



Exposing the True Costs of War

and Militarism Since 1985

# VETERANS FOR PEACE

Organized locally. Recognized internationally.

VFP Newsletter

veteransforpeace.org

Fall 2019

*PROTECT OUR NATIONAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE*

## VETERANS SAY: “DON’T BOMB THE BIGHORN!”

Veterans For Peace has been busy working with a new coalition that was formed to stop the expansion of Nellis Air Force Base in Nevada!

The coalition was initiated by folks in Nevada who were outraged that the proposed expansion would completely take over the largest wildlife refuge in the country, the Desert National Wildlife Refuge (DNWR). The coalition is made up of environmental groups, indigenous tribes that will have their cultural sites restricted, ranchers, outdoor enthusiasts, and veterans.

The Desert National Wildlife Refuge is located next to the Nevada Test and Training Range. The United States Air Force is attempting to take over and reduce access to over a million acres of the refuge for bombing and combat training. The DNWR, a protected refuge that contains hundreds of species, is our natural and cultural heritage.

The Air Force currently already controls 2.9 million acres for the Nevada Test and Training Range, a sprawling expanse of public land that was withdrawn from the refuge for military use. These lands provide ample opportunity for aerial gunnery, flight testing, and other military readiness activities. With so much public land already available to the Air Force, there is no need for the dramatic expansion into and destruction of the Desert National Wildlife Refuge.

The military has designs to use the expansion for a multitude of unlimited war training that will include wheeled-



### STOP THE EXPANSION OF NELLIS AIR FORCE BASE!

*WITH OVER 800 BASES AND INSTALLATIONS AT HOME AND ACROSS THE GLOBE, THE U.S. MILITARY IS NOT LACKING AMPLE SPACE FOR TRAINING.*

and tracked-vehicle operations and direct bombing ranges—the sort of activity that will damage this pristine environment forever.

As veterans, we know the futility of war. We know full well that the U.S. military is engaged in too many conflicts that have nothing to do with our “defense.” Furthermore, with over 800 bases and installations at home and across the globe, the U.S. military is not lacking ample space for training.

Executive Director Garrett Reppenhagen recently traveled to Washington, D.C., and met with many legislators to talk about the importance of protecting our environment. He also pointed out that with over 800 bases, the military does not need to consume more space for training and certainly not to bomb endangered areas of our collective land.

On October 3, 2019, Veterans For Peace members traveled to Nellis from the Creech protests to bring attention and opposition to the expansion, holding signs that declare “Don’t Bomb the Bighorn!” [See photo above.]

Right now, the DNWR is shared and protected by environmental groups, tribes, individuals and government entities, including the military. There is no justifiable reason that the military must be solely able to access this land. With more than half our tax money already going to the “defense” budget, expecting U.S. residents to also hand over our dwindling public lands is nothing short of a greedy land grab.



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

## WINTER DEADLINE

{ JANUARY 10, 2020 }

## GUIDELINES FOR VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

Please keep to 200 words.

Be sure to include the reporter's  
name along with chapter number/  
name/location.

Photos must be high resolution  
to look good in print. 1200 pixels  
wide or more works well. Please  
include a caption and try to  
identify everyone in group shots.

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Send a request along with your  
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## Letter to the Editor



*Ed.: When we published the above photo of Ramsey Clark and war resister Bruce Beyer (crossing the Peace Bridge from Canada into the U.S. in Oct. 1977), we mistakenly identified the man visible behind Bruce (in sunglasses) as Gerald McCarthy. The author responded by sending us the photo below, along with this note.*



Dear Editor:

Just to set the record straight. I was with the contingent of Vets who walked Bruce Beyer back from Canada, but the guy in the [top] picture in shades is not me. I was further back. I'm attaching another photo with me in it. If you look closely you will see me directly across (right) from Gloria Emerson and behind the guy with a beard—I have aviator shades and long hair.

I did not know Bruce Beyer at the time, although we became friends and stayed in touch. Bruce spoke at both the Nyack Public Library and St. Thomas Aquinas College in the Spring of 2018, and we spoke off and on until his death this year. Bruce helped me to understand how saying NO is important...and I miss him. He was always a voice of conscience.

Gerald McCarthy

*Gerald McCarthy is the author of War Story, Shoetown, Trouble Light, and forthcoming in 2020, The Door in the Wall: New poems (Spuyten Duyvil Press).*

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## Letter from Viet Nam

Gerry Condon

Board President, VFP

I am writing from Hanoi, the capital of Viet Nam. I arrived here three days ago with the annual tour led by Chapter 160, the expatriate chapter of Veterans For Peace in Viet Nam. This morning there is thunder and lightning, conjuring up the horrible mass bombing raids that the U.S. conducted on this city and throughout Viet Nam from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies. Hanoi is now a bustling city of 11 million people (and 5 million motor scooters). The people are very friendly and happy to see Americans. Veterans from both sides of the war are working together to mitigate the "legacies of war." These include many thousands of unexploded bombs and landmines, and several million people who are affected by disabilities stemming from the massive U.S. "defoliation" spraying of "Agent Orange."

While some of us were meeting with the Viet Nam Association of Victims of Agent Orange (VAVA), others visited the Friendship Village just outside of Hanoi where we met with veterans and children who suffer from serious disabilities related to genetic damage from Agent Orange as well as continuing exposure. Veterans For Peace and VFP member Paul Cox received flowers and plaques recognizing our continuing efforts to heal the wounds of war in Viet Nam. Our Vietnamese friends are encouraging us to expand our relationships and to offer support and solidarity on many fronts. This very admirable and important cooperation will continue and will grow.

## Opposing U.S. intervention in Latin America

I have done a lot of traveling this year. I have had the privilege of representing Veterans For Peace on delegations to Venezuela and Nicaragua. What do these two Latin American countries have in common with Viet Nam? Among other things, all three have successfully resist-



ed U.S. imperialism's attempts to impose its will upon their sovereign nations. For Viet Nam it was a long war that killed three million Vietnamese. For Nicaragua, it was decades of the brutal, U.S.-backed Somoza dictatorship, followed by a CIA-backed "contra" war that killed 50,000 Nicaraguans in the 1980s. The U.S. also subjected Viet Nam and Nicaragua to devastating economic warfare.

Crippling economic "sanctions" are a primary tool being used in the blatantly public U.S. attempt to overthrow the socialist government in Venezuela. Cuba also has faced decades of a U.S. economic blockade. National Security hawk John Bolton [fired by Trump in Sept.] has labeled Cuba, Venezuela and Nicaragua as the "troika of tyranny" that has "met its match" in the Trump administration.

Veterans For Peace and the antiwar movement must do all we can to restrain our government from intervening, overtly or covertly, in the internal affairs of our Latin American neighbors. We must also continue to educate our communities about the true costs of war and to seek justice for veterans and victims of war.

## Deported veterans and support for asylum seekers

Justice for veterans is exactly what the VFP Deported Veterans Advocacy Project is seeking, with sterling leadership from our Deported Veterans Chapter 182 in

Tijuana, who have devoted themselves to being responsible residents and neighbors in their Tijuana community. Aside from advocating for their right to return to their families and communities in the United States, the Deported Veterans are actively advocating for asylum seekers from Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, Venezuela and Haiti—among other countries—who are stuck in makeshift refugee camps throughout Tijuana. VFP members are helping the Deported Veterans help the refugees by donating money to supply one migrant encampment with clean water on a regular basis. Veterans For Peace recently provided funding for the expansion of the Unified U.S. Deported Veterans office, adding a call center which is being used for advocacy and fundraising. We are very proud of our Deported Veterans and will continue to support them in any way that we can. Stay tuned for more information on how you or your VFP chapter can help.

## Seeking peace and justice within VFP

"Peace at Home, Peace Abroad" has become a strategic slogan for Veterans For Peace in recent years. We stand with those who are struggling for peace and justice in our own communities—by supporting immigrants, by opposing racism, white supremacy, gun violence

continued on page 4...



**Garrett Reppenhagen**  
Executive Director, VFP

I was nearly killed accidentally on two different occasions by the U.S. military while I was in Iraq.

Once we had a couple of Apache assault helicopters strafe our sniper position. As they passed and turned to engage, we pulled out a reflective cloth panel in time to alert them we were U.S. forces.

On another occasion, a drone operator walked a team of humvees on our observation post when we were watching over a bridge in the Diyala province. They opened fire and we took cover in the irrigation ruts of an orange orchard. We were able to radio our command center to find out who it was and call them off.

It is particularly infuriating when you have to protect yourself against an organization you are dedicating your life to defend. We tried to take as many precautions as we could to avoid this risk, but they still happened.

After realizing that the military in no way cared about me or any of my fellow soldiers, I knew I wanted to spend my life bringing attention to the truth of war.

Coming home, I've been involved in a lot of different organizational efforts to help my fellow veterans and to educate people about the true costs of war. I have realized that we cannot escape the legacy of the military in our efforts to organize here at home. We still struggle with

creating safe spaces for our comrades in the work.

Although we aren't using bombs and weapons of war on each other, we are using harmful actions. When we weaponize words and carelessly use offensive language about one another, we can cause real harm. These incidents are a direct mirror of our time in the service and exist in a society that thrives off of oppression. When miscalculated terms and misplaced phrases injure anyone on our team, our whole community is threatened and hurt, making our mission more difficult, if not impossible.

With proper training and vigilance, we can prevent or correct most accidental discharges. These common errors are often the result of complacency. When we can become as conscious of the terms and pronouns fellow organizers wish to be called by as we are of the orientation of our rifles, we can easily avoid certain interpersonal casualties.

If we cannot have peace in our own community, what justifies our demands to end conflicts abroad? How can VFP delegations claim to be stopping U.S. imperialism on behalf of other cultures when we can't stop dominating behaviors among our own members?

We can sometimes do better to listen more and talk less. Make space for other voices. Keep the selector switch to SAFE and take a moment to orientate to our surroundings. Buddy check our teammates to make sure they are not violating our organization's values and injuring our family. And if they are, call them in!

Trust is vital to effective organizing. Inclusion makes us powerful. Working out true equality will help ensure change that is sustainable.

I know we can create an alternative to all the conditioning we've received that tells us the goal is more important than how we get there. Because if we are leaving fellow members behind, we will never achieve Veterans For Peace's full potential.

My first few months have been a whirlwind, but I can say that I'm excited to see all of the possibilities within Veterans

For Peace. I'm amazed at the scope of work that everyone is engaged in. I was recently in Washington, D.C., advocating for protecting the Arctic against further drilling and military incursion, and to speak out against the proposed Nellis Base expansion in Nevada. Everywhere I went, I saw how powerful and needed the voices of veterans are in speaking out against war.

Our work is vital and I know, together, we can continue the work of Veterans For Peace into the future, by creating an inclusive space that lifts up the voices of *all* veterans working to interrupt the status quo and challenge the foundations that drive our society to war.

## President's Message...from p. 3

and the militarization of the police. We uncover the links between racist violence at home and U.S. wars and militarization around the globe.

"Peace at Home" also can be applied to the internal dynamics in Veterans For Peace. As we attempt to become a more diverse organization, with younger veterans, women veterans, LGBTQ veterans, and veterans of color, we inevitably come up against new challenges and contradictions. We are called upon to alter our internal culture so that all members will feel safe and welcome. Interpersonal issues are never easy, never totally clear. They are inevitably messy and confusing. Some accusations may appear over the top. Some members may react very defensively. Things can easily become over-polarized. Better that we all take a deep breath, reflect, and regroup. We cannot allow VFP to become divided or paralyzed. Yet we all must recognize that change is needed, especially if it is being demanded by the very veterans that will lead VFP into the future. No need to take things personally, people. Let us keep an open mind and trust that we are all here for the right reasons. Let us seize this opportunity to move forward more conscious and more united than ever.

