



VETERANS FOR PEACE

Veterans For Peace Convention, August 6, 2009

By Mike Ferner

In Paul Newman's 1967 classic, "Cool Hand Luke," the prison boss in the white suit repeatedly tells Luke to "get your mind right." What turned out to be literally a grave warning for Luke happens to be exactly what we need to hear today.

We open our 24th annual convention against a backdrop of a crippled economy, sweeping foreclosures, widespread unemployment, millions without medical benefits, wars that now exceed a trillion dollars and have killed over a million people.

It's a fair question to ask that, with a name like Veterans For Peace, should we be concerned with issues that go so far beyond opposing war? I believe the answer is "yes," because war and our economic calamities are not only connected, one is

the dominant cause of all the others, and VFP is well positioned to make this argument.

The same year "Cool Hand Luke," played in theaters, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke at Riverside Church in New York, giving what many believe was his greatest speech, "Beyond Vietnam." In it, he called the United States "the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today."

"Time" magazine called King's speech "demagogic slander that sounded like a script for Radio Hanoi."

But every word in King's speech was true – and timeless. Here are a couple gems.



Mike Ferner at the 2009 convention.

Photo by John Grant

"...what we are submitting our troops to is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war... We are adding

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Questioning the Army Experience Center

By John Grant

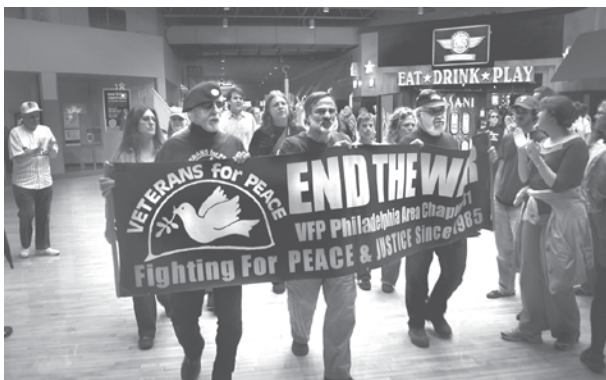
People came from all over on Saturday, September 12th to express their disgust with the United States Army's \$13 million experimental video-game recruitment center at the Franklin Mills Mall in Northeast Philadelphia. At 11:30 AM, over 150 people from all over the east coast began collect-

ing at the busy intersection of Knights and Woodhaven Roads where speakers like writer Chris Hedges spoke about the insidious momentum of war.

At 2 PM, led by the VFP Chapter 31 banner, the spirited group marched down Knights Road and into the Red Entrance of the Mall. The rowdy marchers entered the mall and marched past the Dave

The marchers and their shouts of "War is not a game!" and "Close it down!" filled the Mall, as the cops stood stern-faced, some looking pained as if they wished they were somewhere else, as if their personal politics and their jobs might be in conflict. Inside the Army Experience Center, about 30 members of the right-wing veterans

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Members of VFP Chapter 31 lead the march to the AEC past Dave & Busters game emporium up to the phalanx of Philly cops.

& Busters game emporium – past the neon signs that say EAT-DRINK - PLAY -- right up to the entrance of the Army Experience Center, which was protected by a phalanx of Philadelphia police.

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Photo by John Grant

Agent Orange: The New Institute of Medicine Report on US Veterans

By Paul Cox

The Agent Orange Act of 1991 requires the Veterans Administration to address the uncertainty about the long-term health effects on Vietnam veterans exposed to herbicides, commonly referred to as Agent Orange (AO). Every two years since 1994, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) has issued a Veterans and Agent Orange Update report analyzing the scientific studies from “the widest possible range of knowledgeable sources,” and make recommendations to the VA. The studies are conducted independent of the VA by a panel of academic experts on the several aspects of herbicide exposure.

The most recent report, titled Update 2008, released in July, is detailed and thorough at 569 pages. The current committee

The Update carefully explains that current science cannot determine causality—that is, it cannot prove that exposure to, say, dioxin or Agent White or picloram, has caused a particular disease in a particular veteran. Therefore, the committee looks for elevated rates of certain diseases among exposed populations. They rate the strength of the evidence and drop studied diseases into one of four “association” categories: Sufficient Evidence of an Association; Limited or Suggestive Evidence of an Association; Inadequate or Insufficient Evidence of an Association; and Limited or Suggestive Evidence of No Association. Over the years, several diseases have been placed into IOM’s first two categories and—with the exception of hypertension—all are now considered by the VA to be presumptively linked to a veteran’s exposure to AO.

IOM Recommendations

This Update made numerous significant recommendations. It moved both Parkinson’s disease and ischemic heart disease into the Limited-or-Suggestive-Evidence-of-an-Association category which qualifies them for consideration by the VA for compensation for presumed AO exposures.

It also made a strong argument in support of extending AO benefits to Blue Water Navy vets that the VA has summarily excluded from its definition as Vietnam veterans. Recent studies reviewed by the committee show that the sea-water distillation process used to get drinking water for use on Navy ships actually transmits and concentrates dioxin in the drinking water.



VFP past-president Sandy Kelson raised in excess of twenty thousand dollars during the '09 convention at College Park, MD, when attendees stepped forward to pledge \$1,000 each for Lifetime membership.

Photo by John Grant

Waging Peace Until There Is War No More

In this new political period of the Obama Administration and expansion of war in Afghanistan with less emphasis on Iraq, Veterans For Peace continues to be a leading voice in resisting war and working for peace.

We had a wonderful and exciting time during our annual convention in College Park Maryland. Moving From Hope to Action was the perfect theme as we wrestled with what to do next. Members participated from across the country. Many arrived a little worn out and tired from years of struggle. Who would have guessed eight years ago that we would still be at it, resisting two wars and looking at an expansion of a third? After a weekend of sharing, planning and simply enjoying each other's company, everyone left with a clear sense of purpose, rejuvenated for the next round of work to end these occupations and wars.

With our nation in the midst of a historic economic crisis and tumultuous political division, our government continues to execute a global war with two major fronts and a possible expansion of a third. The depravity of U.S. foreign policy, its negative impact on domestic policies and its devaluation of each of us as individual people continues to grow. Veterans For Peace will remain in the forefront of resistance to these wars and occupations. We will not rest nor stand aside until they have come to an end.

To address the current crisis we are concentrating our efforts in four areas;

- Vigils, Memorials, forums, actions and other activities: Keeping the wars visible at home.
- Bring the Troops Home Now: Helping to shape the national debate and calling for an end to U.S. wars in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- Truth in Recruiting: Offering truth in recruiting/counter-recruitment information to young people and their parents, especially in school settings.
- Ban Torture: Ensuring the end of torture now and preventing its future use by demanding accountability for those responsible.

To move this work forward your financial support and volunteerism is the determinant factor. Organizations across the country have experienced a downturn in fundraising revenue. For some the dip has caused staff cuts and reductions in program work. Fortunately for Veterans For Peace, the bulk of our funding is from members like you. We do not have to rely on foundations and investments. But a portion of our funding is from outside of our membership and there has been a dip in our revenue stream. VFP remains on solid financial ground; however we do need your generous support to keep up the pressure to end the occupations and to

continue to do the long term work of abolishing war.

We also need your help in retaining our members. Our work is long term and hard. People burnout and become disillusioned with the perceived lack of progress. War has plagued humanity perhaps since the beginning. We have taken on an audacious and near impossible task. It is important to call on your fellow veterans and associate members to have potluck gatherings and other forms of entertainment and relaxation. We must continue to do our work, changing minds one at a time until there is a critical mass of people

who believe a different world is possible. But to keep up the struggle we have to take care of each other.

Lastly I would like to thank you for joining Veterans For Peace. To our Associate members I give special thanks for your invaluable support. Veterans cannot end war alone. We need you there with us to help strengthen our cause. Without your work across the country many chapters would collapse. I cannot say enough to fully express my gratitude.

To the veteran members I thank you for heeding the call to serve your country once again, but this time in the secure knowledge that this duty is also in service of all humanity. I

know at times it is tough. I know that we have PTSD and other ills that we must overcome. I know that many of us carry anger and cynicism that at times can be debilitating. But I also know that we have a fire burning inside of us that will not go away. Something will not allow us to sit and let this madness go on. Thank you for your perseverance and dedication. You have not let the whispers that tell us we are ineffective and wasting our time stop you. That is what the powers that be want us to believe. They do not want the message of Smedley Butler, S Brian Willson, Charles Liteky and David Cline to be told. They fear the message will be spread and heard. They exalt the day it is silenced. I do not plan to give them reason to celebrate, unless they are celebrating my death. And when that day comes I will rest knowing that either war has been ended or my sisters and brothers in VFP continue the struggle.

Veterans For Peace, waging peace since 1985 until there is war no more.

Power to the peaceful.



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Photo by John Grant

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The Honduran Coup Bad Omen Or Opportunity?

By John Grant

The US State Department was miffed by President Manuel Zelaya's secret return to Tegucigalpa because the behemoth to the north likes to be in control of developing facts on the ground in a "backwater" like Honduras.

