suggestion of one of the IVAW guys who thought that it might help attract soldiers who were looking for a place to chill. Alas, it was sent away after sitting for several months, unused, in a corner.

*Ensign, a lawyer, is director of Citizen Soldier ([www.citizen-soldier.org](http://www.citizen-soldier.org))*



**Come Home**  
Continued from page 15

cal brilliance, has itself become the gravest threat to our peace and security. Americans may find this accusation disturbing, but I hope they will consider it seriously. Our risks and vulnerabilities around the world are magnified and multiplied because the American military has shifted from providing national defense to taking the offensive worldwide, from being a vigilant defender to being an adventurous aggressor in search of enemies.

“The predicament this muscle-bound approach puts our country in is dangerous and new. Go looking for trouble around the world and you are likely to find it. The next war may be a fight that is provoked not by them, but by us. The next war may already have started somewhere in the world, (the book was published early in '09) perhaps in some obscure country we've never considered threatening....

“The next war, the Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review Report proclaimed in 2006, will be against any or all 'who seek to destroy our free way of life.' The struggle 'may well be fought in dozens of countries (other than Iraq and Afghanistan) simultaneously and for many years to come.' The Pentagon calls this 'The Long War' The military has grandiose ambitions for how it intends to fight it.”

Considering how the corporate mainstream media almost daily demonize Iran and its reputed quest for nuclear weapons, Greider, surprisingly to me at least, mentions Iran only twice and then just in passing in the entire book. Instead, he focuses on The Big Picture. US behavior, he argued, is encouraging nuclear proliferation, stimulating lesser nations' sense of urgency to get the bomb themselves. The old stalemate was destabilized not by rogue nations, but by the United States.” As you know, George W. Bush cited Iraq, Iran and North Korea as charter members of an “axis of evil”.

“If you are on that list,” Greider contends, “it makes sense that you'd want to develop a nuclear bomb or other so-called weapons of mass destruction. Developing a nuclear bomb provides insurance of a sort against a threatening big power or hostile neighbors...Of course, it would be crazy to attack the United States and suffer national obliteration in retaliation, but what if the alternative is abject submission to American power? The essential objective of wannabe nuclear powers is to defend themselves; it

is protection from US attacks rather than first-strike aggression. Yet US war planners usually portray their adversaries as irrational and suicidal—mad dictators who will do anything for their cause, even destroy their own countries. Some adversaries depict the United states in similar terms. There is much more on what the book's liner notes term “the monumental financial collapse of 2008 (which) exposed cracks in the foundation of economic, cultural and political values.”

Obligatory or not, Greider manages to end on a somewhat hopeful note: “Given our circumstances, Americans have a right to dream about a better future ahead. You might say we are obligated to do so. When I imagine that Americans will be awakened by difficult circumstances and set themselves in motion as citizens, it makes me feel hopeful for the country.”



**IVAW Leadership**  
Continued from page 2

campaigns in support of workers' rights. Alex also comes with a strong commitment to GI organizing and resistance. He is one of the two creators behind Coffee Strong Cafe, the GI Coffeehouse at Fort Lewis. He is also a long time GI Rights Counselor and leader within the GI Rights Network, and has actively supported the war resistor campaigns of Ehren Watada and Ricky Clousing. Alex enlisted in the Coast Guard shortly after graduating high school, where he served for two and a half years before being discharged in 2003 for going AWOL. IVAW is very excited to have Alex now at the helm of our work as we develop an effective Field Organizing Program this year.



**Women's Fitted T-Shirt**  
Short sleeve black  
ladies' style cut  
\$12.50



These t-shirts look like they run smaller rather than larger, but are made of stretchable fabric.

**Eliminating Weapons**  
Continued from page 18

would use them for serious abuses and unlawful acts.



- o Support assistance programs for victims of landmines, cluster bombs, unexploded remnants of war, and gun violence.
- o Support The Cluster Bombs Civilian Protection Act of 2009.

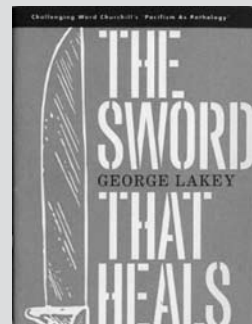
- International Campaign to Ban Landmines — www.icbl.org
- Cluster Bombs Coalition — www.stopclusterbombs.org
- Control Arms Campaign to stop weapons being used to fuel conflict, poverty and human rights abuses — www.controlarms.orgen
- Brady Campaign to end gun violence — www.bradycampaign.org