*Wage peace!*

**Gerry Condon**

[gerrycondon@veteransforpeace.org](mailto:gerrycondon@veteransforpeace.org)



## Where do we go from here?

*Dear Veterans For Peace,*

We have concluded our 2019 VFP Convention and appreciate the time, effort, and energy that organizers put into making it a success. We are also preparing our organization to move forward in achieving our mission and goals in 2020. As such, it is appropriate to reflect on where we have been and where we would like to be come the new year. We are also aware that, given the conversations we had during the business meeting and the hard stories members shared about their experiences being members of Veterans For Peace, many of you might have questions about where we are now.

The Board of Directors and members alike have spent a great deal of the past two years addressing the internal health of the organization and establishing a code of conduct, adopted as policy organization-wide in 2018. Truth be told, organizing for peace and social justice can be hard, demanding, frustrating, and at times thankless work. Many of us veterans have mental and physical health impacts from our military service. However, despite all of these stressors, for the most part our members treat one another with respect in the spirit of solidarity and camaraderie. Unfortunately, this is not always the case,

*WE CANNOT DEMAND PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE IN THE WORLD, WITHOUT SEEKING IT IN OUR OWN ORGANIZATION.*

as many of you became intimately aware during this year's business meeting.

There has also been a culture within Veterans For Peace that has been too tolerant of negative behaviors. It is not that people's hearts are not in the right place. We all want to support one another, particularly when we are struggling emotionally. But at times, support for some has come at the expense of others who were on the receiving end of abuse. Let us be clear, we are not talking about punishment, but accountability. We are talking about ensuring that Veterans For Peace is a safe space for all.

Since our convention concluded, several chapters have contacted us to share that they have conducted sensing sessions with their chapters that involved listening to one another share their experiences, good and bad, within Veterans For Peace. Some of us have been shocked to learn how other members have been treated at times. Some have wondered why it has taken so long for us to see the destructive ways in which some members treat one another. Many of us are eager to change the culture within Veterans For Peace to be healthier, kinder, and more tolerant.

Getting down to specifics, in the six weeks since our convention concluded, the Board of Directors has been in contact with the former managing editor of Peace In Our Times (PIOT), Tarak Kauff. Tarak has decided to step down from PIOT to focus on his own health and well-being, though he will remain committed to Veterans For Peace's mission and goals as an organization. The Board of Directors has accepted his decision and our Executive Director, Garrett Reppenhagen, has begun the process of reorganizing the paper.

We are also in the process of reaching out to members who have experienced or witnessed harmful or offensive behavior. Our goal is not to be punitive, and this

was never our goal. But we would like to hear the concerns of our members so that we might take steps to correct past grievances.

For example, in past years several members were purposefully excluded from participating in delegations in an undemocratic manner. The Board of Directors has created a new delegation committee whose purpose is to ensure that delegations adhere to our mission and goals as an organization, as well as our bylaws, and that they are conducted in an open and democratic manner, with all members being given the chance to participate. We are also exploring ways to decolonize our work in Veterans For Peace, delegations included. More information about this process will be shared as we move forward.

Make no mistake, these cultural changes are necessary if we want our beloved organization to continue to grow and thrive as we work for peace and social justice. We cannot demand peace and social justice in the world, without seeking it in our own organization. It has been a hard process, and we are not perfect, but we are working on it.

If you would like to get involved, or have questions or concerns that you would like to convey to the Board of Directors, please email us at [feedback@veteransforpeace.org](mailto:feedback@veteransforpeace.org). We are attempting to clarify communications within the organization and make it easier for members to bring concerns to the Board in a safe and secure way. This email address will be monitored by the Vice President of the organization. The Board of Directors will strive to ensure that all concerns are addressed in a fair, timely, and respectful manner.

Warm wishes for peace and social justice for all,

**Adrienne Kinne**  
Vice President  
Veterans For Peace U.S.



## Introducing Our New VFP Poet Laureate, Jan Barry

Jan Barry is a poet, author and journalist. Appointed to the U.S. Military Academy after a war tour in Viet Nam, he resigned from West Point to become a writer and peace activist. A co-founder of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, his poems and essays on the war appeared in diverse publications, from the *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Times* to *A People and A Nation: A History of the United States*.

Jan's poetry first appeared in *Winning Hearts and Minds: War Poems by Vietnam Veterans*, published by 1st Casualty Press, founded by Jan Barry, Larry Rottmann, and Basil T. Paquet. With W. D. Ehrhart, he compiled a sequel, *Demilitarized Zones: Veterans After Vietnam*. Marshaling writers and artists confronting the threat of nuclear war, he also edited *Peace Is Our Profession: Poems and Passages of War Protest*.

Three decades after dropping out of school to become a teenage soldier, Jan graduated from Ramapo College of New Jersey with a degree in political science. In subsequent years, he's taught journalism and communications courses at Ramapo College, Rutgers University, New York University, and St. Thomas Aquinas College. In recent years, he's been the New Jersey coordinator for Warrior Writers, a nonprofit group that provides writing workshops, readings, and art exhibitions, and publishes anthologies of poetry, prose, and artwork by military veterans and family members.

### THE PEACE MONUMENT

When will people put up statues  
To those who kept the peace? Honor  
Those who sacrificed to stop the slaughter.

When will hometowns list local heroes who refused  
To join the last great lust for killing  
When it swept half the world like a plague?

Where are the statues to those brave souls  
Who kept the peace, however much provoked  
By those who make a profession of destruction?

War monuments do not commemorate any peace  
But that of blasted battlefields, blasted bodies,  
Blasted dreams.

Where are the village green and city park  
Monuments to those who kept the greens?  
To those who kept the parks' peace?

—JAN BARRY

Reprinted from  
*Earth Songs* (2003)

*Sonoma VFP members were among hundreds who came to honor the peace activists whose names were added to the Living Peace Wall (right) in Sebastopol, Calif., this fall.*



### REMAINS

On the outskirts of Tucson  
there were no garbage men.  
Instead, when it was time for a  
dump run,  
you braced yourself  
rifle-steeled yourself  
for a piece of work.

Hoisting the remains of last  
months's chicken,  
the maggots brought the smell  
of war  
jerked you to a halt,  
brought you to your knees,  
knocked you to the ground.

In Viet Nam you hoisted the  
remains  
of last month's victims,  
and swore you'd never take  
another order.  
I hadn't imagined  
what might be a soldier's duty

in the remains of rice fields and  
burned out jungles.  
I hadn't imagined  
what else might happen,  
that getting out alive could be  
less than enough.  
Imagined the war was over  
Done with.

What can remain of a marriage  
when the smell of death crawls  
Orange in your skin  
ever ready to erupt,  
screams in the night  
fist through the door,  
sobs with the garbage  
—or the news?

In a marriage always more gear  
to carry  
more questions to ask,  
more understanding,  
more help.

More than love.  
Oh yes, we did "make love"  
(a circle of rainbow lights tender  
on scars)  
yet couldn't make "not war"  
(our flares only broke the sweet  
night and exposed the  
wounded ground)

I wanted to be a partner,  
but can anyone ever be more  
than the buddy  
who lived through hell  
with you,  
who gave his life for you,  
who you tried to save.  
My rival hidden, with other  
secrets,  
like the tortured buzzed scalp  
under your long hair,  
the scars beneath your beard,  
the panic behind a quiet man,  
admired, but unknown.

The war continued  
long after  
the protestors stopped,  
long after we,  
fatigued,  
stopped  
trying.

And every day new orders are  
given  
and fresh recruits try to  
make it stop,  
still another Viet Nam  
another war  
against peace,  
against love  
against every two of us,  
abroad  
and back home.

—KAREN BROWN

This poem won first prize in the Monterey County Free Libraries 2019 Veterans Poetry Contest, which is open to veterans and their families. Karen Brown is a librarian, writer of poetry and memoir, and a supporter of Monterey VFP Chapter 46.

## Earth Songs II Poems of Love, Loss and Life

By Jan Barry, 2018 (lulu.com)

Reviewed by W. D. Ehrhart

If Veterans for Peace were reconstituted as Veteran Poets for Peace, Jan Barry would be its hereditary king, prime minister by acclamation, and president for life. Just consider the titles of the anthologies he has edited or co-edited: *Winning Hearts and Minds*, *Demilitarized Zones*, *Peace Is Our Profession*, and most recently *Sound Off*. His own collections include *War Baby*, *Veterans Day*, *Earth Songs*, and *Life After War & Other Poems*. And now comes *Earth Songs II*, a compilation of new work written in the past fifteen years.

I readily admit that I am not exactly an impartial critic. I've known Barry for forty-seven years, and he has been one of the major influences in my life. We first met when he was editing *Winning Hearts and Minds* with Larry Rottmann and Basil Paquet back in 1972. I was trying, without much success, to cope with the flood of emotions coursing through me in the wake of my encounter with the American War in Viet Nam. A few years later, he and I co-edited *Demilitarized Zones* together, and it was during those years—1975 and 1976—that Barry showed me how to direct my rage and confusion into constructive channels through poetry and literature.

He believed then in the power of the word, and all these years later he still does. His refusal to give in to despair, his fundamental belief in the goodness of humanity, and his willingness to keep moving forward in spite of the obstacles life throws in his path are nothing short of astounding. And he has once again demonstrated all these qualities in the 105 poems collected in this new volume.

The poems themselves range widely, touching on issues of war and peace, the debilitating impact of combat on the human spirit, aging parents, the devastating

loss of his wife of decades, trying to date again, his own advancing age, and the rejuvenating power of nature.

Think about this description of our current hyper-militarized culture the next time you're watching an NFL game and they cover the whole field with an American flag while the 82nd Airborne Division chorus sings the national anthem:

**Our flag flapping, sword saluting  
Sworn to secrecy  
Stiff upper lip, suck it up  
He-man, iron man military mindset  
("Singing Out")**

Or these last few stanzas from "Dummies Guide to Chemical Warfare":

**Spewing arsenals of chemical weapons—  
Chlorine, mustard gas, phosgene, sarin,  
A-bombs, H-bombs, depleted uranium**

**'Til we run out of cutesy mots  
And slam into S for suicide—  
And that's all she wrote.**

Some of the most heartbreaking poems deal with the loss of his wife Paula. Just when you think he's going to be okay, the poem "Bad Day Blues" ending:

**Having a bad day—  
Then a cat meows,  
Wanting a companion—  
Ah, come here**

The very next poem, "Death Is Never Done," concludes:

**The cat disappeared  
One night—  
Like your embrace,  
Your face, your light.**

Still, that refusal to give in or give up is captured in "Alone":

**Learning to be alone,  
Sleep alone, eat alone,  
Dream alone.  
On my own.**

**You're surely gone,  
Can't help me carry on.  
Have to find  
Some other sign.**

Some of the most poignant poems are about his parents, who lived long lives, were married seventy years, and died within a year of each other. Other poems explore an uncle killed in a dive bomber in the World War II Pacific ("the tail gunner jumping / from the rear seat engulfed in fire"), the encroachment of "civilization" on the natural world ("the silence / Of this forty mile lake is shattered / By shore to shore boats, / Door to door cottages, / Year round houses"), and the refusal of nature to give in to that encroachment:

#### SUMMER WILDFLOWERS

**Flaming fields of purple loose strife  
Flicker along country highways  
Beside gleaming epaulets of golden rod  
Twirling in stride with fluttering  
Scarfs of Queen Anne's lace  
And shimmering sky blue  
Clusters of chicory.**

Few poets have so consistently insisted that peace is possible and poetry matters. In "Gold Star Grandson," Barry sums up his life's work in a single stanza:

**So I went off to war  
And when I came home  
Transformed silences  
That replaced the missing  
Into poetry  
And sought to tell  
Stories of fallen sons  
Whose voices were stilled.**

The quiet strength of Barry's voice and the simple decency of his vision are blessings to anyone who cares about the world we live in and the future we will leave to coming generations. Here is "Memorial Highways" in its entirety:

**There's a memorial highway  
For veterans of every major war—  
Can you imagine  
A memorial highway  
For peace treaties—  
Peace served  
And died, too.**

W. D. "Bill" Ehrhart is a member of VFP Philadelphia Chapter 31 and editor-at-large of the VFP Newsletter.

# VFP CONVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

THE PHOTOS IN THIS SPREAD WERE CAPTURED BY MIKE S. JAMES. READ MIKE'S STORY ON PAGE 24.



