



Fall 2016, volume XX, issue 3

# VETERANS FOR PEACE NEWS

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL VETERANS FOR PEACE, CHAPTER 27

*Veterans For Peace News* is published quarterly by Mpls./St. Paul Veterans For Peace, Chapter 27.

Veterans For Peace works to increase awareness of the costs of war, restrain government from intervening in the internal affairs of other nations, end the arms race, reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, seek justice for veterans and victims of war, and abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

We pledge to use democratic and nonviolent means to achieve our purpose.

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*"There won't be any trumpets blowing come the Judgement Day — on the bloody morning after, one tin soldier rides away..."*

(Potter & Lambert)



*Local VFP members at the convention (from l. to r.) Steve Gates, Paula and Ron Staff, Dave Logsdon, Robin Monahan, Bruce Berry, Larry Johnson, and Barry Riesch. photo by Mary McNellis.*

## Reflections on the 2016 Annual VFP Convention in Berkeley

by Mary McNellis

Veterans For Peace held its 31st annual national convention this year in Berkeley CA, and while it is hard to distill four days of non-stop action and choose a specific highlight, meeting activists from across the country is always a highlight for me. Snippets of conversations heard at mealtimes and between events still occupy my mind. So much brain power, so much heart in our organization! I am humbled to be in the presence of so many people dedicated to peace.

The workshop that I remember most vividly was presented on Sunday: "Undermining Militarism," by VFP UK members Ben Griffin, Daniel "Lenny" Lenham and Nadia Williams. They expressed how, as former soldiers, they are in a unique position of recognizing how our societies are becoming more militaristic every day. They try to identify, expose and minimize this trend by being careful to not co-opt militaristic language and

symbolism, i.e. not wearing "camo" gear, refraining from using terms like "marching." They've launched public relation campaigns that co-opt/transform military recruiting language. They've established twitter accounts and a website ([www.dontjointhearmy.co.uk](http://www.dontjointhearmy.co.uk)) in response to the Army's consistent misleading and exploitive recruitment campaigns aimed at young people, providing information about military service that is missing from the official recruitment material.

They give out postcards that say on the front: "Don't Join The Army. Become a Better You." On the back is a list of reasons to not join the army. They have produced and released videos parodying FTA – Fun Travel and Adventure, showing cartoon figures being blown up and being brought home in body bags as well as "action figure" toys that come complete with body bags. There was discussion later by audience members about the dif-

Convention, Continued on page 2

## Convention, from page 1

faculty of trying to get anti-recruitment into schools; instead of going through the school administrators to get invitations directly from liberal teachers. Instead of being oppositional, change the language from “counter recruiting” to “full disclosure.” Consider doing counter-recruiting at venues other than schools, i.e. shopping malls. Sponsor cash awards not just for peace essays; but reach out to youth by broadening the competition to include song, dance, poetry, rapping.

On Monday, Daniel Ellsberg, still going strong at age 85, wrapped up the convention giving a powerful presentation on how perilously close we have come on several occasions and how very real the threat of nuclear annihilation is, with irrefutable facts and statistics to back it up. His description of the Tokyo firestorm was something I, like many, were unaware of. Over 100,000 civilians killed in one

night, more than were killed during the two subsequent nuclear bombings in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. His talk, like many during the week, was pessimistic and depressing, but he holds out hope that Obama may repeal the use of “First Strike” before he leaves office noting the editorial in that day’s New York Times. He asked us to pressure Obama to pardon Chelsea Manning before he leaves office. Ellsberg reminded us that first and foremost we must “retain our humanity.”

The event that absolutely melted my heart happened just before Ellsberg’s presentation at the conclusion of Open Mic. VFP’s oldest member, Sally-Alice Thompson, in her thin, beautiful voice, sang lyrics she’d written to the tune of Sound of Silence, “The Children of Iraq” Wow! She brought the house down. She sent me the lyrics, which are reprinted below.