*I am not an expert in these areas. I draw on my experiences as a medic with the Marines in Viet Nam caring for the injured and dying from guns and landmines, to try to reduce the number of weapons in the world; as veterans we can all draw on our experiences to eradicate this man-made epidemic of weapons, an epidemic that sweeps from the paths of Cambodia to our streets and schools. When we use our resources to lessen the number of weapons globally and locally, we are working to remove death, suffering, and fear. We are working against the horrors of war and violence. We are working to building a safer world for all citizens. We are working for peace.*

— mfelker@cis.upenn.edu



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***This Is The Time***  
**Continued from page 3**

tions visible. The keepers of the status quo want the people to forget that our nation occupies Iraq and Afghanistan and is expanding war into Pakistan. They want us to forget about the torture, death and destruction wreaked upon the people of those countries and our service members. They want us to ignore the broken homes, PTSD and homelessness plaguing our troops and the people of the nations we have invaded. We will not let the nation forget. We will not let our political leaders distract us with the politics of the moment. We will not go away.

We must reach out and educate about the full horrors and impact of war. We must tell the stories seldom told. We must be witnesses to the waste of minds, bodies, resources and money war brings and the destructive toll it takes on our souls.

We must provide and live alternatives to war. We must become examples of conflict resolution in all aspects of our lives and building solidarity with allies in search of justice. We must help our nation and the world envision a day when war is no longer acceptable and its abolition is celebrated. Perhaps most essential, we must live at minimum the beginnings of the world we seek. This is walking the path of peace. It is not necessary to be saints as we attempt to

walk this path, but if we are not intentional in our steps as peacemakers and justice seekers, we have no business critiquing others as they walk a path of war.

These three activities are at the core of what we must always do, no matter the time, no matter the political environment, no matter who controls Congress and no matter the president. The critical question is not what should we do, but how we do it? What is the tone of our message? What is the best vehicle to tell our stories? How do we reach out to our allies? How do we build strong and effective coalitions that win together in the struggle for peace and justice? How do we build a better VFP to carry on our campaigns? The answers to these questions change from period to period to meet the mood of the people. I do not have the space here to outline specifics, but this is the discussion we should all have within our chapters and with other members.

This is the time for the peace movement to do its best work. If we do not hold our government accountable on Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan who will? If we do not keep the occupations in the public eye who will? If we do not stand up to militarism and the drumbeats of war who will? The answer is no one. The peace movement, among all other movements, is the only one poised to connect allies and their struggles in an effort for a peoples' march towards

full spectrum peace and justice.

The mission of Veterans For Peace to abolish war and our voices as veterans is uniquely placed to lay a foundation for this mass movement of the people. We may not know exactly what peace looks like, but we know there is no peace with war. The realization of our mission will act as a plateau for a new era of progress for humanity. We cannot let the enormity of the challenge and the slow pace of change stop us. We owe it to the all those who have died in war to ensure their deaths have meaning. I owe a direct debt to those who died and suffered in Vietnam as I grew up in the midst of that war and its struggles. The Vietnam and civil rights struggles shaped my political awareness. I am a veteran for peace because of the movements that sprung from that time. My mother and the history of my people have taught me to never give up in the struggle. My experience with VFP has strengthened my resolve. In time our steadfastness will prevail. We will abolish war. Thank you for all you do.



# Leave a *Lasting Legacy* of Peace

*By leaving a bequest to Veterans For Peace, you will create a legacy that will benefit others for generations to come. If you have already included Veterans For Peace into your bequest, we hope that you will share this information with us. While we recommend that you meet with your own estate attorney or financial advisor to determine the method of giving that best suits your individual needs.*

*Please call the National Office and let us express our gratitude.*

*Your wishes for anonymity will be respected.*

**Here's how you can be PART OF THE LEGACY:**

- Prepare a will. Only 50% of those who pass have one.
- Leave a gift for Veterans For Peace.
- Less than 3% of all wills contain a charitable provision.
- Consider using assets for your charitable gift.
- Name VFP as the beneficiary of your IRA or pension account.
- Name VFP as the beneficiary of a life insurance policy.

**Support the mission of Veterans For Peace to create a sustainable future for generations to come. For more information call our office in St. Louis at 314-725-6005.**

## VFP NEWSLETTER SUMMER 2009



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# ADD YOUR FACE TO: PICTURE NO MORE TORTURE



President Obama refuses to release pictures of prisoners abused while in U.S. custody. Veterans For Peace calls on the President to "release the photos!"

We are collecting hundreds of pictures of people, including veterans, kids, teachers, and others to add to this website. We will also send each and every photo to the White House!

Go to [www.picturenomoretorture.org](http://www.picturenomoretorture.org) to submit your "No More Torture" photo!