SATURDAY AFTERNOON GAZA FREEDOM FLOTILLA ORGANIZED BY ANN WRIGHT & FRIENDS • RIVERFRONT PARK ALONG THE SPOKANE RIVER

# AUGUST 2019 • SPOKANE, WA

FIND MORE CONVENTION PHOTOS, BY ELLEN DAVIDSON, AT [STOPTHESEWARS.ORG/ELLEN-DAVIDSON/](http://STOPTHESEWARS.ORG/ELLEN-DAVIDSON/).



## Standing in solidarity with protectors of Mauna Kea

On July 30, 2019, Veterans For Peace delegates visited Mauna Kea, where they were honored to meet with the elders circle and present the statement below along with a VFP flag.

To the Kanaka Maoli Elders,

Warm greetings from Veterans For Peace. We are an international organization in nine countries for military veterans who are now organizing for peace, not war. We are proud to stand in solidarity with Kanaka Maoli in the protection of your sacred mountain, Mauna a Wakea.

In the traditions of Kahoolawe and Makua Valley and the ongoing pursuit for the protection of Pohakuloa, your stand at Mauna Kea is an event of epic proportions.

Veterans For Peace has stood with Native Americans at Standing Rock and we have sent delegations to Okinawa, Jeju Island (South Korea), Palestine, and Ferguson (Missouri) in solidarity with those challenging militarism.

We are well aware of the United States' history of destroying indigenous lands. As [recovering] veterans, we know it is our duty to stand in opposition to militarism. It is shameful that our military is desecrating ancestral land. Veterans For Peace condemns these atrocities against the Hawaiian people.

We are honored to be welcoming Ruth Aloua, President of Malu 'Aina, to our annual convention this August. The theme of our convention in Spokane, Washington is "Sacred Lands, Sacred Lives: Peace Knows No Borders." We are looking forward to bringing attention to the ongoing resistance at Mauna Kea and we know we will have much to learn from Ruth's story.

Veterans For Peace anti-nuclear sailing ship, the historic Golden Rule, will arrive in Hilo harbor this week as part of the first leg of a voyage that will take her to the Marshall Islands in December 2019, Guam, Saipan, Pagan, Okinawa and finally Hiroshima, Japan by August 6, 2020 for the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the U.S. atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



With Ruth Aloua (behind journalist, at left), Veterans For Peace delegates Helen Jaccard, Gerry Condon, and Ann Wright were honored to present a VFP flag to the elders circle of the protectors of Mauna Kea.

We are sailing for a nuclear-free world and a peaceful, sustainable future. During our Pacific voyage we will highlight the destructive effects of militarism on Indigenous rights and the environment in the Pacific islands.

We do not believe it is an accident that the Golden Rule is arriving to the Big Island of Hawai'i at the very time of the profound Hawai'ian resistance to the TMT construction of a huge telescope on your sacred mountain, Mauna Kea. We are here to witness your courageous resistance and will continue to spread the news to Veterans For Peace members in the U.S. and around the world.

Again, Veterans For Peace is honored to stand with the Kia'i of Mauna a Wakea and in support of the rights of Indigenous peoples everywhere.

Thank you for your courage, which greatly inspires us all! We look forward to finding more ways to follow your inspirational resistance.

## Wounded Knee petition: We say, "Remove the Stain"

On June 25th, legislation was introduced calling for the U.S. to formally rescind the Medals of Honor that were awarded to 20 U.S. cavalry troopers after the Wounded Knee Massacre.

The National Congress of American Indians have long condemned the massacre and have advocated for the rescinding of the Medals. In 2001, the United States Congress also officially changed the name of the Wounded Knee Battle to the Wounded Knee Massacre. However, they did not rescind the medals or compensate the victims.

Representative Denny Heck along with Rep. Deb Haaland and Rep. Paul Cook have introduced the "Remove the Stain Act" H.R. 3467, which would retroactively rescind the 20 Medal of Honor medals they issues to the cavalry troopers who participated in the massacre.

Sign the petition! <<http://bit.ly/RemoveTheStain>>.

## Report from the Sacred Black Hills — Paha Sapa

On August 22–25, 2019, the *InterNātional Initiative for Transformative Collaboration (INITC) and Stories and Songs of the People* co-presented a *GrassRoots Gathering for the Generations to Come in the Sacred Black Hills (or Paha Sapa in the Lakota language)*. Believed to be the center of their universe, where Lakota culture began, the sacred Black Hills are considered home by the seven Lakota Sioux tribes. Several VFP members (non-Native) who attended the gathering, billed as an "Inter-cultural, Inter-Faith Gathering for all Peoples of all Nations—Friends, Allies and Relatives," filed the following reports. —Ed.

WHEN WE GET TOGETHER, THERE  
IS TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE  
ENERGY AND THAT GIVES US  
HOPE FOR A GOOD FUTURE.

### Austin Ringelstein:

The five days in the Black Hills were outstanding and transformative. So many good things came out of the gatherings of over 100 people of all colors of the medicine wheel—black, red, yellow, and white. At one point, a Lakota elder gathered about 50 of us in a room and conducted a trauma and healing session in which each of us gave testimony about the source of our personal trauma. By the end of the night, almost every adult in the room was shedding tears and we all felt like family who had gone a little further down the road together. This was apropos to the message another elder had stated earlier, "There will be peace on earth. It will take a while."

Also in attendance were some of the indigenous youth were who traveled to the Vatican in 2018 to ask the pope to revoke the Papal Bulls and Doctrine of Discovery, the historical bases of colonialism and the attempted erasure of many indigenous peoples around the world. They were the first youth delegation ever to speak with the Vatican about these things, and they practiced conflict resolution using spirituality and ceremonies. They asked the Vatican, "Don't just listen to and hear us, feel us."

The panel, led by a 20-year-old Lakota woman who gave a powerful declaration that her generation will solve these problems, received a thunderous standing ovation from our audience. Others spoke about the state of the world and how "the earth, rock, and stone are telling us things we need to know... It's an exciting time to be alive. Young people are so awake."

I had a great conversation recently with VFP member named Matt about the transformative power of such gatherings. Matt, who helped me haul a 4,000-pound generator to and from the gathering, talked about our responsibility, as white males

of privilege, to "work alongside people [especially traditionally marginalized communities] and not in front of them." For example, we can use our positions of privilege to help raise up and empower communities by carrying some of the burden on our shoulders. The founder of the Two Spirits Camp at Oceti Sakowin, gave a riveting talk about how she inspired Jane Fonda to do just that. Matt and I also discussed how VFP can be better allies, an ongoing and dynamic question that we continue to explore.

At the gathering, a Lakota elder said, "It is an exciting time to be alive," and I agree. Because when we get together there is truly transformative energy and that gives us hope for a good future. Special thanks to VFP members Garrett, Matt, and David for facilitating the movement of the generator for this important gathering, so that the events could take place in their full transformative-power capacity.

OUR INTERNĀTIONAL, NATIVE-LED  
GATHERING WAS A CONTINUATION  
OF THE DECOLONIZING PROCESS  
OF MIND, HEART, BODY, AND  
SPIRIT GOING ON SINCE OCETI.

### David Cooley:

This story didn't begin or end in August. Nor did it begin on that early December morning in '16 driving down that winding, backlogged road to the Oceti Sakowin camp at Standing Rock, seeing with eyes that said, you're right where you are supposed to be, a savior to none but being present and at service to the Native people of this land and on their land, as a white colonizing settler. We white, black, and yellow people have to own that as a basis for potential individual and organizational growth, collaboration, and service.

Our InterNātional, Native-led gathering was a continuation of the decolonizing process of mind, heart, body, and spirit going on since Oceti. It was focused on the rights of the earth and all living and existing on it. The heartening thing is, this gathering was not alone. Simultaneously, in Tamera, Portugal, was a second gathering attended by Lakota elder and people from Europe, India, Columbia, Brazil, New Zealand, Portugal, Africa, the Middle East and more. There was also a gathering in Palestine.

In this country, Veterans For Peace have been friends and allies in this process, along with many in the Unitarian-Universalist community. Several of our members worked in close collaboration with VFP Executive Director Garret Reppenhagen to secure the acquisition and transport of a specialized generator

*continued on page 13...*

## The Proud Legacy of GI Resistance

by Maj. Danny Sjrursen, USA (ret.)

As I'm sure many VFP members know and feel, antiwar dissent can be a lonely endeavor. In a society infused with militarism, with a public often gripped by apathy and a government intent on squashing even peaceful opposition, antiwar activists, even we veterans, can feel quite alone. But we are not. We have not only each other, but a proud legacy of GI resistance throughout the centuries to call upon for support in times of need.



Danny Sjrursen shared his own resistance story during the GI Resistance Mini Plenary at the 2019 VFP convention.

Few Americans know, have read, or been taught about this discomfiting (for the government) legacy, of course. That's because much of this history has been deliberately suppressed by the powers that be, from Washington to state houses to local school boards.

Nonetheless, it is a story that must be learned, told, spread, and shared. The health of our republic demands it. And who better to impart the courageous tales of GI resistance than the veterans of today?

To start, let us briefly survey the history of GI resistance since the founding of the United States as a nation. While it is important to realize the U.S. was founded on a legacy of genocide and displacement of Native peoples, it is also

important to recognize that many who were called into service were repulsed by and pushed back against the immorality and social injustices of empire.

As early as the Revolutionary War, Connecticut and New Jersey regiments in General George Washington's Continental Army mutinied on the grounds of unpaid benefits, poor provisions, and weak officer leadership. At one point, furious mutineer regiments—often led by elected enlisted men—marched on the Continental Congress in Philadelphia and successfully demanded backpay. Washington's response was to have many of the “ringleaders” shot.

In the Mexican War, an Irish-American unit switched sides and fought for Mexico against what was clearly an aggressive Anglo invasion and land grab. Those captured from the self-declared “St. Patrick's Battalion” were also executed, but not before they'd successfully exposed American brutality and conquest. Though few actually resigned, many later prominent Civil War generals and captains publicly expressed their own disenchantment with the invasion of America's sovereign neighbor. Indeed, though few remember this aspect of his career, future President Ulysses S. Grant stated, “I do not think there was ever a more wicked war than that waged by the United States on Mexico. I thought so at the time, when I was a youngster, only I had not moral courage enough to resign.”

During America's century-long Indian Wars, some U.S. Army officers and soldiers found the conduct of the government abhorrent. Indeed, some historians, such as Robert Utley, have argued that though overall U.S. Army actions against Native Americans were often brutal, there were indeed instances when sympathetic army leaders and units actually stepped in to temporarily halt settler encroachment on Indian lands and, counterintuitively, act as “the only friends the tribes had” in those moments.