### The Children of Iraq

My tragic thoughts keep turning back  
To the children of Iraq;  
To the children who are crying,  
And the children who are dying,  
And the things they’ve seen that no one should  
have to bear,  
Happening there,  
So filled with fear—  
They’re silent

Children should be having fun,  
Safe place to play, safe place to run;  
Wholesome food and clean, pure water,  
Safety for their moms and fathers,  
And not be exposed to the violence we abhor  
That goes with war:  
The roar of bombs, then awful silence.

In our country we ignore  
All the horrors of these wars,  
No one hears the children crying,  
No one sees the people dying,  
And few of us see the profits they inspire,  
Going higher and higher;  
Don’t see tears rolling down  
In silence



*Sally-Alice Thompson*

## Convention focuses on peace at home and abroad

by Ron Staff

Another wonderful and exhausting gathering of the “bad news messengers” was just completed. We know that the messenger with bad news is not well received. We are them. The messages reporting the true conditions in the country and beyond are not pretty. We circle around them relentlessly. Can’t seem to get enough. Islamophobia, deported veterans (oh, they were promised citizenship?), Syria, blockade of Gaza, homeless veterans, arms trade with Mexico, the Asian pivot, Agent Orange and unexploded ordnance, depleted uranium, drone warfare, racism, nuclear pollution, the need to finally end the Korean war, finding our own footing in this swirl of bad news of the prospect for humans. Yet, being able to honestly tell children of the hope and courage they will be able to use in getting out of this stuff to the peaceful and just world emerging from the dreck (as Larry’s workshop noted).

One knows ahead of time that exhaustion will be your companion; along with relentless engagement with all the dire messages. It is common knowledge that merely making profits illegal for war material manufacturers would surely aid in the “search for peace.” It’s virtually certain that without profit, war would just evaporate in some miraculous manner.

Taking the profit out of tanks, planes, submarines, aircraft carriers, bombs, bullets, grenades, hummers, APC’s, rifles, pistols, armor plating, flack jackets, jeeps, trucks, jets, helicopters, virtual war games and not so gamey gadgets, boots, web belts, battle medals, uniforms (dress and camouflaged), hats, gloves, wrenches, military grade equipment of all sorts could well shut down the economy, since we have not planned for it. The political history of attempting to end “war profiteering” is neither reported nor revisited in any meaningful manner.

Nearly all local members commented about the deep value of “off line” conversations, around meals, between plenaries, while walking the tabling area, in restroom lines, at the sign-in jam, in the dorm halls, during van rides, wherever one had a non-didactic moment.

From the Opening Plenary, where we heard about the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in the 60s and the courte-



Oliver Stone

ous protesters, who removed their shoes before climbing on the police cars, until Daniel Ellsberg’s closing upbeat, positive message, our hope waxed and waned. But there was always the clear sight and committed messaging of the truth, which the convention served with agility and anxiety.

As Bruce Berry noted: “For me and I believe most in attendance encountered information overload as usual, although the urgency of reacting to the content was much more critical compared to previous conventions. The exceptional lineup of speakers and panelists brought a new reality to the table. You pick the battle on earth, SUSTAINABIL-

ITY (or extinction), HATE, or MILITARY SUPERIORITY.

“Although I was recently aware of a military buildup in Asia...the Asia Pivot workshop blew me away...compared to the other also very, very critical convention issues presented that I attended. With 60 percent of our naval strength in Asia now, special agreements with small countries is creat-

Theme of peace, Continued on page 4

**America has been at war  
222 out of 239 years  
since 1776. Let that  
sink in for a moment.**





## Peace at home and abroad, from page 3

ing the formula for WAR. Connecting information in another workshop about Move to Amend (Corporate Personhood) brought attention to the TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership). This influence of multinational corporations bringing Global Corporate Personhood to the world will not help fend off the continued growth pattern toward war (now in stage one).

“As a ‘people of the world’ we must work much harder to PUSH the KOOL-AID aside NOW!”