Nothing underlines this backwater status better than the treatment Honduras has received this summer from the Obama administration. The only counter to this kind of selective inaction is for American citizens, especially VFP members, to stand up for participatory democracy in Honduras and to speak out.

"Sending mixed messages appears to be the official US policy on Honduras these days," writes Laura Carlsen, director of the Americas Program in the Center For International Policy.

The Obama administration has rhetorically condemned the coup, cut some aid and cancelled some visas, all of which is good. But beyond that they have stringently avoided anything that would seriously hurt those behind the coup. The low point was the statement President Obama made in Mexico in August.

"The same critics who say that the United States has not intervened enough in Honduras are the same people who say that we're always intervening and the Yankees need to get out of Latin America. You can't have it both ways."

I've been a critic against US intervention in Honduras ever since I was deported from there in June 1984 with five others for speaking with Honduran labor leaders about murders and disappearances. John Negroponte was US ambassador at the time and was running the Contra War against Nicaragua in cahoots with General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, a ruthless thug who built Honduran death squads on an Argentine dirty war model. During Negroponte's four-year stint, US military aid to Honduras went from \$4 million to \$77.4 million a year.

Current military leaders in Honduras are said to pine for those golden days.

This is the kind of intervention critics complain about. No critic wants to send in the 82nd Airborne or CIA covert teams; we

want the government of the United States to stop giving aid and comfort to the same oligarchy that has historically oppressed poor people in Honduras. In this sense, the President's remark was either historically ignorant or politically mendacious.

The ultimate insult is that this sudden delicate sensitivity toward intervention is coming from a guy who wants to escalate an existing intervention in Afghanistan into an unprecedented, full-blown counter-insurgency war to install democracy and totally make the place over.

We're asking for the US to freeze personal assets and restrict more visas; to use the US's veto to quash the IMF's recent grant of \$168 million in aid; to investigate our own State and Defense Departments and intelligence agencies for possible involvement and good-old-boy linkages with coup plotters. The list of tough options is long.

A grassroots National Front is growing in Honduras. And, as in the past, it is being organized in opposition to the United States. The President's stated reluctance to intervene in Honduras means nothing to ordinary Hondurans. Why should it? It was addressed to the political right, not to them.

Once again, we're the bad guy in the eyes of the poor in Latin America. And whether or not it is true, a huge swath of Hondurans believe the CIA was involved in the coup and is overseeing the repressive aftermath.

"The workers are participating, and the middle class is also coming out," said Gilbert Rios, an organizer with the National Popular Resistance Front that formed after the coup out of existing groups. "People communicate with each other, and there is much more flow of information. The oligarchy made the coup with an old manual."

The resistance is devoted to non-violence, Rios says. But he is quick to add, "The armed forces are small (and) there is a high concentration of weapons in the hands of the people."

In August, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the OAS sent a commission into Honduras that reported murders, disappearances, sexual violence and arbitrary detentions. Their report concluded:

"The Commission confirmed the existence of a pattern of disproportionate use of public force on the part of police and military forces, arbitrary detentions, and the control of information aimed at limiting political participation by a sector of the citizenry."

Leticia Salomon is a sociologist and economist and Director of Scientific Research for the National Autonomous University of Honduras. She agrees that grass roots opposition to the coups arose quickly and, despite the repression, has grown ever since. She says the power of the two established parties – the National and Liberal Parties -- has been diminished by the coup, and a new social force has been created focused around the need for a new constitution to replace the 1982 version written under the Negroponte/Alvarez Martinez regime.

The key plotters of the coup were the business community and the military, Salomon says. Both feared the participatory democracy and expansion of rights Zelaya was pushing; business elements particularly feared Zelaya's effort to raise the minimum wage.

"In the days and weeks before the coup, there were meetings between politicians, the military, the church and business leaders to decide what to do," Salomon says. She is certain US Ambassador Hugo Llorens participated in some of these meetings. "The US knew, just like the business leaders and the politicians did."

Born in Cuba, Llorens was appointed ambassador by George Bush in September 2008. Just before the June 28 Honduran coup, in reference to Zelaya's plan to poll the Honduran people whether they wanted the 1982 constitution re-written, Llorens said: "One can't violate the Constitution in order to create another Constitution, because if one doesn't respect the Constitution, then we all live under the law of the jungle."

Llorens may not be aware of Article 3 of the 1982 constitution. It says:

"No one owes obedience to a government that has usurped power or to those who assume functions or public posts by the force of arms. ... The people have the

Honduran Coup continued on page 19

Chapter Reports

Chapter 1, Portland, ME

Chapter 1 continues as one of the major organizations in anti-war activities throughout Maine.

Over the course of the summer months members protested the launching of another Aegis warship at Bath Ironworks. The chapter leads activists in the state in the campaign calling for conversion from the manufacture of the instruments of war to industrial products related to “soft energy” paths—mass transit, solar panels, and wind generators.

In August, Bruce Gagnon, Coordinator of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, was honored as the featured speaker at the International



Veterans For Peace- Republic of Korea accept the banner Bruce Gagnon (far left) delivered on behalf of Maine VFP member Tom Sturtevant.

Symposium for Peace in Hiroshima and at the Mayors for Peace Conference in Nagasaki as well as at other events commemorating the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. During the nearly month-long tour he spoke 15 times in Japan and Korea and has been invited for return engagements in Korea in October.

Two Chapter members were honored for their long-time service—Jack Bussell, at the 2009 National Convention and Art Whitman, at a gathering of chapter and other “peace” community members at his home in Auburn, Maine. Both members have distinguished themselves through tireless labors in the pursuit of social justice for decades.

Dud Hendrick

Chapter 9, Eastern, MA

Since we missed the last two reports I would like to catch folks up on what we have been up to.

The Smedley Butler Brigade hosted a fundraiser for Cindy Sheehan on June 29, in the Boston area. The fundraiser drew about 250 people and we considered it to be a success. Cindy was very pleased with the turnout and as always, gave a great talk. She stayed to sign her book and at times there were 30 or more people in line to talk to her. Cindy spent the night at one of our member’s houses and we drove her to Maine the next day, where she planned to meet with the Maine VFP folks.

We recently launched an initiative that will allow veterans who are in recovery from alcoholism or drug addiction to live in safe, affordable, sober housing. With \$45,000 in grant money raised to date, a revolving loan fund has been created which will make interest free loans of up to \$5,000 to groups of six or more veterans in recovery to allow them to rent a house that will become a sober home. The program, called Vets-Welcome Home, will utilize the Oxford House Sober housing model exclusively. For more information

go to: www.vetswelcomehome.org

We will be hosting a fundraiser Sept. 27 in support of Under the Hood Cafe and GI resistance. Members have worked with Doug Zachary and have made arrangements to fly Victor Agosto to the event. Victor is an Afghanistan war resister who just spent 30 days in jail for refusing to deploy to Afghanistan. We are excited to meet Victor and help support GI resistance.

Mike Tork

Chapter 10, Albany, NY

Over the past few months Chapter 10 sponsored the 11th annual Kateri Tekakwitha Peace Conference, www.kateripeaceconference.org, which featured speakers on racism, the Middle East, and non-violent social change along with workshops on

closing the SOA, the play 7 Jewish Children, Single Payer Health Care and St. Francis of Assisi. Members also participated in the Hiroshima Day Event at the Grafton Peace Pagoda. John Amidon produced the DVD, No Running Water - Close the SOA/WHINSEC which has been featured on the VFP National web site (thank you) and now has over 1100 views. Our chapter is presently preparing 500 crosses to ship to the SOAW at Columbus, GA for this November’s vigil. Ask your Rep. to cosponsor H.R. 2567 to close the SOA! We had several members attend the VFP National Convention in Maryland which was a rewarding experience. We continue to vigil locally. This October we will hold our first VFP Awards dinner. The Thomas Paine Winter Soldier Peace and Justice Award will be given to Ed Bloch, Trudy Quaif and Steve Wickham to recognize and honor their tireless and nonviolent work on behalf of peace and justice in our community.

John Amidon

Chapter 14, Gainesville, FL

Chapter 14 continues to monitor progress on having our Enlistment Guide available in the public schools, following up to ensure that every ROTC student gets a copy, that the guide is available on the library website and that every site with literature from military recruiters also has VFP literature available in order for students to have the full range of information required to make a good decision on whether they should join the military.

Weekly anti-war pickets have been focused on the theme of Healthcare not Warfare for the end of August and the beginning of July. VFP was joined by the local labor party, Sierra Club and members of the Gainesville Unitarian Fellowship for these demonstrations.

In August VFP sponsored several short plays including Theater of War, a series of readings from ancient Greek plays exploring the mental wounds of war, and Seven Jewish children chronicling events in Gaza. Both productions were followed by panel discussions that included Chapter coordinator Scott Camil.

Florida Veterans for Common Sense, based in Sarasota, and Chapter 14 have held exchanges with two of their members

visiting our monthly meeting in August and Scott and IVAW member Anthony attending their meeting in September.

Chapter 14 is monitoring developments in South Florida Everglades of a War Games Training Center proposed for Highlands County. This facility, which would have a live bullets training area and a 6000 foot runway presents environmental and social justice challenges. See details on our blog at School of Americas Comes to Florida.