In World War I, upwards of 330,000 Americans officially evaded the draft,

many of them deserters unconvinced that war with Germany was necessary, or that the U.S. should enter the maelstrom on behalf of the British, French, and Russian empires in a war that was truly one of empire versus empire, rather than the official American story of a “war for democracy.” Thousands of war objectors, many of them veterans, were held in what were termed, in Orwellian fashion, “Conscientious Objector Prison Camps.” When socialist leader Eugene Debs earned a draconian 10-year federal prison term for supporting such war and draft resisters, he famously (and beautifully) announced at his sentencing: “Your Honor, years ago I recognized my kinship with all living beings, and I made up my mind then that I was not one bit better than the meanest on earth. I said then, and I say now, that while there is a lower class, I am in it; and while there is a criminal element, I am of it; and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free.”

Between the world wars, many famous literary figures such as F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway—themselves World War I veterans—went into self-imposed exile in Paris partly due to dissatisfaction with the war and a sense of alienation from their country. This “Lost Generation” of American writers penned some of the more consequential novels in American history. More prominently, the most decorated Marine Corps General in the military, Smedley Butler, a two-time Medal of Honor recipient, after he retired, wrote a vicious antiwar tract titled *War is a Racket*, and went on national speaking tours decrying America's venal, corporate-backed military interventions in Central and South America. In one resonant speech, he declared, “I spent thirty-three years and four months in active military service as a member of this country's most agile military force, the Marine Corps. I served in all commissioned ranks from Second Lieutenant to Major-General. And during that period, I spent most of my time being a high-class muscle-man for

*continued on next page...*

## Sacred Black Hills ...from p. 11

to run sound equipment. Special thanks are in order to the VFP brothers and sisters of Colorado for their financial generosity and generosity of heart that made this particular effort come together. Deep gratitude is offered to all involved in rallying support for the INITC-sponsored gathering.

A place has been made to exist for the possibility of collaborative service for and with the national organization of Native veterans in the U.S., should they have need of our service. This could be called on at any time or never, but, it exists. Native veterans, not unlike dominant-culture VFP veterans, may have little reason to trust the government, or us for that matter. Trust is built by showing up and being there in a good way, not “your way.” As it is said, “it is not what you do, but how you do it” that matters.

My hope is that more VFP members show up next time around. It could transform the culture of our organization positively. Hearing about the discussions that took place at this year's VFP convention, I think the seven values of INITC would be of value to VFP, aiding a paradigm shift within the organization locally and nationally. I recognize shifts don't happen overnight, but with intention and good will, some pace could be created. Being in this place for two-plus years has been and is transformative. I recommend investigating two websites thoroughly—[initc.net](http://initc.net) and [storiesandsongs.org](http://storiesandsongs.org)—to gain a sense of how it all operates. (At the latter site, click on “presenters” to see a first-name listing.)

Lastly, I want to suggest a VFP Circle be created based on INITC that down the road could be joined by our Native brothers

## GI Resistance ...from p. 12

Big Business, for Wall Street and for the Bankers. In short, I was a racketeer, a gangster for capitalism.”

The ill-advised, illegal, and immoral Vietnam War produced perhaps the golden age of GI resistance, a living history experienced and contributed to by many VFP members alive today. When discussing the reasons for the end of that war, few historians or pundits admit to the seminal role of internal military dissent and opposition. Thousands of aggressive officers were “fragged,” entire units refused to patrol outside the gates of their bases, and grassroots, antiwar, GI newspapers flourished both in the States and in country. Thousands of other veterans joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW), infused protests, lobbied Congress at the famed “Winter

Soldier” hearings, and threw their medals over the White House fence in an act of powerful defiance. With the U.S. military in Viet Nam on the verge of collapse and mutiny, GI dissenters contributed mightily to the final end of that war.

Without a draft in place to motivate large-scale citizen resistance to America's now ongoing, really forever, wars on “terror,” the antiwar movement may appear weak. In one sense it is, in comparison to the Viet Nam era. That said, there remain thousands of vets opposed to these wars, including VFP members, About Face (formerly Iraq Veterans Against the War) members, and plenty of unaffiliated dissenting veterans. It remains incumbent on us to provide a home, a “landing pad,” a platform for a new generation of antiwar vets with all the power, credibility, and moral righteousness of those brave GI

and sisters. A circle is a place where the gradual shedding of a colonized mind begins, and a paradigm shift becomes possible. I welcome interested members to contact me, David Cooley, at [dacooley@usinternet.com](mailto:dacooley@usinternet.com).

## November 15–17 • Bridging the Past and Present: SOA Watch Gathering at the Gates of Fort Benning, Georgia

School of the Americas (SOA)-trained military personnel led the massacre of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter, in El Salvador, almost 30 years ago. Despite the movement that arose, led by Roy Bourgeois to “**Shut Down SOA!**” and despite its name change (WHINSEC), the school continues to train foreign military and police personnel, and to militarize our borders.

Commemorative events will begin with a candlelight vigil to mark the tragedy of 30 years ago, at the south entrance gates of Fort Benning at 7:00pm. On Saturday, at the Bibb Mill Event Center (3715 First Ave, Columbus, GA) two panels—one exploring the past, present, and future of SOAW, and one focused on positive change-makers in these difficult times—will be interspersed with music and honoring of the movement's Prisoners of Conscience. VFP will also gather for an informal meeting at some point. The Sunday schedule begins with an early walk to the gates led by Veterans For Peace and Peace Pagoda Buddhists to protest the militarization of ICE, to be followed by the closing program and procession at 10:00am. More info at [soaw.org](http://soaw.org).

resisters who came before them. We are one great line in what is a proud, and highly necessary, historical legacy of veteran resistance. It is time to take up that challenge and continue our shared struggle.

Danny Sjrursen is a retired U.S. Army officer, Veterans For Peace member, and regular contributor to various publications. His work has appeared in the L.A. Times, The Nation, Huff Post, The Hill, Salon, Truthdig, Tom Dispatch, among other publications. He served combat tours with reconnaissance units in Iraq and Afghanistan and later taught history at his alma mater, West Point. He is the author of a memoir and critical analysis of the Iraq War, *Ghostriders of Baghdad: Soldiers, Civilians, and the Myth of the Surge*. Follow him on Twitter at [@SkepticalVet](https://twitter.com/SkepticalVet). [©2019 Danny Sjrursen]

# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

## #001 – PORTLAND, ME

The Tom Sturtevant Chapter is working to pass a law similar to Maryland's "The Every Student Succeeds Act." Federal law requires high schools to release student names and contact information to military recruiters. This law would also require them to notify parents of their right to opt out, by putting the opt-out question on the emergency contact form sent to all parents. Additionally, schools would be required to select release option 8 for ASVAB tests, ensuring students' scores will not be sent to recruiters by anyone but the students themselves.

We again tabled at the annual Common Ground Country Fair September 20–22, an event that draws upwards of 60,000 people. We set up in the Social Action tent under the theme "War Conversion," emphasizing actions at Bath Iron Works to stop the production of Navy destroyers. We had new Rob Shetlerly "Americans Who Tell the Truth" calendars to sell and give away free to teachers, along with lots of VFP stuff. Kids got to make peace buttons with our magic button-making machine.

Doug Rawlings read poetry at opening receptions for Ron Carver's amazing *Waging Peace in Viet Nam* exhibit in New Bedford and Boston, Massachusetts. The photo exhibit of GI resistance started out in Viet Nam, and was on display at the VFP convention in Spokane.

Chapter members continue to work with Moms Demand Action to rid our culture of assault weapons. We are also supporting student-led climate strike actions.

Doug Rawlings

## #010 – ALBANY, NY

The Tom Paine Chapter has been busy! Our chapter supports the Kateri Peace Conference in Fonda, New York. This year's theme was "Defying Extinction: Nurturing a Garden of Resilience in the Face of Climate Crisis," and the conference was well attended. It featured Dahr Jamail, author of *The End of Ice: Bearing Witness and Finding Meaning in the Path of Climate Disruption*. The two-day conference focused on our need to dramatically alter our consumption of fossil fuels and reduce war and militarism or face extinction in the not-too-distant future. Jamail's book is highly recommended and has received excellent reviews.

The *Daily Gazette* published a letter written by VFP member John Amidon under the title "Don't be confused about climate change," which read, in part, "Being a USMC veteran, I wondered what the U.S. military is doing to prepare for climate change. Online, I soon found 'A War Plan Orange for Climate Change,' by Commander T. McGeehan from the U.S. Naval Institute. One chilling quote from this report reads, 'Rising global temperatures, changing precipitation patterns, climbing sea levels and more extreme weather events will intensify the challenges of global instability, hunger, poverty and conflict.'" We all need to address climate disruption immediately.

John Amidon

## #021 – NORTHERN NEW JERSEY

As always, Chapter 21 had a busy summer. On June 23, we joined with friends and allies in the Filipino community and took part in an anti-imperialist/pro-migrant contingent at the annual parade and festival organized by that community in Jersey City. The next day we made our way to Palisades Park to mark the 69th anniversary of the start of the Korean War with an information table in the Korean community. The following month, on July 27, we marked the 66th anniversary of the signing of the Korea Armistice Agreement with an information table in the heart of Koreatown in New York City.

We had a good turnout at the 4th of July parade in Teaneck, as part of a contingent of progressive organizations. On August 3, we got together with NYC Chapter 34 at what has become our annual barbecue; we always look forward to this event as it gives us an opportunity to share projects and activities with our NYC brothers and sisters.

On August 27, two of our chapter members, Soobok Kim and James Yee, met with U.S. Congressperson Bill Pascrell, Jr. (D-9th CD) to advocate for the signing of a peace treaty with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to finally end the Korean War.

Wendy Fisher

## #023 – ROCHESTER, NY



VFP Chapter 23 members at Hiroshima/Nagasaki Memorial vigil in Avon, New York on August 6, 2019. L to R: Marybeth Knowles, Rev. James Swarts, Douglas Ryder (Ch. 157, North Carolina), Jack Spula, Roger Griswold, Dr. Arnold Matlin, Lew Montemaggi. [Photo: James Swarts]

In June, Chapter 23 Treasurer and retired Army veteran Marybeth Knowles represented our chapter at an Impeach Trump vigil in Geneseo, New York, where she proudly flew the VFP flag while standing her ground against verbal confrontation by Trump-supporting veterans.

In July, Chapter 23 members participated in a very large, well attended Lights For Liberty vigil in Rochester, New York. Our table of VFP literature and publications drew a lot of interest and positive support.



VFP Chapter 34's Susan Schnall and Gerry Hassett (left and right) stop to admire rainbow-sweatered "Grumpy," who traveled with Judy Homanich (center) from Binghamton to New York City for the Reclaim Pride Queer Liberation March on June 30, 2019. [Photo: Ellen Davidson]

August was a busy month for Chapter 23. It kicked off with the second annual picnic hosted by William and Marilyn Fisher at their residence.

On August 6, chapter members joined with Genesee Valley Citizens for Peace (GVCP) for the Hiroshima/Nagasaki remembrance vigil held in Avon, New York. While this was the 45th year GVCP has held their vigil, they reported this was the largest one ever held, thanks to VFP and two other groups that joined the vigil. Chapter 23 President Rev. James Swarts was interviewed by local media and ended up being featured in a front-page article in the *Livingston County News*, as well as in an online video of the vigil.