Barry Riesch celebrated his birthday the day after listening to Oliver Stone, one of Barry’s heroes. Stone observed that American reaction to fear is always overreaction. In Vietnam a sniper would crank off a couple of rounds and the patrol would need an ammo resupply shortly afterwards. No casualties around, but lots of money in ammo. A black man reaches for the information an officer asks for and dies. These are not greatly separated things. Perhaps everyone is a little too tightly wound. How do we help the country lighten-up?

Larry Johnson said he “spent a great deal of time with Paul Gessler from Fort Collins, Colorado before and after Paul got one of the banquet awards. I don’t remember the exact narrative when the award was given, but Paul has spent a great deal of time building bridges between Vets for Peace and traditional veterans’ groups, as well as another peace group that has too often treated him as ‘not pure enough’ in his peace activism. It’s reminiscent of the powerful message in Jan Selby’s movie Beyond The Divide, about a peace activist and a Vietnam veteran building bridges over the polarizing Peace Sign on the hill in Missoula, Montana. In this wake, I was inspired by the comment by Jonathan Hutto, one of the Convention Islamophobia Awareness leaders: ‘We don’t have to be uniform to have unity.’”

Larry continued, “I reacted similarly to Ann Jones’ comments at the banquet keynote. ‘No matter how ‘pure’ (or ‘impure’) a President we might elect, he or she would be hamstrung, without the backing of a Congress and a massive movement of people nationwide, saying ‘We’ll never fight or pollute again.’ So I hope we all take Ann Jones’ lesson of taking on the strategy of the Koch’s even if we have to do it with a fraction of the money they manipulate. I guarantee the mighty movement, leading to the Kellogg Briand Pact, didn’t happen because people were nitpicking who was more pure in their work for peace and justice.”

He added, “A final highlight was skipping out of the Saturday business meeting to walk in Muir Woods with three other irresponsible convention derelicts whose identity I will protect from VFP Security. I’ve been there before,

but had forgotten that the United Nations was formed in 1945 in San Francisco and the delegates spent one day in the Redwood Forests named for John Muir, hoping that the power of the magnificent, massive trees would inspire and lock in a movement and mechanism for world peace. Of course, a main missing piece with the UN, as with the Kellogg Briand Pact, is the lack of ability to enforce and too much ability to be a big country bully. Conventions like the one we just attended are part of finding the mighty room with the men and women of THE STRANGEST DREAM.”

A full report of the convention would be incomplete without noting that the US Peace Memorial Foundation, Inc. awarded the national VFP its 2016 Peace Prize at the banquet Saturday night.

It’s not as though there are a lack of needful actions. There does seem to be a distraction from the simple things that can move humanity through these shoals of danger. The deeper water within each of us offers a steady course toward kindness and attention to cleaning up our shared house, the earth.

Stephen Gates added, “I am proud to know you all. All of you charming people who care about the world and the people on it. It’s somewhat rare in this world to meet and/or know anyone who thinks beyond their own selfish needs/desires. It’s like mingling with the founding mothers/fathers of a new age of reason.” He concluded with “The happy take away: someone cares.”

Next year the convention is in the windy city, Chicago.

You know, if Congress and President Eisenhower had been honest in their efforts in 1954, they wouldn’t have changed Armistice Day to Veteran’s Day, they would have called it Cannon Fodder Day.

-Mike Madden

## Notes from the President

by Dave Logsdon

*"I prayed for twenty years, but received no answers until I prayed with my legs."*

*-Frederick Douglass*

What a whirlwind summer this has been! We wrapped up another canoe raffle, another Peacestock, another Hiroshima/Nagasaki Remembrance, another Memorial Day Ceremony, and another National Convention. Our schedule ahead is relentless in a very good way! We are trying to get the word out on the events down the road as best we can. Please try to be as proactive as possible and finding particulars about these events! I want to give a shout-out to all of you that rolled up your sleeves (sometimes literally) to make these wonderful events possible.