On a lighter note two chapter members had an opportunity to table at a Crosby Stills and Nash concert in August. Stephen Hunter and Bill Warrick represented the Gainesville, FL chapter of Veterans For Peace. We were joined by two members from the Central Florida chapter.

Graham Nash's son, Will, came to see us and received the gifts for his dad and the rest of the band. Entire account and photo is on our blog.

Mary L Bahr

Chapter 21, Northern New Jersey

Never been to a convention before. Heard about 'em often enough; formed a few opinions: a large gathering of people from around the country (or state or world), a lotta speeches and meetings, funny hats and boisterous behavior, good opportunity to meet, drink, push agendas, settle scores, pick up bumperstickers, act like a fool . . . I was filled with prejudices and misconceptions.

But I'd been scorched by the emotional intensity of the Winter Soldier Hearings, March 13-16, 2008. As Security volunteer, I found myself part of the biggest and truest thing happening in America those four days. My particular job was small and anonymous, but I walked with heroes those days. My life was changed in ways marches and vigils, signs and slogans could not match.

So I went to the Convention looking for those heroes.

And in the hallways and meeting rooms, the food court and lit room, I found them . . . guys like Paul Brailsford, Englishman, Massachusetts VFP, activist and poet, who went to sea in 1932 at age 16, stood the lonely watches as a deck officer in the Pacific during World War II and at age 93 remains a stalwart voice for peace and justice . . . and Suel Jones, the Marine rifleman from Texas and the Vietnam

War, who now divides his time between Alaska and Vietnam, went from oilfield machinist to gifted memorist and friend to the Vietnamese people . . . and the service brats: Deborah Forter, Navy, M.F.S.O.'s new leader and Donna Edwards, Air Force, Maryland's new Congresswoman. Dragged around the world as service kids are, these eloquent women learned at an early age to love the warrior and hate the war . . . and everywhere I turned, there was Carlos - just like at Winter Soldier - a curly-haired Saint Everyman, tirelessly holding heaven and earth together, his presence our whole meaning, his tragedy our fight . . . The names and faces go on and on, anchored by a corps of Vietnam veterans and their good spouses, enriched by those of other eras and re-affirmed by the strong, young faces of the men and women of the Afghan and Iraq Wars.

We had many members at the convention. Bravo! Next year in Maine!

Walt Nygard

Chapter 26, Chicago Area, IL

On Memorial Day weekend, Chicago-Area Chapter 26 members marched in the Chicago Parade with the Combined Veterans' Organization (May 23rd) and participated in the combined VFP/VVAW/IVAW Memorial Day Ceremony (May 25th).

In June, VFP and IVAW members tabled at the CSN Concert (4th), staffed the Chicago Homeless Veterans' Stand-down (11th-13th), attended the Chicago Peace Fest (19th-20th) and Chapter President Ray Parrish took part in "Light the Darkness," a suicide prevention walk (27th-28th).

We marched in the Oak Park July 4th Parade and on July 17th-19th Ray Parrish, a military counselor, spoke at the National Counter-Recruiting Conference at Roosevelt University.

We sent five Chapter members to the VFP and IVAW Conventions in College Park, MD. on August 5th-9th.

For future actions, Chapter 26 Treasurer Bob Gronko donated home-brewed beer for the "Beer, not Bombs" fundraiser on September 19th. We will attend a Chicago demonstration against the Afghanistan war on October 3rd, hold a combined Veterans' Day Dinner/Chapter meeting on November 7th and take part in the annual combined VFP/VVAW/IVAW Veterans' Day Ceremony.

Mike Woloshin

Chapter 27, Minneapolis, MN

Steve McKeown has collected most of the nearly 8,000 signatures from 314 cities and towns in Minnesota which Chapter 27 will present to our U.S. senators, asking them to invite President Obama and leaders of all nations which have nuclear weapons to join Obama at the Pipestone National Monument to implement nuclear disarmament. Pipestone is still quarried there for making Peace Pipes and it is one of the most important Native American sites in the world. The goal is to meet there between October 18-29, 2009, the anniversary of the Cuban missile crisis.

Our Chapter is also going to ring bells on the state capitol grounds on Armistice Day, November 11, to replicate what was done on November 11, 1918, ringing 11 times, on the 11th hour, of the 11th day of the 11th month at the end of World War I, the "war to end all wars". We do this at funeral services for our members, rather than the rifle salute. We encourage other Chapters to follow suit.

Chapter President Larry Johnson and John Sherman with other chapter members attended a meeting of over 150 Minneapolis secondary School Social Studies teachers to offer our Speakers Bureau services for their classes. Over 20 teachers signed up. Thanks to Larry and John's efforts, we are now "Community Partners" with Minneapolis Public Schools and have equal rights to our schools as do military recruiters.

Jim Steinhagen and Bob Heberle

Chapter 31, Philadelphia, PA

The Philly chapter has been working with other local peace organizations on the issues of Afghanistan, the Honduran coup and military recruitment. Chapter 31's goal is to become visible as a regional veterans voice countering a profligate, runaway militarist machine. Members have kept themselves informed, written letters to the editor and to congress and published newspaper op-eds. Due to good labor connections, CH31 again marched as the only non-labor entity in the Philadelphia Labor Day Parade. The chapter worked with activists from up and down the east coast on a September 12 march to close the Army Experience Center at a working class city mall; CH31 led the march and did some post-march publicity. Members joined labor activists in a September demonstration for health care reform. Our annual dinner in October was a good vehicle to bring mem-



Members of VFP Chapter 31 march in the annual Philadelphia Labor Day Parade with Chapter President Chuck Rossi in the forefront. Photo by John Grant

bers and friends of CH31 together. A CH31 member has joined with a Philadelphia labor leader he recently accompanied to El Salvador in a series of speaking gigs on the post-Honduran coup Left in Latin America. CH31 is co-sponsoring a discussion and showing of Robert Greenwald's "Rethinking Afghanistan" documentary. Members were in Washington October 5th for the march and CD at the White House.

John Grant

Chapter 34, New York City

Chapter 34 has over 100 members and conducts monthly meetings in NYC. Members participate in numerous events throughout the NYC area, including the Vietnamese Victims of Agent Orange tour, Arlington East, and JROTC defunding actions. 26 chapter members attended the annual VFP Convention in College Park, MD. For many it was their first convention, and a great experience; looking forward to the 2010 Convention in Portland, ME.

Recent chapter actions include:

- A public education event called "War & the Economy", where speakers addressed the effect of spending for the ongoing wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on our recession economy.



Chapter 34 Pres. Frank Stearns at our annual Memorial Day observance at the NYC Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

- Annual Memorial Day observance,
- VFP contingent in the NYC Heritage of Pride parade on June 28,
- Tabling and literature distribution at the Veterans Conference on 125 St in NYC

Chapter 34 members participate in five ongoing weekly peace vigils at various locations, and a monthly event in front of Grand Central Station. We distribute flyers outlining peaceful alternatives to war in Afghanistan, encouraging folks to contact their elected representatives.

We are currently planning a screening of Rethink Afghanistan on September 25th at a local church, participation in Rape Awareness Week, and an antiwar veterans contingent in the annual NYC Veterans Day Parade up 5th Avenue on Nov. 11.

Bob Keilbach

Chapter 54, Santa Barbara, CA

Chapter 54's original Arlington West continues albeit now once a month on the first Sunday and has been expanded to include the cost of the war in Afghanistan. Additionally, the chapter sets up its Iraq Moratorium on the third Friday of the month at Santa Barbara City College. This project, initiated by Dr. Gilbert Robledo, features hundreds of tombstones on the college's lawn and the students are asked to place a nametag with photo of one of the hundreds of teenagers killed in action in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan on the tombstones. Students are assisted in preventing the military recruiters from getting their contact information and petitions to ban depleted uranium, and get the USA out of Iraq are signed at this monthly event. The weekly Inconvenient Booth features the connections between war and our consumerism. Dr. Robledo is formerly head of counseling at SBCC, now retired and a member of Chapter 54.

We are currently updating our website www.vfpsb.org and invite you to follow the progress and have an active membership recruitment and renewal effort. Recently we have learned that the wars are costing the city of Santa Barbara millions of dollars in salary

supplement, overtime and pensions due to the activation and federalization of city employees who are members of the California National Guard or the reserves. We are contemplating an effort named "Cost of War Comes to Town...our town" that will press the city to seek compensation from the DOD for this cost.

Lane Anderson

Chapter 55, Santa Fe, NM

Our VFP Chapter hosted a two-night Torture Awareness program. We showed the film Taxi To The Dark Side the first evening and then hosted an inter-denominational service to commemorate victims of torture; acknowledging both victims and perpetrators—victims themselves. VFP member Charlie Clemens was our keynote speaker. We conducted a Doing Democracy training that was well-attended. During the Labor



Day holiday we set up an information table at the Railyard Park and had a good number of people stop and talk as well as a handful who got on our local email information list and a couple of veterans who took VFP applications and committed to joining. Two members of our chapter marched with Lisa Law's Peace Bus in the Santa Fe Fiesta's Historical/Hysterical Parade and were given the honor of leading the float and a contingency of African Dancers. Our entry was well-received by spectators. Peace.