James Swarts

## #025 – SOUTHERN WISCONSIN

Chapter 25 had a behind-the-scenes summer with activity focused on laying the groundwork for peace and supporting other organizations in our area in their peace and justice efforts. Steve Books spearheads our outreach efforts in tabling. Once again, he reached out to the general public through an informational table at the main farmers market, which attracts hundreds of people every Saturday morning from spring to fall. Members also staffed tables at the Willy Street Fair and at Laborfest.

Chapter 25 joined Physicians for Social Responsibility for the annual Lanterns for Peace on Hiroshima/Nagasaki Day.

Member Phil Fransen continues to be our representative with the social justice group, United Against Hate.

A critical issue facing our area is the Air National Guard decision to station F-35 fighters at our local military base, Truax Field. Brad Geyer has been instrumental in helping our chapter understand the crux of community opposition, which revolves around water quality and noise levels for homes surrounding

the base. Members have petitioned lawmakers from city councilors to senators, taken part in public hearings, and joined the Safe Water Clean Skies group in protest. Member John Fournelle wrote an excellent letter to the editor on the subject.

Fran Wiedenhoef

## #034 – NEW YORK CITY

Chapter 34 is active with Save Our VA (SOVA), Move the Money, Save Yemen, and Agent Orange Campaigns.

Meeting speakers this summer included Michael Kramer, President of Northern New Jersey Chapter 21, talking about the 1965 U.S. Invasion of Dominican Republic, and Wendy Fisher, talking about Jewish Voice for Peace.

Summer events included a June 5th SOVA demo; June 23rd celebration of Okinawa's Memorial Day; June 30th Reclaim Pride March; July 27th peace tabling on 66th anniversary of Korean War Armistice Agreement; and the August 5th Hiroshima-Nagasaki commemoration at Japanese Consulate. VFP members marched in the NYC Labor Day Parade with a SOVA message.

Chapter 34 has supported Ken Mayers and Tarak Kauff, arrested at Shannon Airport when they walked onto a runway carrying a banner protesting U.S. violation of Irish Neutrality, with demos at the Irish Consulate, demanding that they be permitted to return home, pending trial.

Susan Schnall, Skip Delano, and Ellen Davidson attended the VFP convention in Spokane, Washington, conducting workshops on Agent Orange, VA Privatization, and GI Resistance (Viet Nam Full Disclosure). Susan spoke at the *Waging Peace in Viet Nam* exhibit openings in Massachusetts and D.C.

We joined the September 20–23 People's Climate Strike and International Day of Peace and look forward to an October 7th Drone Protest at the U.N.

Find us on Facebook @veteransforpeacenyc034.

Bob Keilbach



The indefatigable Hollis Higgins, lead organizer from Chapter 35, welcomes convention attendees to Spokane with open arms. [Photo: Ellen Davidson]

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# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

## #035 – SPOKANE, WA

The Spokane chapter is still in Recovery and Gratitude Mode after experiencing the exhilaration of hosting the 2019 National VFP Convention. Many helpers created a container that held some amazing ideas and possibilities, some of which grew beyond our expectations into exotic creations! Big shout out to Ann Wright for the Gaza Freedom Flotilla in Riverfront Park! And to Seattle Chapter 92 for much-appreciated financial backing. Tacoma Chapter 134's installation of Arlington Northwest was another over-the-top event.

Before heading into a fall retreat for reorganizing and re-focusing, we accepted the invitation to join the Student Climate Strike on September 20, with the Sunrise Movement and Spokane 350. Our lifestyles must become Fossil Free immediately!

The fantastic opening of Ron Carver's *Waging Peace in Viet Nam* exhibit held in Spokane at the start of the convention is the way all conventions should begin; we plan to support a reading of the companion book at our own independent Aunties Bookstore soon.

Meanwhile, Operation Mobility Guardian is taking place at nearby Fairchild AFB. War planes have been gathering since September 9. The expense and the pollution are unacceptable. And the American Redoubt is strapping up, locking, and loading in a five-state area.

Care 4 Peace 4 All!

Hollis Higgins

## #042 – CONNECTICUT



July 4, 2019—Veterans For Peace Connecticut Chapter 42 members march in the Boom Box Parade in Willimantic, Connecticut.

In May, members went down to the Connecticut Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, and helped protest the appearance of John Bolton of the NSA when he addressed the graduates there.

On the 4th of July, VFP members and supporters marched in the annual Willimantic, Connecticut, Boom Box parade behind a 20-foot banner donated by VFP member Bill Potvin that reads, "NO MORE WARS FOR PROFIT," and includes the VFP Chapter 42 Logo.

On September 21, Chapter 42 members gathered in West Hartford to observe UN International Peace Day. The organizing group, Campaign Non Violence, has been supported by Rev. John Dear, a member of VFP's Board of Advisors.

Dave Ionno and Steve Fournier continue to produce their Hartford Public Access TV show, *Voices of Veterans*.

Jim Brasile

## #046 – MONTEREY, CA

VFP Chapter 46 has been achieving, and exceeding, established goals. This quarter we co-sponsored five events with local peace coalition organizations and led two events to raise awareness about the Venezuelan crisis.

We re-launched our farmers market program over the summer, which has helped grow our contact list. Every Tuesday we set up a table at the local farmers market's "free speech zone" for three hours. The people and tourists of Monterey are big supporters of our organization. We influence at least 300–400 people weekly at this event.

Finally, Justin attended a local town-hall event with our local House Representative, Jimmy Panetta. Justin commented about a series of important issues that were fresh on his mind from the convention, which included femicide by returning veterans [alarmingly high numbers of women spouses killed by service members that returned from war], saving our VA (we have a VA facility 10 miles down the road), and the Venezuelan crisis. He finished by informing the congressman about veterans being deported, and asked what he was going to do about it. The audience was shocked to hear the facts, and the congressmen responded positively. Luckily, Mr. Panetta falls on our side of that issue and is an ally for the deported veterans project.

Justin Loza

## #055 – SANTA FE, NM

The Joan Duffy Chapter continues to prepare for the 2020 National VFP Convention to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, in collaboration with the Albuquerque chapter. We are coordinating with another peace organization that is setting up for a demonstration at Los Alamos in the same timeframe as our convention to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima.

We have contacted a local movie theater to show the documentary, *An Endless War: Getting Out of Afghanistan*, presently scheduled to run on October 23.

We will walk in the Armistice Day Parade here in Santa Fe, where we have always been well received!

We continue to hold regular street vigils on the corner of St. Francis Drive and Cerrillos Road in Santa Fe. Many thanks to our associate members who provide a great deal of help to make this happen.

Ruth Sabiers and French Leger



Green Mountain Chapter members displayed their 50-foot-long "Budget Banner" in a September 6th rally to protest the F-35. The banner uses different colors to represent proportionally the 2019 budgets for the Department of Defense, the Veterans Administration, and the State Department. The budget for restoration of damages to communities and environment is minuscule in comparison (too small to show).

## #057 – GREEN MOUNTAIN, VT

Summer activities of Will Miller Green Mountain Chapter 57 consisted of participating in three parades with seven signs reading, "Stop the U.S. Wars in: Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Libya, Yemen, Somalia, and Niger." We marched with these signs in the Montpelier and Warren 4th of July parades, and in the Northfield Labor Day parade, where we march behind 1200-plus military cadets from Norwich University.

Along with 35 other cosponsoring organizations, Chapter 57 participated in a protest rally in Burlington, Vermont, where F-35s are to be based starting this month. Several speakers spoke out against the detrimental local impacts of the basing (health-threatening noise, risk of accidents, potential target of the area by enemy strikes due to the nuclear capability of the F-35). I spoke out against the whole F-35 program as it promotes an escalation in militarization around the world. The Department of Defense's Foreign Military Sales Program is aggressively marketing the F-35 around the world, having sold and/or established contracts with nine countries, with potential sales to eight other countries. I argued that the trillions of dollars wasted on F-35s would better be used to cope with the climate crisis.

Richard Czaplinski

## #069 – SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Chapter 69 member Paul Cox is the recipient of The Howard Zinn Lifetime Achievement Award for 2019, awarded during the VFP convention in Spokane, Washington. The award is to recognize a person who has made significant and outstanding contributions to the cause of peace, and made exceptional efforts to increase public awareness of the cost of war.

Paul is a founding member of Veterans Speakers Alliance in San Francisco. He was the chief organizer of VFP Chapter 69. He is one of a few people who have worked to put together the annual Viet Nam Tour hosted by Chapter 160. He is president of Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute. He is on the Board of Directors of Swords To Plowshares. He is chairman of the San Francisco War Memorial Commission. He is a member of the Agent Orange Relief and Responsibility campaign. He is a civil engineer with an unsurpassed capacity for detail and quick solutions. He is compassionate and helpful and does not hesitate to go out of his way for another person regardless of their station in life.

Here's to Paul Cox!

Denny Riley



Chapter 69's award-winning Paul Cox: A jolly good fellow!  
[Photo: Mike S. James]

## #071 – SONOMA COUNTY, CA

The Sonoma County VFP Chapter 71 information booth occupied a prominent spot in Petaluma's Walnut Park at the 22nd Progressive Festival. Supplying printed material and talking to many of the 500 in attendance were Chapter 71 President Fred Ptucha, Dominick Favuzzi, Bob Bulwa, and Terry McNeill. The main topics of interest for those who visited the booth were the war economy and how it is affecting North Bay residents, the

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# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

Chapter 71, Sonoma County, CA, continued...



Chapter 71 members Dominick Favuzzi and Fred Ptucha meet the public at the Progressive Festival in Petaluma, California, on Aug. 25.

Afghan war in its 17th year, and how military spending could influence the 2020 elections.

Sonoma Chapter members participated in a Living Peace Wall ceremony in Sebastopol, California, on September 7, and in Santa Rosa events organized as part of the worldwide Strike for Climate Action on September 20. In the works is a presentation and panel for students at a Santa Rosa middle school concerning the impact of continual wars on America's youth.

Terry McNeill

## #089 – MIDDLE TENNESSEE

Chapter 89's weekly show, *Veterans For Peace Radio Hour*, has been in nonstop mode in recent months, providing our critique on events like Memorial Day, with its parades and sales, the hype around the 75th anniversary of D-Day, and the July 4th pyrotechnics that so many veterans can't bear to be around.

We showed up to support the Lights for Liberty vigil for refugee children and families in Nashville and Charleston, Tennessee, and shared the powerful witness of vigil speakers on our show.

We attended the PBS taping of *Songwriting with Soldiers*, where veterans and Nashville songwriters performed songs they had composed together to give voice to their personal war traumas. PBS will air the special on October 25. Meanwhile, listen to our 8/8/19 show on *Soundcloud* to hear some of these powerful songs.

Thanks to a heads-up from Buzz Davis and David Cooley, three of us participated in a VA Focus Group on Mental Health care in September. We gave them an earful.

Yours truly had a "Letter to the Editor" published in *The Tennessean* in response to a DoD/VA Suicide Prevention Conference in Nashville in August. We are working on a show about the conference and the VA Focus group. Stay tuned.

Harvey Bennett

## #090 – BROOME COUNTY, NY

For Memorial Day 2019, Chapter 90 organized a special event at Mark Twain's grave in Elmira, New York. After a short-lived stint as a soldier for the Confederacy, Twain decided he didn't want to kill anyone and so, as he put it, "I skedadddled."

Two of our chapter members, Rev. Art Suggs, our Chaplain, and Jim Clune, a conscientious objector during the Viet Nam War, read and acted out Twain's famous prose poem, *The War Prayer*. Area TV covered the event and followed us afterward to film Chapter 90 Vice President Larry Evans laying flowers on his great-great-great-great uncle's Union Army grave. Curiously, it was just a few feet away from the massive Elmira National Cemetery where 3,000 Confederate soldiers are buried. Those soldiers, who died by the thousands between late summer 1864 and late spring 1865, were POWs in Elmira, and called their disease-ridden frozen ground, *Hellmira*.