### Roots of terrorism?

American journalist Russell Warren was filming an interview with Menachem Begin in 1974. In it Warren says: "The red light came on under the lens. Without preamble, I turned my shoulder to the camera, stared straight in Begin's eyes and asked: "How does it feel, in light of all that's going

on, to be the father of terrorism in the Middle East?"

"In the Middle East?" Begin bellowed, "In the world!"

It is abhorrent that this Zionist government can brazenly continue this Apartheid oppression on the Palestinian people and be fed with military guns and equipment from our government. One could argue we did the same to the indigenous people in America, and you would be correct. Hopefully, the boycott/divest movement can put some pressure on our politicians (Democrats and Republicans) who are all in with Israel.

*"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."*

*-Gandhi*

Being around a group of well informed committed people at the National Convention in Berkeley was inspiring. Chicago will be hard-pressed to top this one next year. The climate afforded the Berkeley folks a big asset that Chicago won't have for next year's convention. The mild days and cool nights are hard to beat. In 2018 we will have an opportunity to host the National convention right here the Twin Cities. We have a hotel we have been vetting in downtown St. Paul. I ran the dates and room prices and some other logistics by some of the top National folks and they were very receptive. So far, so good, but we have a long way to go!

*"Anger is an acid that can do more damage to the vessel in which it is stored than on anything on which it is poured."*

*-Mark Twain*

Keep on moving forward; Peace out!!

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Mayday Books has been a consistent and significant supporter of Chapter 27 for many years. The volunteer staff has provided help with mailings and has donated books for the use of our group. It is also a great place to drop in and have a cup of coffee and talk with whomever happens to be there and find that book you have been looking for.

Hours: M-F noon to 7 p.m, Sat. noon to 6 p.m.

## Soldiers: Know Your Rights

To Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan: You took an oath to uphold the Constitution, not to support policies that are illegal. The GI Hotline phone number is:

**1-800-394-9544**

# Refusing Complicity, Choosing Service

by Wayne Wittman

*Wayne Wittman served in the U.S. Navy from 1948 to 1951, was employed as a State of Minnesota rehabilitation professional, and was an active trade unionist from 1958 to 1991. Further, he was a charter member of Veterans for Peace Chapter 27, and chaired the VFP Chapter 27-SOA committee. He wrote this article following his ordination as a Catholic Deacon, comparing his spiritual calling to that of serving in Veterans for Peace.*

Not to be served but to serve was the theme of the St. Paul-Minneapolis Archdiocesan permanent deaconate ordination class of 1984. As a member of this class I thought I was a pretty good fit. I had been a Minnesota state employee as a rehabilitation counselor for 26 years. I really enjoyed helping people with disabilities find ways to remain independent. I was successful enough to be valued by my employer, and my supervisor had recommended me for the deaconate program three years earlier. The last of our five children had finished high school, my youngest daughter and her older brother were in college, and the older three had finished college and were employed. So the children would not be branded as “preacher’s kids.”

My wife Joan and I did not know what God had in store for us, but we both felt we would do the best we could with whatever came along. I had been an activist for opportunities for people with disabilities, a labor union officer, and was active in opposing the Vietnam War—so I saw my ordination as a spiritual affirmation of my life choices and life style. I knew that I would be required to take a vow of obedience, but I did not think Archbishop Roach would require me to do anything that I couldn’t do, or that would be hurtful to the Church that I loved.

I had taken an oath to obey the President of the United States when I enlisted in the Navy in 1948, so this wouldn’t be a new experience for me. Born on September 11, 1929, I was 12 years old when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. I experienced our country going through this tremendous era of patriotic zeal, when we all seemed to be tuned in to the goal of defeating the Germans and the Japanese. As a teenager I marked the progress of the war and I was impatient to get old enough so that I could do my duty and get into the military, as I saw my older acquaintances doing. In August 1945, when I was 15 years old, the war ended; my dream of having a military career was put on hold as my mother wanted me to finish high school.