Daniel Craig

Chapter 63, Albuquerque, NM

With the help of the local ACLU we now have access to the Veterans Memorial Park, where we tabled at the event on Memorial Day, to favorable response. We are also tabling at numerous other public events.

We had our float and marchers in the State Fair Parade September 12. We were joined by Santa Fe and local IVAW members. We were well received by the onlookers.

Our chapter was renamed the Don and Sally-Alice Thompson Chapter.

We are eagerly looking forward to the second weekend in October, when the Pentagon of Peace will be occurring. The Pentagon, five dynamos for peace and justice, will be sharing their wisdom and courage with Taos, Santa Fe, and Albuquerque. The five are Anne Wright, Cindy Sheehan, Elliot Adams, David Swanson, and Ray McGovern. What a weekend that will be!

Sally-Alice Thompson

Chapter 87, Sacramento CA

Sacramento VFP members spent part of September 11 serving lunch at a local homeless community center. It felt good to help in this way and we plan to arrange to do this at least monthly. Our chapter vice-president, Daniel Costa, recently provided information about increases in homeless veterans to a local attorney who is working to protect the community's homeless population. While Sacramento struggles with issues involving ordinances against tent cities and how to afford needed services, local homeless people are looking for safe ground on which to sleep at night. Many of these are veterans, including at least two homeless men who were among those arrested recently for sleeping overnight, with permission of the owner, on private property.



Top photo: John Reiger and Daniel Costa of Chapter 87 serving at the homeless lunch line.

Bottom photo: Debra Reiger helping out at the homeless kitchen

We encourage other chapters to reach out to veteran brothers and sisters who are homeless in your communities. Everyone should be able to have a good meal and be treated with respect. And we will have fliers with us about available veterans' services in our community.

On another note, three members of VFP Chapter 87 have been elected to the ACLU Sacramento Chapter Board of Directors for the upcoming year. They are Cres Vellucci, Daniel Costa, and Debra Reiger.

Debra Reiger

Chapter 91, San Diego

Although spring and summer of '09 seemed to have flashed past, San Diego's Chapter 91 managed to accomplish a bit.

Our Memorial Day Arlington West display on the beach in Oceanside, CA was well attended by both locals and active duty marines stationed at nearby Camp Pendleton.

The following weekend SDVFP hosted Southern California's first Regional VFP-Conference. The success of this Oceanside gathering can be attributed to the diverse and informative workshops and the dedicated SoCal VFP members who attended.

Additionally, teams of SDVFP constituents led by Jack Doxie, made seven visits to four of San Diego County's Congressional offices. The district offices of Representatives Bilbray, Filner, Hunter, and Davis were called upon. A visit with Congressman Darrell Issa is pending.

August found Dave Wiley and Jan Ruhman, Chapter 91's president and vice president, in Maryland to present workshops at VFP's 24th National Convention. Immigration lawyer Heather Boxeth, Marine veteran Luis Alvarez (a possible deportee), and his sister Angelica Madrigal, who formed the panel for Ruhman's workshop on "Banished Veterans", accompanied them. Dave Wiley led a workshop on non-violence and teamed with Sharon Kufeldt for another titled, "Hearts and Minds".

And so it goes...

Deb Schneider



Left to right: Jan Ruhman, Angelica Madrigal, Marine veteran Luis Alvarez (who faces deportation) and immigration lawyer, Heather Boxeth during the "Veteran's Deportation Workshop" at the first Southern California Regional VFP Conference, May 29 - 31st, 2009

Chapter 99, Western, NC

The HUD-VASH (Housing and Urban Development and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing) program helps homeless vets find and maintain housing.

That's great—but a roof, floor, and walls aren't quite enough. With Mary and Ken Ashe coordinating our efforts, WNC Chapter 99 members collected truckloads of dishes, towels, and other goods and furnishings to help the vets get started. Three of the program's beneficiaries spoke at a program during which we presented our gifts. Our feelings on that day were well expressed by chapter member Ed Sacco:

"Tears welled up in my eyes as I listened to the former homeless veterans tell their stories. It was the joy they expressed—not the troubled years of struggling outside of mainstream society, but the powerful emotions of gratitude. They were touched and energized by people who cared.

"My part was simple: I merely loaded up a few laundry baskets of various goods and drove them to a storage place. I, myself, was touched and energized by the other volunteers. Even though I felt as a 'stranger,' I also felt that I was part of a community doing our small thing to heal in a world too often broken by violence and fear."

Kim Carlyle

Chapter 102, Milwaukee, WI

A Homeless Veterans Initiative, to find and assist veterans living on the streets in the Milwaukee area, has been a major chapter priority for the past year.

VFP volunteers go to shelters, meal programs, homeless encampments and onto the streets to locate homeless veterans. We offer them help in obtaining food, shelter, clothing, transportation and medical care;



Chapter 99 members fill baskets of household goods for formerly homeless vets.

registering and pursuing their claims for disabilities, pensions, or other Veterans Administration benefits; and eventually finding jobs and places to live.

It is a slow process that begins with finding the veterans and earning their trust.

Already, there are success stories. The first veteran we interviewed over a year ago, who had no income and was living in an abandoned car, is now in his own apartment and gets an Army pension. Another, sleeping in parks when we encountered him, is in transitional housing on the VA grounds and enrolled in technical college. A third, a double amputee, who was evicted from his apartment and ended up at the Rescue Mission, found it hard to accept a helping hand without giving back. He now has a place to live again, and works as a volunteer with us on a daily basis.

Bill Christofferson

Chapter 132, Benton County, OR

VFP 132 had two good tabling opportunities recently, at the Benton County Fair and at the Crosby, Stills & Nash concert in Eugene, Oregon. Both events offered outstanding opportunities to engage the public



VFP chapter 118 member Cecily Light (L) looks up a VA regulation with Salt Lake City Vet Center counselor Janice Kensington at a recent workshop on compensation facilitated by www.homefrontvet.org founder Aaron Davis. Photo by Aaron Davis

on the cost of war and to encourage vets to join VFP. Many thanks to Chapter 69's Hal Muskat for arranging the CSN tabling connection with the Guacamole Fund.

We also spent time renewing our "Truth-in-Recruiting" relationship with three local high schools. This year we focused our efforts on ensuring the "opt-out" provision was faithfully implemented by the schools.

The highlight of this period was the first annual Corvallis Peace Fair on September 19th. Chapter 132 was one of the chief sponsors

and organizers for this celebration commemorating the International Day of Peace, a UN-sanctioned holiday. We obtained the endorsement of the Corvallis City Council and sponsorship of numerous church, civic and business partners. The Fair was created to raise awareness about the International Day of Peace, build community, create a positive and welcoming event for foreign-born residents, and build on relationships with Corvallis' sister cities in Ukraine and Ethiopia.

It featured music, dance, arts & crafts and games and offered many children's activities.

Bob Stebbins

Chapter 134, Tacoma, WA

Our biggest event every year is Arlington NW - borrowed from the Seattle chapter (many thanks!!). It was displayed along our waterfront on Puget Sound on Labor Day weekend 2005 - the fall before our chapter was formed. We have continued the tradition each year - this will be our fifth year. This year and last year we will have the display up for two days. (The newspaper will never print a picture in advance - thus the photographer will come out Saturday and it will be in the paper Sunday - so

we get a little publicity). We do produce flyers and business card notes that we put on the windshields of cars of military and retirees (just look for the base access stickers on the windshield). We have had good cooperation from the park board to use the park. The fee has been \$300, with a damage deposit. However when they also asked for \$1 million in liability insurance last year we found out that National's insurance no longer covers chapter activities, so we have to pay another \$300 for event insurance. This year my VP, Ray Nacanaynay and I appeared before the regular park board meeting to plead our case. They waived not only the fee, but the insurance requirement



Benton County Fair Peace Booth, VFP132 member, Jim Spain. Photo by Esmeralda Allen

as well. We made the case that we are putting on the display as a public service. So I would encourage other chapters to do this (after you have a good history).

Dave Dittmore

Chapter 136, Central Florida

Considering the same rules of law applied by VFP National in its 2004 call for the impeachment of President Bush, members of the Central Florida chapter voted on and approved a resolution to call for the impeachment of President Obama for the commission of war crimes under his command, authority and knowledge relating to the U.S. wars on and occupations of Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

We were both surprised and disappointed that VFP's national leadership and members in attendance at the National Convention voted against our resolution to impeach President Obama for what are indisputably war crimes being committed under his command and authority. As VFP remains silent on the issue of impeachment, President Obama continues to expand and



escalate the wars and their atrocities while on our watch.

Chapter 136 will continue to put our commitment to defending the Constitution and to VFP's Statement of Purpose before politics and political correctness. We encourage our fellow Veterans For Peace to do the same, especially in regards to this issue.

Our chapter has generic 4.25" x 11", "War Crimes are War Crimes, PROSECUTE BUSH, IMPEACH OBAMA" bumper stickers available. Stickers can include local contact or other info. Email CentralFlaVFP@aol.com for details.