On Hiroshima Day, August 6, VFP Chapter 90 worked with Peace Action of Broome County and the First Congregational Church to create the First Annual Children's Peace Fair. It was a huge success. It was so great to see children streaming into the outdoor event to first ring a huge ground bell to remember the tragedy of August 6, 1945, and then join in a celebration of peace and hope that included music, dance, live parrots, games of peace, contests for the best sidewalk chalk drawings of peace symbols, and painting of rocks to take home as souvenirs or place in public parks.

We look to the children for a peaceful 21st century. They have known war all their lives. We think they know the truth—that war is not the answer—and this Z generation will become not warriors but truly, the greatest generation.

Jack Gilroy

## #091 – SAN DIEGO, CA

San Diego Chapter 91 has had an active summer and looks forward to a whole host of fall activities. On Memorial Day, May 27, we set up our Hometown Arlington West Memorial at the USS Midway Museum downtown, honoring the nearly 300 service men and women from Southern California fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Our chapter continues to support Chapter 176 in Tijuana, Mexico, with goods and visits. With them, we support the many undocumented folks who remain trapped in Tijuana while awaiting hearings in the U.S.

On July 13, members of Chapter 91 walked in the San Diego Pride Parade, the largest event of its kind in San Diego.

We continue to raise funds to buy new Coleman sleeping bags, which we hand out to the estimated 1,000 homeless folks in downtown San Diego. We've distributed 4,200 sleeping bags to date since December 2010.

Now in our fourth year of educating the public on the many downsides of the popular Miramar Air Show held here in late September, we have been demonstrating twice weekly at two



Members of Stu Naismith Chapter 90, Broome County, New York, celebrated Memorial Day with a special performance of Mark Twain's "The War Prayer," at the author's grave in Elmira, New York. L to R: Larry Evans, John Patterson, and Jack Gilroy.

freeway overpasses, while gaining press coverage and local group endorsements each year.

We look forward to our traditional fall activities and hope to continue being a beacon for peace and justice in this heavily military-oriented city.

Gilbert Field

## #102 – MILWAUKEE, WI

We expanded our boundaries a bit this summer, participating in events in Racine and Madison, Wisconsin, 20 and 80 miles down the Interstate, respectively. In Racine, some of our members marched in the 4th of July parade with a contingent from the Racine Coalition for Peace and Justice. In Madison, we were part of an action protesting Senator Tammy Baldwin's support of bringing the F-35 fighter jet to Madison's Truax Field.

We co-sponsored the annual Lanterns for Peace event commemorating the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, participated in weekly Stand for Peace vigils sponsored by Peace Action, joined union activists and others in an action at

the VA hospital, and leafleted at Milwaukee's Labor Fest.

Our 11th annual Armistice Day observance will feature author Suzanne Gordon and VFP Board President Gerry Condon as the main speakers. Gordon is an award-winning journalist whose latest book is, *Wounds of War: How the VA Delivers Health, Healing, and Hope to the Nation's Veterans*. Condon, a Viet Nam-era veteran and war resister who spent six years in Sweden and Canada after refusing orders to Viet Nam, has a long history in the veterans peace movement.

Bill Christofferson

## #104 – EVANSVILLE, IN

Chapter 104 modernized our website <vfpevansville.org> in 2019; it is being maintained admirably by John Michael O'Leary. Another big change; we voted to hold quarterly, rather than monthly, business meetings, and began hosting public presentations in between to better acquaint locals with our mission. Well attended with lively Q&A sessions, presentations included:

February 28: "Elections Have Consequences," presented by Political Science professors Robert Dion (University of Evansville) and Matthew Hanka (University of Southern Indiana).

March 28: "Coming of Age During Viet Nam," presented by retired *Evansville Press* and *Bloomington Herald-Times* reporter Rod Spaw.

June 27: "Evansville's WWII Economy: Who Got Left Behind," presented by local residents/activists Kelly Coures and Sondra Matthews.

August 22: "Militarism and the Environment," presented by Science Prof. Dr. Edith Hardcastle (Univ. of Southern Indiana).

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Milwaukee Chapter 102 members show off the banner they carried in the Racine, Wisconsin, 4th of July parade. L to R: Keith Brumley, Jim Pingitore, Ben Ingaldson, and Paul Moriarity.

# VFP CHAPTER REPORTS

Chapter 104, Evansville, IN, continued...

In April our annual “Pasta for Peace” fundraiser was a tremendous success, thanks to events chair Mark Atchison.

At our Spring Cookout at the local VA Clinic on May 15, we provided hot dogs, drinks, and snacks for clinic attendees and staff.

Thanks to the hard work of member Lynn Kinkade, we produced two PSA videos featuring local members, “Peace Is Possible” and “Why Veterans For Peace,” which National graciously promoted for us.

Member Leslie Eades and Matt Wagner helped us gain extra recognition and funding through the local Roller Derby Veterans’ event on July 20, where members Alan Williamson and Stan Lightner made our presence known.

Bart Lindenschmidt

## #106 – DALLAS, TX



In front of Dallas City Hall: Chapter 106 Veteran members Bre Jackson, Zen Biasco, and Bob Fusinato, flanked by Olinka Green (left) and associate members Diane Baker and Leslie Harris (right). [Photo: Bob Baker]

Our chapter cosponsored “Tipping Point 2019: Protecting Humanity and Creation,” a presentation about the dangers of artificial intelligence (AI) technology and autonomous weapons, and tabled with information about the Golden Rule Project.

We joined the “Lights for Liberty” national event at Dallas City Hall, arriving early to protest against war with Iran and staying late to project messages onto the wall: REFUGEES WELCOME HERE, CLOSE THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS, and END THE CRIMINALIZATION OF MIGRATION.

We’re part of a campaign against war with Iran and have demonstrated at city hall, on a busy Dallas street corner, and on a freeway overpass bridge adjacent to the Bush Presidential Center (“Lie-bury”).

The Islamic Association of Collin County very generously put on two garage sales benefitting VFP Chapter 106. Thanks to Dr. Shahrukh Kureishy for organizing!

We’re participating in the #GlobalClimateStrike and, most recently, joined light brigaders to display messages promoting the #GlobalClimateStrike at Fort Worth’s Federal Building, the Tarrant County Courthouse—and in the street. The same night, the NRA was holding its “Personal Protection Expo” at the Ft. Worth Convention Center, and VFP 106 was there to project the message NRA ENABLES DOMESTIC TERRORISTS onto the building.

Leslie Harris

## #112 – VENTURA COUNTY, CA

Greetings from Ventura County! Here are a few humble actions that keep our 15-year-old chapter going.

Two members attended a joint Veterans Administration–U.S. Representative-sponsored meeting informing us of the guidelines for the new VA Mission Act, listening to grievances, and announcing the planned expansion and upgrade of our area’s VA outpatient clinic.

One member continues to work in counterrecruiting, including making an annual check of VFP brochure literature supplies in nine area high schools.

We participated in the annual Juneteenth Festival in the city of Oxnard. Members continue to support anti-gun violence rallies and efforts, including a visit with a local California State Assembly member.

We have contributed \$100 each to individuals promoting solutions to immigration and climate change. VFP associate member, Cindy Piester (vfpclimateaction@gmail.com), has created a climate change presentation from the perspective of U.S. Military involvement. Former VFP national Vice-President, Sharon Kufeldt, encouraged a national tour. Cindy is also anticipating membership in a possible VFP National Climate Working Group.

In July, Marine veteran and chapter president Joe Acebedo arranged for tabling at a Native American Pow-Wow. Joe also attended this year’s national convention in Spokane. Occurring on the same weekend as the convention was our long awaited and necessary chapter gathering, celebrating the 50th anniversary of Woodstock!

Michael Cervantes

## #113 – HAWAII

Chapter 113 participated in the first Veterans Summit Conference in Hawai’i in June where we met members of many other veterans organizations in Hawai’i.

Chapter member Ann Wright was in Hilo, Hawai’i, with VFP President Gerry Condon and Golden Rule Operations Manager Helen Jaccard to greet the VFP historic anti-nuclear sailing ship, The Golden Rule, upon her arrival after her 20-day voyage from San Diego. The Golden Rule will be in Hawai’i until early December, when she sets sail for the Marshall Islands, the site of 54 U.S. nuclear detonations in the 1950s and ’60s. We also hope to have a VFP delegation in Japan to greet the Golden Rule when she arrives in Hiroshima in August 2020 to participate in events surrounding the 75th annual commemoration of the horrific U.S. bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Chapter member Pete Doktor attended the VFP convention in Spokane with members of Okinawa Chapter 1003 and Henko (anti-base) supporters.

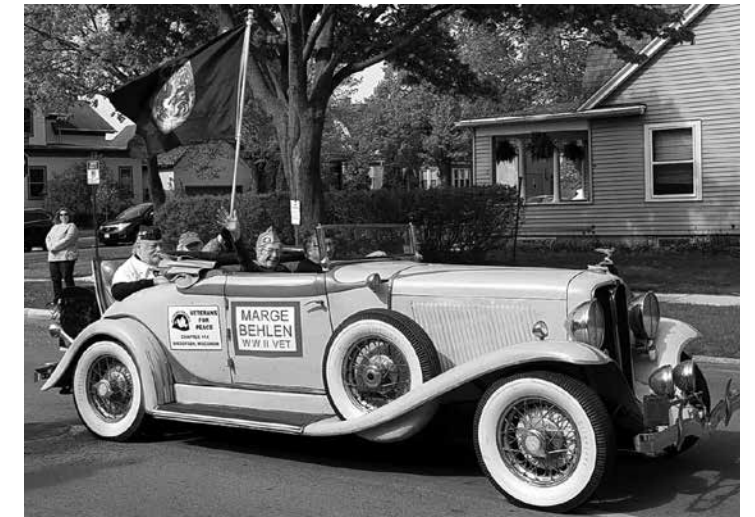
Ann was on the Veterans For Peace delegation to Nicaragua in July and also spoke in Guantánamo, Cuba, in May at the sixth seminar on the abolition of foreign military bases. She has been on citizen-to-citizen diplomacy delegations to Iran and Russia this year.

Ann Wright



Pete Doktor, Sandy Yee, and Ann Wright represented Veterans For Peace at the first Hawai’i Veterans Summit in June.

## CHAPTER 114 – SHEBOYGAN, WI



Chapter 114’s 96-year-old WWII vet, Marge Behlen, waved to thousands of cheering fans from a 1931 Auburn roadster (owned and driven by Jim Nicholson) in the 2019 Sheboygan Memorial Day parade.

Greetings from the freshwater surfing capital of the Midwest. This has been a busy year for our small chapter. On March 30, we hosted our 15th annual Concert for Peace and Justice at the 8th Street Ale Haus in Sheboygan, where musicians donated time and talent to entertain and inform a packed house full of local lefties, progressives, and peaceniks.

On a chilly Memorial Day, fourteen of our members marched in our city’s parade. Signage focused on PTSD and veteran suicides.

We continue to support development of our local peace park. Associate member Frank Koczan and his wife Mary have devoted many hours to the effort. One unique feature is a special path honoring heroes of peace and justice, using 37 engraved paver stones. Names on these stones will include well-known individuals such as John Locke, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as less famous people like Paul Robeson, Oscar Romero, and James Groppe, who led the struggle for civil rights and fair-housing laws in Milwaukee in the 1960s. (We will invite his widow, Peggy Rozga, 2019–2020 Poet Laureate of Wisconsin, to speak at the unveiling of his stone.)