I graduated from Humboldt (Iowa) Public High School

on May 22, 1948, and I was sworn into the U.S. Navy on May 25, 1948. I enlisted in the Navy as a Hospital Recruit which meant that the Navy agreed that I would be sent to Hospital Corps school and become a Hospital Corpsman. I had some interest in studying medicine and this would give me a feel for that profession, but I was looking at the Navy as a career. I went through boot camp and Corps School with no problem, and was assigned to Long Beach Naval Hospital and subsequently to the Naval Training Center in San Diego.

Coming from a poor family in a small town, I championed a Navy career as the most rewarding way for anyone to spend their life, even when I knew that the Marines used Navy Corpsman for their medics, and I had heard the Hospital Corps had the highest per capita casualty rate of any of the services. I had requested sea duty several times but my request had been denied. I found that a serviceman in peacetime is not appreciated like he is when there is war, and my war came on June 25, 1950, when North Korea invaded South Korea.

On July 1, 1950, I was ordered to sea duty on a ship with the 7th fleet, bound for support of the UN forces in Korea. I recall examining my government’s response to the invasion of South Korea by North Korea, and our role in the United Nations’ intervention, attempting to repel aggression according to the principles of the United Nations Charter. I felt our action was warranted if we were to have a world where nations respected each other’s territorial integrity, which I thought was the most effective path to world peace. (This is a position I still hold and still think has the most promise for world peace.)

I loved the Navy and I was sorely disappointed when my Navy career ended, as I was found to have advanced

## WORLD BEYOND WAR

VFP members Leah Bolger, Bruce Gagnon, and Paul Chappell are among the impressive International Speakers Bureau headed up by David Swanson.

It is worth CHECKING out and  
SUPPORTING this bureau.

[www.worldbeyondwar.org/speakers/](http://www.worldbeyondwar.org/speakers/)

pulmonary tuberculosis and the Navy found me physically unable to perform the duties of an active-duty hospital corpsman. After several years in the Veterans' Hospital in Minneapolis, I went to college and studied the social sciences in order to be a high school social studies teacher.

My studies included political science, economics, and history. I found the devastating effect of war on our world and our culture to have been a tragedy throughout history. But I was encouraged that we—as a world—had found principles that would allow us to avoid war, if we were persistent in applying them.

As a student I met Joan, and we got married and started having children. I finished college, got a job, and things were going along pretty normally. Then, in the latter part of the 1960s, I suddenly noted that my government was intervening in the internal affairs of another country. When that intervention became a full-scale war, I started to protest my government's actions in Vietnam.

As a military veteran, I became a leader in our community's local protest movement, especially in my church, my union, and my political party. There was a movement that I was a part of called Veterans for Peace. In 1973 our involvement in the Vietnam War finally ended, and I thought we surely had learned not to intervene in the internal affairs of other nations.

Then, as an activist in political affairs in the 1980s, I noted that my government had initiated actions in Nicaragua that were illegal, and that concerned me. I remembered that in the 60s and 70s people had doubted my credibility because I had not physically been to Vietnam, and this had handicapped me as a Vietnam War protester.

So in February 1987 I took a travel seminar to El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. I was appalled at the oppression in El Salvador and my government's complicity in it. I also found that we were arming, paying, and supplying a force called the Contras, whose role was to terrorize the population of Nicaragua and disrupt the democratically elected government of that country. It seemed that the principles promoting peace, for which I had been willing to risk my life in the UN action repelling aggression in Korea, were now being violated by my government with impunity.

I found that I was not alone, as other military veterans voiced the same concerns. There was an opportunity to join a veterans' peace action team monitoring U.S. actions in Nicaragua. I joined in November 1987 to monitor a truce in Nicaragua, and while with this team I learned about a renewed organization called Veterans for Peace, Inc.

The Veterans for Peace national convention in 1992 acted in support of nonviolent actions to close the School of the Americas at Fort Benning, which is adjacent to Columbus, Georgia. Steve McKeown, one of our VFP

chapter members, then spearheaded an effort to take old discarded doors to various events in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area with the slogan "Shut the Door on the School of the Americas." Persons were asked to sign the doors as petitions, and the doors were taken to local Congresspersons to petition them to close the SOA.