Phil Restino

Chapter 139, North Olympic Peninsula, WA

We've had a busy summer hosting Kit Siemion (a VFP Associate) of Code Pink. Kit brought us up to date on the situation in Gaza and efforts to bring in medical and other aid. We joined a Single Payer Healthcare Coalition in the Port Angeles, Washington 4th of July parade. Cindy Sheehan made two appearances sponsored by our chapter in Sequim and Port Townsend, Washington on her Pacific NW tour with excellent turnout and contributions to her



VFP Chapter 136 - June 25, 2009 National Torture Accountability Action Day, Daytona Beach, FL, Left to Right: Heidi Brehmer (VFP), Phil Restino (VFP/MFSO), Jim Virene (VFP Assoc).

effort. August is county fair month and Chapter 139 had booths at both Clallam County and Jefferson County Fairs featuring our focus on Iraq Water Projects, Military Sexual Trauma and Truth in Recruiting.

We voted to officially change our chapter name to the VFP Tony Van Renterghem Chapter in honor of Tony who passed away recently from age related causes. Tony was a Dutch resistance fighter with a Gestapo death sentence on his head. His memoirs will be published shortly and are certain to contain recollections of his Veterans For Peace activism in Arizona and Washington State.

David Jenkins

Chapter 151, Far West, TX

We struggle to find common ground in our remote rural community. The economic crisis triggered our organizing a Transition Town Initiative. Townspeople participated and Transition Alpine is expanding via a campaign for 1000 Edible Gardens and an informal Sunday brunch discussion group.

At our weekly Alpine demonstration, our banners read BRING OUR TROOPS HOME NOW and PROSECUTE WAR CRIMINALS, REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS. Our local newspaper published an Op-Ed piece by a chapter member, Joe Goldman, describing the meaning of this 2-year action.

In September of this year, we arranged for Dahr Jamail to speak locally about his new book, *The Will To Resist*. He was warmly received by a small but totally engaged audience.

Arlington Southwest, Alpine, TX

Photo by Paul Schaefer

Our chapter created and dedicated Arlington Southwest as a permanent reminder of the costs of war. The tombstones stand on the edge of 4500 acres of unfenced grasslands, adjacent and visible to traffic on U.S. 90. Facing southeast, on a grid of 8' intervals, the tombstones appear brightest at dawn and rest in shadow at dusk. We update the number of tombstones each Veterans' Day to equal the number of Texans who have died, but the installation memorializes all deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Paul Schaefer

Chapter 141, Brandon, OR

Bandon is a town of fewer than 3,000 people on the southern Oregon coast. For more than three years, our chapter has maintained a weekly peace vigil at the side of Highway 101, the Coast Highway, where it passes through Bandon. During the winter months, we present a film series and speakers at the Bandon Public Library. We have given the library over thirteen hundred dollars in new books and videos dealing with war and veterans issues. We support the Friendship Village Project near Ha Noi for victims of Agent Orange, and the Duc Son Pagoda Orphanage near Hue. Don Blackburn, a Vietnam veteran, is a member of the American Committee for the Friendship Village Project. Don lives in Bandon half of each year, and in Vietnam the other half. We also buy food cards for the local Veterans Administration Clinic to pass on to vets and their families. On Saturday afternoons, you can find us at our favorite hangout, the courtyard of the 2 Loons Cafe in Old Town Bandon, where we stuff ourselves with good food, drink pots of coffee, talk politics, tell funny stories, and thoroughly enjoy being in each other's company.

Bob Fischer



VFP Women Talk

by Georgia Wever

A lively Women's Caucus at the 2009 Convention came up with ideas and concerns enough for a caucus of many times its size.

Building VFP

Upon learning that nearing 1/3 of VFP members are non-veterans, participants volunteered to write an outreach flyer directed specifically to women veterans. There were a few proposals for chapters:

- Post and distribute the women's flyer at battered women's and homeless shelters, since many residents are veterans.
- Visit the women's coordinator at the VA and try to get the flyer posted.
- Post the flyer in the women's room at the VA, Social Security offices and welfare centers, and distribute it at entrances.
- Ask local peace and justice groups to ask on their membership forms, "Have you ever served in the military?" Collect the names periodically and invite them to chapter meetings.
- Make friends with the aide in your elected officials' offices. They receive calls and letters from veterans requesting assistance and, with encouragement, may keep a list and forward names to local chapters.

Attention to anti-recruitment

The discussion reflected special concern about the recruitment of young women in the military. The group applauded the new VFP bumper sticker "Warning: 1 in 3 Women RAPED in Military" and designation of October 12 - 16, 2009, as Military Rape Awareness Week (MRAW). A link

to MRAW will be on the VFP web site, to promote ideas for the campaign. The sticker can be used creatively--not only on car bumpers but in toilet stalls in schools where recruitment is active and anywhere young women congregate.

It was pointed out that military recruiters recognize that victims of incest may seek out the military in an attempt to find safety from a violent home life. Anti-recruitment efforts must emphasize that the military is not a safe haven for women. Commanding officers do not know how to address charges of assaults against women; several participants related personal experiences of poorly handled issues regarding women or minorities.

The Miles Foundation was mentioned as an information clearinghouse for victims of sexual violence in the military, as was Servicewomen's Action Network (SWAN). (The speakers for the Military Sexual Assault workshop at the convention provided good sources too; Pack Parachute Charity and MilitarySexualAssault.com.)

Building Visibility

Caucus participants will advertise the Women's Listserv in the VFP newsletter and on flyers. They suggested improving the visibility of women in the newsletter by re-establishing a permanent women's column (or column about women with both men and women contributors). Also, a periodic conference call would enable those without computers to participate in discussion.

There is hope for a film version of the book, *The Woman Soldier*. Two books were recommended: *The Lonely Soldier* by Helen Benedict (Beacon Press) and *Bringing Vincent Home* by Madeline Mysko (Plainviewpress.net).

Many would like a magnetic (removable) auto sticker or license plate holder that reads "Woman Veteran" with the VFP web address on it.

Statistics on women veterans in prisons may be useful. What organizations keep such information? How can veteran's organizations use it to reach out to women vets

in prison and upon release? Does VFP have prison chapters or homeless chapters? How do they work?

There was understanding of the situation of military wives who also "serve" by living overseas with husbands. One participant described her loneliness at leaving her family at 16 years of age to accompany her husband overseas. Because she "had two tours" she identifies with veteran's issues. Is there a place for the voices of military wives to be heard in VFP? Their desire to have a vote in VFP must be balanced with the need to remain a primarily veteran's organization.



Agent Orange

Continued from page 2

Since it was standard procedure for ships to move near the mouths of rivers to take on less-salty seawater for the distillation system, they conclude it is reasonable to assume that those ships could have taken on herbicide-contaminated runoff water.

The committee also complained about a lack of focused scientific information and repeated past recommendations for further prompt and comprehensive studies. Seven recommendations involve reopening, completing, or mining data from existing studies or databases such as the Ranch Hand Study (which was shut down in 2006) and National Vietnam Veterans Longitudinal Study (stopped in 2003). The Update also called, not for the first time, for collaborative studies of the Vietnamese population. To date, the US government has failed to successfully cooperate with the Vietnamese government on study protocols. The IOM also recommended studies to focus on the possibility of birth defects and developmental problems in children and grandchildren of exposed veterans.

Limitations of the IOM AO Updates

For all that these Updates have added to our understanding of AO, this and all previous IOM Updates have serious flaws. The committee does no independent study; their Updates are studies of studies, and only synthesize and summarize other research that happens to intersect with the IOM's mandate from Congress, and attempt to relate it to Vietnam veterans' health. Update after Update complains that "there has been

Agent Orange continued on page 19



Left to right, John Gretzinger, Ed Pool, Scotty Rollins, Tom Fugere, Don Blackburn, and Frank Quinn march in the 2009 Bandon Fourth of July Parade. photo by tawnya

Army Experience Center

Continued from page 1

group, A Gathering Of Eagles, stood behind the glass panels smirking and mugging for protesters' cameras.

It was quite a ruckus for about 20 minutes.

Earlier in the day, my wife Lou Ann and I wandered up to the entrance of the AEC to see what was going on. The active-duty commander of the center told us the center was closed for the day due to a 9/11 commemoration event with members of A Gathering Of Eagles. The Eagles all featured their usual denim jackets and motorcycle regalia with POW-MIA patches and other obligatory, right-wing identity symbols.

I asked the young captain if, as a veteran, I could join the commemoration event, since I also felt obliged to honor the sacrifices of that day, especially the brave civilians who took matters into their hands over Pennsylvania. "No!" I was told firmly.

For the record, in May the Philadelphia VFP chapter formally requested permission through veteran director Al Flood to set up a modest, respectful table for presenting alternative views to the youth entering the AEC. Flood assured us he would submit the request and get back to me. We have heard nothing.

A tall, bearded Eagle remained at the entrance, and we began to make cordial conversation with him. He was from North Carolina so we exchanged pleasantries on that fine state, since Lou Ann and I had just returned from a week on Ocracoke Island. Lou Ann knew the area he was from, so it was a polite exchange. That is, until Lou Ann asked the man if he thought the polarization between left and right in America was something that could be surmounted -- or was it just a case of war?