At the urging of two new members, we revived our “Free Speech Corner” demonstrations for the first time in ten years, addressing a different topic each month—“War with Iran” in July, “Justice for Migrants” in August, and “Climate Crisis” in September.

Peace Out!

Tom Contrestan

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VFP Lifetime Member George Grider presents the Peace Pole to the First Congregational Church in Memphis, Tennessee, September 19, 2019.

## #149 – MEMPHIS, TN

On September 19, 2019, Memphis Veterans For Peace Chapter 149 planted a Peace Pole at the First Congregational Church. Part of Campaign Nonviolence Memphis, the ceremony involved peace and justice groups across the city in celebrating several peacemakers whose work serves the local citizenry in peaceful and productive ways.

Speakers included: Alexis Pugh, director of the Memphis Animal Services, which has greatly improved its rate of adoption in the past few years; Stephanie Rollen, Coordinator of the First Congregational Church Food Ministry, which has served 20,000 hot meals to the hungry, and provided groceries for 8,400 families throughout the community; Edith Ornelas, Coordinator of Mariposas Collective, which organized relief for the influx of asylum seekers at the Memphis bus station last fall, providing food, clothing and toiletries to thousands of migrants monthly; and Brad Watkins, Executive Director of the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center, who works with the Memphis Living Wage Campaign, the Coalition Against Private Prisons, and the campaign to end the war in Iraq.

The seven-foot-tall VFP Peace Pole displays the message “May Peace Be In Our Communities” in English and seven other languages. More than 200,000 Peace Poles have been placed around the world in 200 countries.

George Grider

## #160 – HANOI, VIET NAM

Veterans For Peace Chapter 160, the Hoa Binh Chapter, hosted an 11-person group of VFP members (including VFP National President Gerry Condon), and guests on a busy and productive tour of Viet Nam from September 7 through 22, in which the delegation met with a number of Vietnamese officials and with the United States Ambassador to Viet Nam, Dan Kritenbrink. The theme of the tour was to work on remedies for the legacy of the American War in Viet Nam—the after-effects of Agent Orange, unexploded ordnance, and massive numbers of Vietnamese MIAs. The group was led by Chapter 160 President Chuck Searcy, Chapter 160 Secretary-Treasurer David Clark, and Paul Cox, a longtime member of VFP San Francisco Chapter 69 who also serves on the board of Chapter 160.

[A full report of this tour will appear in the Winter issue of the VFP Newsletter.—Ed.]

Robert Neuman

## #162 – EAST BAY, CA

Chapter 162 members Cathe and Fred Norman and Janet Chisholm attended the Hiroshima Day anti-nuclear demonstration at Lawrence Livermore Labs in Livermore, California, on August 6, joining Denny Riley and Paul Cox from San Francisco VFP Chapter 69.

Eugene Ruyle continues his efforts to spread the word about peace and VFP at UC Berkeley. He is assisted in this by volunteers from the Oscar Grant organization, Students Against Fascism, and folks from Peoples Park.

Daniel Borgstrom continues to work with Radio Station KPFA to promote programs for peace.

Maurice Martin presented workshops at the recent VFP convention in Spokane on both Homeless Vets and Deported Vets. He joined a fact-finding tour to Nicaragua in an effort to explore the illegal intervention by the USA in the government affairs of the Nicaraguan people. He also participated in the fall gathering and training of military counterrecruitment presenters in San Francisco, along with Grandmas Against the War and the Raging Grannies, to speak out about alternatives to military service. This program is aimed at middle and high school students.

We still have a few VFP license plate frames to sell. Contact Cathe Norman at 925-858-9153.

Cathe Norman

## #168 – LOUISVILLE, KY

The Louisville chapter continues to produce our Veterans For Peace Radio Hour program, broadcast monthly on the fourth Monday (1pm), Tuesday (7pm), and Wednesday (8am), on WFMP 106.5 FM, and available for streaming or download at <forwardradio.org>. Recent shows have covered militarism and climate change, fraud in the DoD, and VFP news—all hosted by member Patrick King—and member John Wilborn did a show on American exceptionalism.



In this group shot from the September 2019 tour of Viet Nam led by members of VFP Hoa Binh Chapter 160, tour participants pose with bomb- and mine-removal crews working for VFP-sponsored Project RENEW. [Photo: Edward Meagher]

Members Carol Rawert Trainer and Harold Trainer participated in Congressman Tim Ryan’s (D-OH) event with Mom’s Demand Common Sense for Gun Control. Carol has been organizing support for our peace efforts via the Give For Good Louisville campaign. Harold had a letter to the editor published in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* titled “Trump’s Economy.” Both Carol and Harold tabled for VFP at the at a local Minor League baseball game. Harold contributed to member Hart Hagan’s *Climate Report* (also on WFMP) with a report titled “Cost of War in the U.S. and the Middle East.” Hart’s show takes on issues essential to understanding emerging issues central to war and peace in the twenty-first century and can be downloaded at <forwardradio.com>. Member Steven Gardiner spoke on “Consequences of 9/11” on the *Sound and Fury* show on IBISRADIO on Wednesday, September 11.

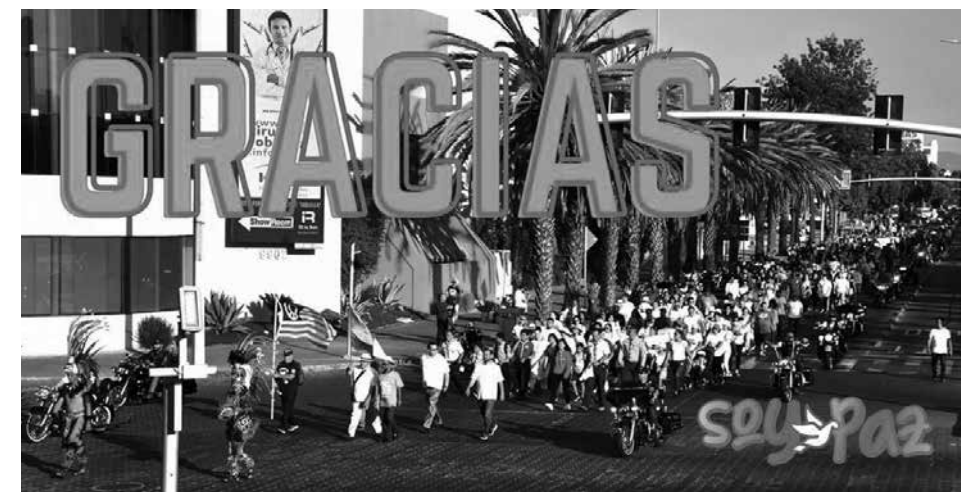
Steven Gardiner

## #182 – TIJUANA, BAJA, MEXICO

On Saturday, September 21, Veterans For Peace Sgt. Barrios Memorial Chapter 182 had the honor of leading the UN International Day of Peace walk in Mexico carrying the Mexican flag and an American flag with a peace sign instead of stars.

It was very humbling to be allowed to carry this flag and represent a great peace organization, Veterans For Peace.

Robert Vivar



Veterans For Peace lead the way in the UN International Day of Peace procession in Mexico.



## MIKE S. JAMES

CINCINNATI, OHIO  
MEMBER SINCE 2019

When I joined the Navy, I had reservations... At the time I was 25, with a degree in photography, a bad apartment in a bad neighborhood, and a constant battle to pay my bills. In an effort

to escape poverty and jump-start a career, I thought I'd try the military. I figured there must be some element of neutrality to it; the hospital ships, the disaster relief and "peace-keeping efforts," etc. I thought it just needed well-meaning patriots to bolster the ranks.

I ended up getting a contract to become a Mass Communications Specialist. I was to become a propagandist (I think I saw it that way at the time). I even enjoyed the majority of the training. The camaraderie and the intense physical demands of boot camp were fun. Defense Information School made me feel like I was pushing my boundaries and setting myself up for a meaningful career. When the opportunity arose to attend advanced aviation survival training at Combat Aircrew School, I jumped at the chance.

Combat Aircrew School lead to a stint in an intelligence unit with an anti submarine warfare squadron out of Whidbey Island, Washington. As a part of Obama's 2009 60,000-troop surge, I found out we were to deploy to southern Iraq to provide real-time reconnaissance in 30-year old P-3 Orion turbo prop planes. I remember we took official command of Commander Task Group 57.18 on my birthday, May 24.

There in the southern Iraq desert at the ancient city of Ur, I was engulfed in 50 years of environmental cataclysm. Dried-up rivers and marshes, shredded military vehicles, abandoned bunkers and unexploded ordnance littered thousands of miles of the once sacred land around me. Burn pits raged day and night, and towering sandstorms hit like freight trains. We received routine rocket attacks, as I watched young men and women struggle to keep planes that all felt like museum pieces aloft in summer temperatures exceeding 120 degrees on the tarmac. I began to wonder if this was the place I wanted to die and what it would mean if I did.

A few months after returning from that hellish experience, I began to grow bored sitting around in the Puget Sound and felt a need to "get on with it," as it were. I volunteered to be an Individual Augmentee, which meant I would separate from my unit and deploy again to a war zone wherever the DoD saw fit. Only six months out from Iraq I deployed once again, to Kabul, Afghanistan.

After attending a month-long Army infantry bootcamp for sailors, I was assigned to NATO-Training Mission Afghanistan as a Public Affairs Specialist. I'll never forget traveling along one of the most embattled stretches of road in the world, from

Bagram Air Base to Kabul, in that claustrophobic personnel carrier. Once again I witnessed humanitarian and environmental cataclysm on a grand scale. Kabul had all the potential to be a gorgeous, high-altitude city which I caught small glimpses of in the faces of hard-working, family-loving Afghans and in the magnificent mosques and rose gardens and pomegranate trees at the presidential palace and American embassy. The vast majority of what I witnessed, however, was orphaned children, starving and disease stricken; amputees and heroin addicts spare-changing on the pavement in rush hour traffic; roadside bakeries with their precious Naan bread covered in dust and soot from endless convoys of MRAPS and armored cars.

It occurred to me that military intervention had been tried endlessly in both of these dystopian landscapes, not just in the recent U.S. occupations, but for decades before; it simply wasn't working. I began to feel ashamed; it was obvious that I had fallen into the wrong side of history. I had become an imperial stormtrooper. Even worse, as a propagandist, I was constantly emotionally and mentally compromised in the most visible way.

After a year in Kabul leading armored convoys, rubbing elbows with generals and pentagon officials, and propping up that horrific status quo, I returned to the States and shortly thereafter received orders to Defense Media Activity at Fort Meade, Maryland. My career as a Navy Mass Communication Specialist was bright! I was highly decorated among my peers, Air Warfare qualified, with strong evaluations describing me as a "rising star." I was being groomed to become senior management and had every opportunity to do so. It was just all wrong though. All shiny exterior but deeply corrupt and festering inside. As much as I enjoyed the salary, benefits, and camaraderie, I knew I had to go.

After finally separating from the military a few years later, I drifted back to Ohio and struggled to make sense of my place in history and how to go about shaking off the filth of my military career. I'm still very much battling those dark experiences and ensuing negative self-talk while slowly taking steps toward healing. The progress I so desperately need to alleviate the shame and conflict in my heart has come partly from my understanding of history, imperialism, militarism, and the blind allegiance Americans have to endless war. I have come to understand that I was another pawn in the long march of colonialism, white supremacy, corporate exploitation, and resource extraction. I understand now that I must share my experience and show solidarity with those same people I helped to ruin and kill.