"It's not left or right," the man said. "It's Democrat-Republican, and the Democrats have been taken over by Communists. They're Marxist-Leninists."

This was more than we expected and a bit confusing. We had both voted for Obama and were Democrats, but we both now felt for one reason or another Obama was in cahoots with militarists like this Eagle standing in front of us when it came to the issue of Afghanistan.

"That's simply absurd," I told him.

"I won't talk about it," he said and stepped away.

The extent of blindered and willful ignorance of this otherwise polite guy was staggering. What was so sobering was that this sort of willful ignorance symbolized for me the incredible cultural momentum from eight years of post-9/11 vengeance-rooted military mobilization, a national state of mind that has involved two major invasions and follow-up occupations and a runaway regime of secrecy, illegal surveillance, detention and torture. It was all in this guy's block-headed assumptions about "communists" in the woodpile.

We certainly had our work cut out for us. How does one go about organizing a reasonable and decent society when this is



A Gathering Of Eagles members mug and giggle from behind the AEC glass panels behind a phalanx of Philly cops.

the kind of response a tax-paying citizen encounters when he has the temerity to ask what is going on and why is it so necessary to hose more gasoline on the fire we kicked up in Afghanistan/Pakistan? I can hear the usual Gathering Of Eagle chuckle and response to this question: What about Osama bin Laden? OK, what about him? Aren't we fulfilling his stated matador-like goal of driving us into bankruptcy? All this stuff needs to be discussed afresh.

Every one who came out to march on Saturday against the Army Experience Center realized, as an institution, the AEC is a fundamental adjunct of our unquestioned and unquestionable Afghanistan policy. If you choose to make war and you choose to expand the violence, you need young men and women to hump the rugged terrain of Afghanistan and to drive the dangerous roadways of Afghanistan and to engage the fierce Pashtun Taliban fighters so infuriated at the US military occupation of their homeland. There is so much screwed up about our presence in Afghanistan it's hard

to know where to start. And I won't even try here. Suffice it to say, it is fundamentally screwed up thanks to the corrupt Bush years and, now, the insidious momentum of war on both sides of the battle. It can go nowhere but from bad to worse.

As one of the march signs pointed out, from January to July of this year, there were more suicides among soldiers than there were combat deaths. Post Traumatic Stress is at crisis levels -- to the point the military is now featuring "resilience training" to toughen up our troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. This kind of psychological counseling is notoriously good for one thing: getting young men and women to buck up and get back on the line. No one is asking the real questions such as: Why the hell are we recruiting young kids and sending them into the war in Afghanistan at all? As many vets will submit, one of the causes of PTSD is a sense of not understanding what the mission is or slowly coming to the realization the stated mission is dishonest and the real deal is something much more insidious.

We can only speculate why the US Army picked the Franklin Mills Mall for its experiment in high-tech youth entrapment. Might it have something to do with the working class demographics of the Northeast Philadelphia and the dismal economic climate for jobs and careers facing young kids graduating from high school? The rumor spread during the march that the Army had decided not to invest in centers like the AEC in malls across America. One can only hope, its Gathering Of Eagles support aside, that the Army sees what a morally dubious enterprise the AEC really is. At least the Marines' new recruitment ads show kids enduring hardships and even vomiting during basic training.

In the end, the Philadelphia Police Civil Affairs Unit arrested seven demonstrators who refused to leave the mall after the rowdy period of loud questioning. Once everyone had been swept out of the Mall, its Red Entrance was protected by the phalanx of Philly cops. The AEC and the Mall were again safe. All the gravely serious questions this motley gathering of angry, tax-paying citizens still harbored had been deflected.

But if the foolish escalation of Afghanistan isn't stopped, we can all be assured more kids recruited out of cynical places like the AEC will die there.

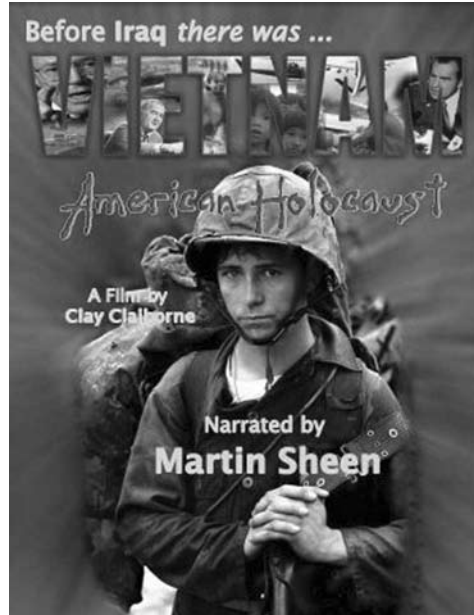


Vietnam: American Holocaust – A Review

Vietnam: American Holocaust
A documentary film by Clay Claiborne
Narration by Martin Sheen
90 minutes

When Saigon fell on the last day of April 1975, the American defeat in Vietnam was punctuated by the immediate re-unification of that war-torn nation, North and South - the very objective the U.S. had fought ten years to prevent. For their victory the Vietnamese would be severely punished under economic embargo for the next decade. But what would really matter now for the U.S. political mainstream was how the Vietnam War was to be packaged historically for U.S. domestic consumption - public and educational - in the years ahead.

A consensus would be struck around the neutral formula that the Vietnam War was simply a well-intended mistake. Naturally, this interpretation was found wanting by the war's die-hard apologists who, in the words of Ronald Reagan, claimed Vietnam as a "noble cause." But the real point for managers of the National Security State



was not to defend the war, but to forget it, and to repress the more authentic views of the broadly constituted, but minority progressive community that the U.S. invasion of Vietnam was a war of aggression and, subsequently, a crime against humanity.

If the public, especially emerging

generations, were to retain the memory of Vietnam as an ignoble defeat, the illegal invasion, occupation and wanton devastation of a small, powerless and sovereign third world country, then the strategic pursuit of "endless war" to sustain U.S. global dominance would be severely undermined. Public amnesia on the realities of Vietnam was essential in convincing that same misguided populace to invade first Afghanistan and then Iraq as the appropriate response to terrorism. The predictable consequence: déjà vu all over again. Or as one bumper sticker recently spotted puts it, "Quagmire Accomplished."

As keepers of the truth about Vietnam, antiwar progressives have labored persistently to demonstrate parallels between that fiasco in S. E. Asia and the militaristic adventures of the present, always linking them to the imperial aims they are designed to serve. This perspective has been steadily assembled over the years in an abundance of popular and scholarly writings, and, on occasion, in film, dramatic and documenta-

Vietnam continued on page 19

The Good Soldier – A Review

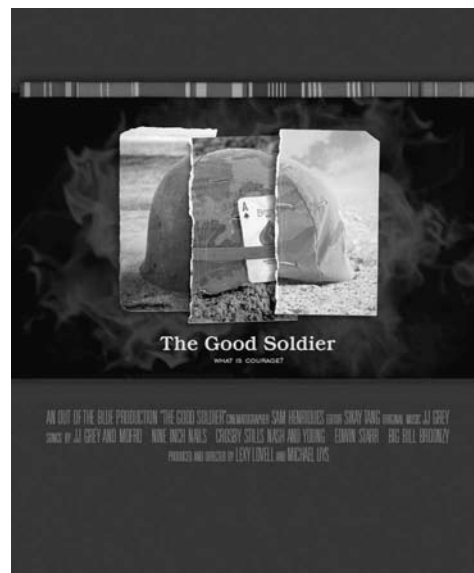
The Good Soldier
By Lexy Lovell and Michael Uys
Out of the Blue Productions
79 mins.

By far what I found most remarkable in the new documentary, *The Good Soldier*, is the uncommon degree of honesty at work on multiple levels, in the statements Lovell and Uys extract from the former soldiers they interview. It starts with the very first words spoken on camera and continues throughout. The absence of any narration makes *The Good Soldier* feel even more direct.

Sometimes the honesty counters the lies told by military recruiters, as when Army Warrant Officer (ret.) Perry Parks says in his opening comment, "Every man is an infantryman. Your real bare-bones job is to go out and kill people."

Other times, it's a more difficult, personally revealing, kind of honesty.

"The more of your people you see hurt and killed, the more it intensifies your desire to kill," said Army Staff Sergeant Will



Williams, who did two tours in Viet Nam.

He described a night spent pinned down in a bomb crater next to the body of a friend who had been shot in the head. When morning came, he helped load the body onto a truck and his friend's brains "fell out into my hands." After a painful pause, Williams said, "But then it was

easier to go back and kill."

Plumbing deeper, Williams said, "You get a rush. Your first kill seems hard... you think about it, especially if it's at close quarters...(but) I had hate building for those people...it bothered me if I didn't get a chance to kill. I became an animal...no remorse."

Marine Staff Sergeant, Jimmy Massey, described the time early in his tour in Iraq when he and his unit opened fire on a group of demonstrators. Afterwards, he examined the bodies, "all soaked in red," and saw no weapons. "Then, that little voice goes off in your head and says, 'Well, that's war. That's what happens in war.' I'll be honest with you, I chalked it up. I really did."

Apparently, these former soldiers have spent time in therapy or at least seriously contemplating their military experiences, because they each have taken the important next step, learning the genesis of their behaviors.

Massey explained how Marine Corps

Good Soldier continued on page 19



P O E T R Y

THE AMERICAN SOLDIER

Deep in a vale, a stranger now to arms,
 Too poor to shine in courts, too proud to beg,
 He, who once warred on Saratoga's plains,
 Sits musing o'er his scars, and wooden leg.

Remembering still the toil of former days,
 To other hands he sees his earnings paid;—
 They share the due reward—he feeds on praise,
 Lost in the abyss of want, misfortune's shade.

Far, far from domes where splendid tapers glare,
 'Tis his from dear bought peace no wealth to win,
 Removed alike from courtly cringing 'squires,
 The great-man's Levee, and the proud man's grin.

Sold are those arms which once on Britons blazed,
 When, flushed with conquest, to the charge they came;
 That power repelled, and Freedom's fabrick raised,
 She leaves her soldier—famine and a name!

— Philip Freneau (1752-1832)

Freneau, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, became a vocal critic of the post-war treatment of former enlisted men by the US and state governments. George Washington called Freneau a "rascal," which Washington meant neither to be cute nor complimentary.

TAKING STOCK AT 65

These disastrous mornings
 mortality swirls around me
 Sister Maggi
 cut to pieces at the Mayo
 Sister Peggy on the coast
 a virtual streamer
 broken like a doll

Nothing like a wedding
 to spice the family madness
 The selfish son estranged
 damaged by war
 no less than the father

'Tis cruel to give a flower
 then pluck it back

Do not deceive yourselves:
 The contemplative life
 does not a contemplative make
 You have to work at that

On these embattled mornings
 flowers help
 Tour the morning garden
 in the lee of the solstice
 A hundred perennials to greet
 A multitude of colors set their roots
 by beauty's calendar

Early bulbs and wild flowers
 take first bow

Trout lilies spread the ground
 with mottled leaves
 Lady slippers glimpsed
 where least expected

Unforgettable forget-me-nots
 drop violet stars in every bed
 Across the stone embankment
 pink phlox creeps
 The deep hued columbine
 rise like corn
 on stalks of grape and magenta

And in the dooryard
 lilacs bloom their therapies of perfume
 to rival sweet rugosa rose
 in powers of intoxication

On and on it goes
 everyday an old friend newly found
 and as we gain we lose

Remember this:
 No fleeting flower
 can slow the ticking clock
 These flashes of forgetting
 are but a steady keel
 to steer the stormy days
 There is no cure for life

*Michael Uhl
 July 2009
 Walpole, Maine*

UNTITLED

Socraton and Porcius
 two scrofulous
 right hands of Consul Piso
 synonymous with greed and plague
 devouring our country. The great
 god Priapus,
 erect, had served your pleasure:
 look, a banquet spread at noon,
 you feed and spawn,
 drunken in the sunlight.
 And, my friends, dear Fabullus
 And my lttle Veranius, starve, for-
 ever walking
 down city streets to find a meal,
 gazing at banquets, wondering who
 will take them in for dinner

— Catullus

I saw the masked men
 throwing truth into a well.
 When I began to weep for it
 I found it everywhere.

Claudia Lars

BOOK REVIEWS

by Will Shapira



The Progressive:

100 Years: 1909-2009

130 pages, \$3.95 paperback

www.progressive.org

Just 300 miles southeast of where I live in Minnesota is Madison, WI, home of The Progressive one of the best, most enduring peace and justice publications ever. Marking its 100th proud anniversary, its publishers have issued a 130-page special issue of the magazine which, at \$3.95 paperback, is a steal. It is a compendium of stories showing first and foremost how little progress we've made in so many areas, especially the prevention of war and combating the influence of the American War Machine.

A sampling of the headlines and the years the stories were published starting almost literally from Day One of the magazine reads as follows: "Our Duty to the Earth," 1909. "The Most Moral Tax of All" (about the income tax) 1909. "Money Should Not Buy Office," 1909. "Human Rights Higher Than Property Rights," 1910. "Why War?," 1911. "Industrial Despotism," 1912. "The Consolidation of Banking and Big Business," 1913. "Ensuring the Right to Organize," 1914. "The Future of the Indian," 1915. "The Right of the Citizen to Oppose War and the Right of Congress to Shape War Policy," 1917. "The Need for Health Insurance," 1917. "How the Press Serves Big Business." "War Profiteers," 1918. And that takes us only to p. 17! I certainly am not going to spoil your enjoyment by running the actual stories but if those headlines don't entice you, what will?

While many of the stories were written by founder Wisconsin Sen. "Fighting" Bob LaFollette, others were written by his wife, Belle Case LaFollette, Lincoln Steffens, Jane Addams, Carl Sandburg, Louis Brandeis, Samuel Gompers, Scott Nearing and Leo Tolstoy, among many other historic figures over a century of American history.

There are a number of histories of liberal thought in the United States but I defy you to find one that packs so much into so few pages and is available at such a low cost.

From the VFP standpoint, there are many stories dealing with war, those who promulgated it and those who opposed it with all of their might.

You owe it to yourself (and maybe family, friends and associates) not only to order this remarkable document but to sign up for The Progressive monthly under the editorship of Matthew Rothschild who carries on in the great tradition of William T. Evjue, Morris and Mary Rubin and Erwin Knoll. Like the compendium, the monthly also is available at a bargain rate. Congratulations to all who have made The Progressive the vital magazine it remains today and who will keep it at its high level for years to come.

Rothschild also has edited *You Have No Rights: Stories of America In An Age of Repression* www.thenewpress.com \$16.95 paperback. Though it came out during W's administration, it seems to have lost none of its relevance and timeliness in the first year of the Obama regime. It is, says Rothschild in the introduction, a compilation of 82 case histories of "innocent individuals simply minding their own business or exercising their First Amendment freedom" and those who would take those freedoms away and in many cases, did. No doubt this has happened to people you know or admire from afar or even to yourself. No doubt about it--activism comes with a price.



The Wounded Warrior Handbook: A Resource Guide for Returning Veterans

by Don Philpott and Janelle Hill

14 pages paperback, \$30

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www.rlpbooks.com

Beyond keeping our brave troops out of hegemonic, capitalist wars, beyond trying to get such existing wars ended and heading off new ones, there are other things we in VFP can do to "support the troops." One of the most important these days is helping them transition back into society.

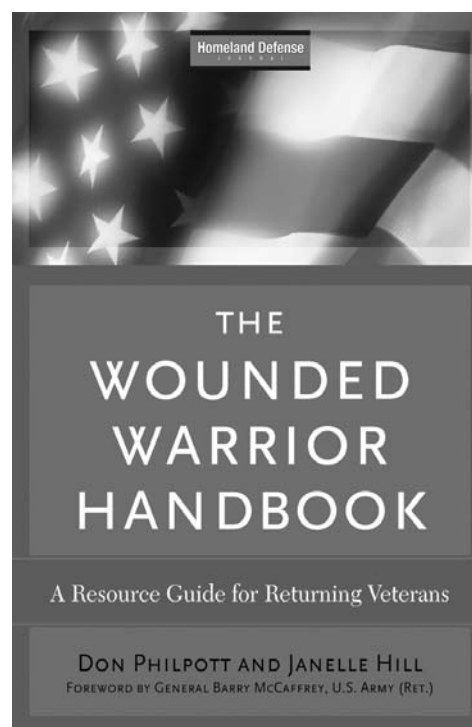
This book will help a lot and I urge all VFP chapters to get a copy and pass along copies of this review to your local media, employers, business organizations and government at all levels so they, too, can help

support the troops by easing their return to civilian life.

At the same time, the national VFP leadership should champion this book by making its existence and contents known to Pres. Obama, his cabinet and advisors; Secretary of Defense Gates; the Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and all members of Congress plus the national media via op-eds and letters to the editor. You all can get professional PR materials by contacting Nancy Hofmann or Lisa McAllister at reviews@rowman.com.

Philpott and Hill and have compiled an invaluable list of things that vets, their families, other loved ones, friends and even private citizens can do to help vets return to society. They are spelled out in some detail in the book and in greater detail on the authors' website www.homelanddefensejournal.com.

There are words of encouragement from Secretary Gates, Ret. Gen. Barry McCaffrey and the authors. But the real action must come from us, to spur those in power to exercise it on behalf of those brave men and women who laid their lives on the line for us and to do it now, when they need us most. Vets helping vets.



Convention Continued from page 1

cynicism to the process of death, for (our soldiers) must know after a short period there, that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved.

“Americans, who calculate so carefully...military victory, do not realize that in the process they are incurring deep psychological and political defeat.”

Then, 42 years ago, Dr. King spoke words that could be addressed to us here today:

“This war is but a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit, and if we ignore this...reality we will find ourselves organizing... [antiwar] committees for the next generation. They will be concerned about Guatemala...Cambodia... South Africa. We will be marching for these and a dozen other names and attending rallies without end unless there is a significant and profound change in American life...”