Attending the Veterans For Peace national convention in Spokane was a bit of homecoming for me. I felt as though I had found my tribe. I met dozens of people who have repeatedly put it all on the line to organize, agitate, and resist the inherently evil American Industrial Military Complex. At the same time, I was happy to be able to witness firsthand the internal struggles of the organization and meet face to face my brothers and sisters in peace who strive to hold the imperialists' feet to the fire.

## RAY CAGE

WALKING IT OFF  
MEMBER AT LARGE SINCE 1988

I am a 72-year-man and a Viet Nam combat veteran. Anger is always present within my core being. Though the terms belong in the medical field, Moral Injury and PTSD are the reality for many of us. Denial is a cruel world, and not taking responsibility for one's action is also cruel. I have had to find my own way to deal with the emotional pain.

When I left the military at the age of 23, all I could do for a while was focus on basic survival within an imperialistic nation. I became a vegetarian, joined food co-ops, and managed cheap rents for homes, and experimented with psychedelics, mainly mushrooms and mescaline. Other things that helped were good ol' American music, reading books, some very understanding people, a great Grandma, and being polite. I am a parent to a grown son and friend to quiet a few young ones. I went through employment like crazy. I do not lay claim to any trade. I keep moving forward.

I joined VVAW in the late 1970s, then dropped away. Then, during the Reagan Authority, I learned of Veterans For Peace through a friend and joined in 1988. I swore when I left the military that I would not join anything. Well, here I be, and I am a Life Member.

As a young veteran I walked a lot. I did walkabouts by myself for about 12 years. I just kept returning to nature to share my grief and anger. Later I began walking with others. I participated in two spiritual walks this year. Both these walks help me to deal with my shame.

The Sacred Peace Walk (Nevada Desert Experience) was from Las Vegas, Nevada, to the Nuclear Test site. This action was put on during the week of Easter, and culminated with civil disobedience leading to arrests on Easter Sunday. The Northwest Peace Walk was put on by Rev. Senji Kanaeda Nipponzan Myohoji Temple and the Nevada/Oregon/Washington Catholic Workers, with one lone Quaker assisting in Salem. We caravaned and walked starting in Eugene. From there we went to Corvallis, Salem, Portland, Tacoma, Seattle, ferried over to Bainbridge Island, and finished at Ground Zero (GZ.org), next door to Naval Base Kitsap. We assembled a good crowd at the gate to this nuclear naval base. Three VFP fellows numbered among those who finished. Dave Patterson and I were together for both walks; Victor White joined us in Seattle for the NW Peace Walk. The final ceremony for the NW Peace Walkers was at Green Lake in Seattle, where we gathered to honor the victims of the two atomic bombs dropped on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Br. Sengi Kanaeda led our group in prayer and Buddhist drums. At the end our group began the floating of the lit candle lanterns. VFP Seattle tabled at this event.



Ray Cage is happiest when he is walking.

So yes, I live with anger and being pissed off about the lies that keep issuing forth. And being in the streets helps me a lot. In the last five years I have made some goods bonds with VFP members through the Golden Rule project, attending the annual conventions, and participating in public actions sponsored by VFP, Catholic Workers, and Code Pink.

Showing up is key! See you in the streets!



**VFP continues to thrive—** thanks, in part, to generous, thoughtful people who, in the past, remembered us with charitable gifts in their wills.

**You can easily do this, too.**

For more information, contact:  
314-725-6005 + vfp@veteransforpeace.org

## “Why I endorse the F-35 in Vermont, sort of...”

by Namaya

*“The only purpose of war is make the rich richer and the poor poorer.”*

—Major General S. Butler USMC

There is a big NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) brouhaha about the F-35 being stationed in Burlington, Vermont. The plane has certainly lived up to its appellation as Fubar-35 (finagled up beyond all rationality) and the environmental pollution and deafening noise are certainly factors to consider. Lockheed Martin and the Pentagon know the plane is a disaster; nevertheless, it's a bonanza for the military-industrial mafia: Pratt Whitney, Northrop Grumman, Lockheed Martin, and hundreds of military suppliers.

Contrary to reason, I say bring this noisy mechanical economic failure here to our Green Mountain State! In every sacred valley, let the sound of the F-35 shake the foundations of our NIMBY bias, 24/7, 365 days of the year. Like Paul Revere riding through the night to alarm his fellow patriots, let this plane roar like the dinosaur it is!

The words fiasco, disaster, boondoggle, military-industrial-corporate heist, and egregious personification of vulture capitalism are just a few appellations that have been ascribed to the F-35 and its abject failure. Its cost is between \$150–\$200 million per plane (not including interest). The total U.S. military budget is estimated between \$1.5 and \$2 trillion. The Project on Government Oversight evaluated the F-35 and, in sum, the plane is often not operational. “What we learned about the operational test fleet at California’s Edwards Air Force Base is even more troubling. It is failing dismally to meet the required 80 percent fully mission capable rate—it has averaged only 11 percent since December 2018. And most recently, it received a rating of only 8.7 percent. A plane that can’t function puts our troops in harm’s way.”

A Pentagon study concluded, “A \$1 trillion maintenance cost for the entire

fleet of F-35s over its lifespan, not accounting for inflation...includes both the nearly \$400 billion being spent on the development and production of the next generation fighter jet and the expected costs of operating the fleet of warplanes.” Yet, the numbers for the total cost of the plane shift faster than a conman’s fingers for a shell game on 42nd St. In truth, not even the Pentagon knows the actual costs; we have only best estimates.

The USA is in the business of war. Though we are just 4.2 percent of the world population, we make up over 51 percent of total global military sales. We send drones and drop hundreds of tons of bombs on Yemen, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The people in those countries speak of the incessant buzzing of drones 24/7, 365 days of the year, while those of us who are fortunate to have a home are safe and secure and do not hear the sounds of warplanes or drones. We are immune to war, unless one of our sons or daughters comes home in a body bag. Nevertheless, we, or our surrogates in Saudi Arabia or Israel, are only too happy to send drones and rockets and drop bombs on civilian targets. When civilians are killed, we call them terrorists. When children in those countries are killed, they are called terrorists in training.

When we neither see nor feel the consequences of war, then we can wage war with impunity. Though the USA has military bases in over 150 countries around the world, we rarely see the impact here at home. Until war is an equal opportunity offender that impacts every person, we cannot fully fathom the true cost of war. Instead, we sit safely on our couches waving the U.S. flag, cheering on the troglodyte POTUS and the war machine. Are we like Cheney, Trump, G.W. Bush, Biden, and the other chicken hawks who have called for war, but who dodged the Viet Nam draft?

Does the USA have to sacrifice the well-being of its citizens to have the world’s greatest war machine? As General Eisenhower reminded us, “Every gun

that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, is a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.... Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.” Has \$1.5 trillion annual military budget contributed to the epidemic of homelessness, the lack of healthcare for more than 40 percent of Americans, the 25 percent of elderly who live in poverty, and an infant mortality rate at 33rd in the world? You bet!

It is time to bring the F-35, with all its pollution, wastefulness, and bone-numbing thunder, across the skies, home to Vermont. Bring the F-35 right here to the epicenter of political correctness, and place it front and center in every conversation, so we might consider the cost and consequence of war and militarism in society. It may even give the most ardent supporter of POTUS something to consider. Ain’t nothing more annoying than an F-35 rumbling and shaking the foundations of your house and spilling your beer while you’re watching Sunday football!

Fellow Vermonters—liberals, fascists, and everyone in between: Let us bring the F-35 to our beautiful green mountains. Let all the F-35s scream across Vermont! Let us learn that war is not some abstract notion of “over there,” but the present reality, 24/7, 365 days of the year, affecting the quality of our lives! When the thunder of war threatens to knock us off our sofas, we may consider that it ain’t such a great idea after all.

Bring this thundering, boondoggle monstrosity of a plane to Vermont. Let the deafening roar shake every sacred valley and every home. Let us deeply consider the true costs and consequences of the F-35 and the U.S. military budget, here in Vermont, nationwide, and across the globe.

Namaya is a member of Veterans For Peace and a U.S. Navy, Viet Nam-era veteran who writes from Blue Heron Pond, Vermont.

## Update from Ireland: Boots on the Ground walk concluded

U.S. military veterans Tarak Kauff and Ken Mayers have finished three weeks of Boots on the Ground for Freedom, in which they walked through Ireland to support Ireland’s neutrality, to protest its role in facilitating U.S. wars in the Middle East, and to demand that they be allowed to return home to the United States. Meanwhile, the Ennis Circuit Court postponed a key decision on moving their case to the Dublin Circuit Court, a key step in the process of getting their bail conditions changed to allow them to leave Ireland. Find more detail and updates at <<http://www.stopthesewars.org/kenandtarak/#Boots>>.

A series of video blogs about the 21-day Boots on the Ground for Freedom Walk through the northwest of Ireland can be found at the following links:

- Episode 1: <https://youtu.be/YeLsjiPsHkk>
- Episode 2: <https://youtu.be/HI5ft84fISY>
- Episode 3: <https://youtu.be/hSYFPlzGTVM>
- Episode 4: [https://youtu.be/PyZmNQ\\_tav8](https://youtu.be/PyZmNQ_tav8)
- Episode 5: <https://youtu.be/PSbcNTLG3JE>
- Episode 6: <https://youtu.be/9TtpoqyXAns>
- Episode 7: <https://youtu.be/md60cBsnRZ4>

**RIGHT:** At the VFP Convention banquet, Kaiya Yonamine, a 17-year-old Okinawan American high school student from Portland, Oregon, was honored along with members of the Okinawa chapter of Veterans For Peace (VFP ROCK, or Ryukyus Okinawa Chapter Koku-sai). Kaiya made a documentary this year to show the world how the beautiful Okinawan ocean in Henoko is being destroyed for a U.S. military base, and how the native Uchinanchu people are fighting to protect it. She made it because “I was frustrated with the silence of the media around this crisis.” The film, OUR ISLAND’S TREASURE, was screened on Thursday afternoon at the convention, and is available at <[vimeo.com/340517922](https://vimeo.com/340517922)>. Please watch and share the link widely!

#RiseForHenoko  
<[www.riseforhenoko.com](http://www.riseforhenoko.com)>

[photo by Mike S. James]



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

### Statement of Purpose

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

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

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

THANK YOU FOR BEING PART OF VFP!

**Save the Date! The next annual VFP Convention will be held August 5–9, 2020, in Albuquerque, New Mexico.**





**Veterans For Peace**  
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## Veterans For Peace Take Climate Action!



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1. Bob Keilbach, Zool Zulkowitz, and Gary Davidson (Ch. 34) at the People's Mobilization to Stop the U.S. War Machine and Save the Planet Rally & March in NYC on Sunday, Sept. 22. [Photo and banner: Ellen Davidson]
2. Eduardo Krasilovsky, John Deschenes, and Daniel Craig (Ch. 55) at Climate Strike events organized by Youth United for Climate Change Action (YUCCA) on Sept. 20 in Santa Fe, NM.
3. At the Global Climate Strike in Dallas, TX, Marine veteran Zen Biasco (Ch. 106) found a perch from which to point out the U.S. military's immense contribution to the climate crisis. [Photo: Dave Jensen]
4. Cara Bissell and Alice Ritter (Ch. 13) tabled at the 2019 Youth and Peace Conference at Pima West Campus on Sept. 21 in Tucson, AZ.
5. VFP Assoc. Dia Winograd (right) at the Climate March in Santa Fe, NM.