My daughter brought this home to me right after the invasion of Iraq, when she said, “This is my generation’s war, just like Vietnam was yours, isn’t it?”

So here we are, organizing another generation of antiwar committees, attending rallies without end. It’s still necessary. We’ll keep doing it, but I’m sick of it. I’m tired of being that Vet For Peace guy who makes history dance at another rally by revealing what Smedley Butler had to say. I long for the time when Veterans For Peace can build its membership on a reputation for creating a peaceful world and its practical nonviolence skills, not just because we lept to the front ranks against yet another war.

Chris Hedges wrote “war is a force that gives us meaning.” Could it also be true that antiwar is a force that gives us meaning? If we are content to be an antiwar movement or peace movement in name only, we’ll have work that will give us plenty of meaning for this generation, our children’s generation, and the one after that if the planet is still breathing.

No, what we need is a peace movement that is true to our chant in the streets: “No justice, no peace!” Peace with justice means stopping the few from making policy for the many; from robbing us blind; denying our right to health care; destroying Earth’s life support systems; as well as sending us to war.

Peace with justice needs a foundation. That foundation is democracy. Not democracy “as advertised on TV,” or bandied about during elections, but the real thing. We must govern ourselves, for we have seen what happens when we don’t.

Imagine a peace movement that is part of a larger democracy movement. We talk about “outreach” to other groups. We talk about defunding the war to fund human needs. But brothers and sisters, what is our vision? Stopping the F-22 or trading an aircraft carrier for a housing program? It has to be more than that! What we need is to govern ourselves so we can create the kind of life to which we have an indisputable, inalienable right.

But we aren’t going to gain the power needed to govern ourselves if we expend our precious time toiling in an isolated peace movement that merely wants to get our troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan, just as we won’t become self-governing with an environmental movement that aims only for more solar panels and cars with better mileage.

We need to get our minds right so we can see ourselves not as mere workers and consumers but as human beings with an absolute right to define what kind of life we need – and then take it!

We need to create a culture of democracy from the bottom-up, to replace our culture of death. We need to change our government from what it is today – a huge roadblock, guarded round the clock by greed and private interests, into a vehicle that nourishes the public interest; that helps us express our love for each other and our planet.

I believe there is a hunger for self-governance and democracy in America and that hunger is the fundamental link between the peace movement and every other movement working to address human needs.

I don’t need to remind this audience of war’s real cost. We can’t even identify all the categories into which we pour war’s staggering sums. Less than 5% of what we’ve spent in Iraq and Afghanistan would pay the tuition in the U.S. of every student attending public university this year. Beyond dollars, we know war’s human toll on individuals, families and whole communities is as impossible to quantify as the heartache of a single loved one; as impossible to calculate as the multiples of misery endured by those under our bombs.

If we experienced casualties in our

country [<http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation>] comparable to those just in Iraq it would mean – listen for where you live – that every person in Baltimore, Boston, Dallas, Philadelphia, San Diego, San Francisco and Seattle would be dead. Every. Single. Person. Everyone in Delaware, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada, New York and Oregon: wounded. Every. Single. Person. The entire populations of Ohio and New Jersey: homeless. Everyone in Michigan, Indiana and Kentucky: refugees in Canada or Mexico.

What’s astounding is that so many insist this kind of madness is practical, is realistic....and yet would look at VFP’s bottom line, “To abolish war as an instrument of national policy” and say “now, that’s crazy!”

How can this be? Well, think how much we pay this system every year to produce this culture of death, and then define it as normal, in fact as the only way to live. There is one good thing about all this – when we realize what a constant, herculean effort the system must make to construct such a massive delusion and maintain it in the face of everything rational, we can sense how fragile the empire really is. *If you doubt that, recall the toppling of the Berlin Wall in 1989, when just two years before such a thing was unthinkable – and it didn’t require passing any legislation.*

And so we’ve come full circle, back to the demand of Cool Hand Luke’s prison boss to get your mind right! We can either do that, or stand dumbfounded on the side of the road, waiting in awe for the Imperial Oz to give us direction.

Well, we’re here to tell the nation that Veterans For Peace knows what we see today is not the only way forward. War is not an unavoidable absolute. Human beings decide to create injustice, to promote empire, to whip up public fears. But veterans know human beings can make different decisions. We can create better outcomes. We can build a just society. We can create a culture of democracy. We can abolish war. We can, and we will!

But remember this other passage from that great speech of King’s. “We may cry out desperately for time to pause...but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residue of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words, ‘too late.’”

Sisters and brothers: Let us begin!





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Vietnam

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ry. A recent offering in this latter genre by VFP member Clay Claiborne is Vietnam: American Holocaust, a provocative recap of that war through archival footage that will be new to most viewers.

Structurally, Claiborne's 90 minute film is organized into info-packed "chapters," with headings like, TV War, History, Puppets, Tonkin and Air Power. By choosing a didactic approach in lieu of a conventional narrative synthesis, Claiborne has adapted his documentary for the classroom. Given his use of graphic news and military footage which make no effort to distance the viewer from the horrors of war, American Holocaust is best suited for more mature students in senior high school and college, most effectively absorbed, given the volume of information, by presenting it in halves for two separate screenings.

But the film is also of interest to scholars and old anti-Vietnam War activists who are unlikely to have seen what appears to be freshly mined footage from a number of archival sources. Even in retrospect after so many years it's shocking to see the degree of venality expressed in their own words by our leaders in the planning and execution of the war.

The villain par excellence remains the late Robert McNamara, and former Secretary of Defense who, visiting Hanoi long after the war for an exchange of historical views with the former enemy, is filmed asking his hosts, "Do you mean to say that [having lost]... on our population base the equivalent of 27 million people, the war was not a tragedy for you? What did you accomplish?" They gained their independence Bob. Makes you wonder where McNamara would have stood in 1776.

Adroitly narrated by actor and peace activist Martin Sheen, American Holocaust must now confront the perpetual challenge of our progressive minority to find the audiences that are most in need of learning - or being reminded of - the lessons of Vietnam. Of course, no single medium assumes the full burden of retrieving the inconvenient facts of history, but every honest initiative increases the odds that one day the public will demand that conflicts be resolved by peaceful means rather than by force.

Michael Uhl
www.veteranscholar.com



Agent Orange

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little or no action toward implementing several investigations that the committee regards as imperative;" but the committee's mandate gives it no power to implement its recommendations, and the VA and DoD have consistently ignored and sabotaged comprehensive research efforts. Thus, nearly 40 years after the last AO spraying in Vietnam, there are as many questions as answers. This is not a scientific failure. It is a political failure.

A final glaring deficiency is that the research mandate is limited to Vietnam vets. Even though there were only four studies of Vietnam veterans included in this Update, there were NONE that considered Vietnamese or Vietnamese Americans. How can this be?

This sorry state of affairs is really not surprising if one considers the history of non-treatment of atomic veterans, or ill-treatment of the First Gulf War veterans. As Fred Wilcox titled his book on chemical warfare, they are simply "Waiting for an Army to Die." In the case of Agent Orange, there has been sufficient political pressure that the US government has given a little ground in support and treatment of Vietnam veterans, but it avoids funding

Honduran Coup

Continued from page 4

right to recur to insurrection in defense of the constitutional order."

While Salomon feels, in its miscalculation, the military leadership is holding out now "to protect their dignity more than anything," she fears a "veto power" precedent set by the coup in both the business community and the military. This fear spills over into neighboring countries like El Salvador, where the FMLN just inaugurated a weak president.

She is uncertain exactly how the coup will collapse, but she says, "One thing is for sure, and that is they cannot sustain this government until November and the day of the elections."

Some VFP members may monitor that election election if and when it occurs. In the same vein, we need to monitor our own government and press it to better stand up for democracy and expanded rights in places like Honduras.

John Grant is a writer/photographer and a member of VFP Chapter 31 in Philadelphia.

hard scientific studies that would illuminate the hard political choices.

Agent Orange Campaign News

Please visit the Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility Campaign website www.vn-agentorange.org for more information.



Good Soldier

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training "does a great job of putting that warrior ethos in effect. It gives the ability to kill at least once. After that, it's on you."

Former Army Captain, Michael McPhearson, a veteran of the First Gulf War, added, "I can tell you this, if you have a pack of hungry dogs and you let them loose, you can't just whistle and call them back. They're gonna go after what you sent them after till they catch it. Unless you get there and pull them off that thing you had them catch, they're gonna kill it. I'm not trying to justify anything. I'm just saying this is the nature of war. You can't turn on and off the faucet. It doesn't happen like that."

Today, McPhearson is Executive Director of Veterans For Peace.

Massey is a founding member of Iraq Veterans Against the War. In one scene where he's shown holding a picket sign with the words, "I killed innocent civilians for our government," he adds, "I sold my soul a long time ago. I'm just here trying to recover it."

Perry retired after 29 years in the Army and attended his first protest during the Iraq war.

Williams is a leader of the anti-war group in his Wisconsin hometown. He closes The Good Soldier with these exquisite words: "The greatest generation is yet to come. It won't be the WWII vets; it'll be the people that take away all the reasons behind us going to war. That will be the greatest generation."

Mike Ferner



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