By June 1993 we had over 20 doors with more than 10,000 signatures and did not know how to use them. A decision was made to take the doors to Fort Benning and present them to the commandant of the SOA with our request to close the School. The doors were loaded into a utility trailer and a contingency of 13 people in three vehicles journeyed to Columbus, Georgia. Father Roy Bourgeois was informed of our plan and arranged a reception with the local media. We arrived in Columbus, Georgia on June 14, at which time we held a press conference and informed the Fort Benning personnel and the community of our plan to enter the Fort the next day.

On Flag Day, June 15, we were met at the gate of Fort Benning and informed that, if we persisted in entering the Fort, we would be arrested, fined, and imprisoned. We had not thought we would be stopped as we were just expressing our constitutional rights; instead our constitutional right to petition our government for redress of grievances was violated. We left the doors with Father Roy, but told the Army "We will be back!"

Two months later at the national Veterans for Peace convention of 1993, our Minnesota Chapter 27 presented a resolution for a VFP national rally at the gates of Fort Benning in January 1994, which would call for closing the SOA. Father Roy Bourgeois was the keynote speaker at this convention, and our chapter was given special recognition for our "Close the SOA" effort. We have heard that Newsweek magazine picked up on the trip we made in June 1993 and later did the story "A School for Dictators," that appeared in their August 1993 issue.

Our Veterans for Peace chapter has continued to be an active participant in the effort to close the SOA, and many other groups in our community have taken leadership in the effort as well. Our VFP chapter was able to present a resolution calling for closing the SOA before the Minnesota AFL-CIO; it passed in Minnesota, later was presented to the National AFL-CIO, and subsequently has been adopted as their position. It is important that we continue to expose the SOA, as it clearly shows how our foreign policy serves the "haves" and oppresses the "have-nots."

It is obvious now that the military in Latin America is used to oppress the poor and keep them from having a fair shake in life. We need to change this policy in order to pro-



# Beating weapons into windmills walk takes place October

by Larry Johnson

October 22-24 I'm doing the **BEATING WEAPONS INTO WINDMILLS WALK**, and many have asked, "Can I go along?" Well, yes. It's not organized as a mass hike, but you're certainly welcome. You'd have to communicate ahead at [larryjvfp@gmail.com](mailto:larryjvfp@gmail.com) to know how to join the route. You could also do your own similar (maybe shorter) hike anywhere, or walk to a 7 p.m. program in one of the destination towns. I'm available for a short program each evening with **MUSIC FOR WEAPONS AND WASTE REDUCTION**, as well as stories from the pack, my book **SIXTY-ONE**, and the OGP (Old Gardening Party), to keep the world safe for children, gardening, and storytelling.

In 1961 I did the JFK 50 Mile Hike in one day, as athletic achievement, having no idea it was based on an extreme test for Marine fitness. In 2007, when I turned 61, I did a 61 Mile Hike in two days, making a statement as a medic/veteran, for less war, therefore fewer veterans, and an end to equivocating about veteran care, especially in areas of mental health and exposure to chemical toxins. I was also determined to emerge healthy from my own fight with the environmental toxins that killed my Dad at age 61. This year I turn 70 and will walk 70 miles in 3 days, partially at the urging of my sister, who said, "It's only right. After all, mom died when she was 70." Mom, and many others I know, including veterans, had cancer. The hike is also 22, plus 1 or 2, miles each day, my own urgency at the number of veterans daily who take their own lives. Though I did not carry the 50 lb. pack required for Marines in 1961, this time my **SIGNIFICANT PACK** will hold things we all can do.

Day One, October 22, I will walk to Northfield, because Paul Wellstone taught and began organizing there, and I was too sick in 1996 to reproduce my 50 Mile Hike at age 50 to help him win again. Day Two, October 23, I will walk from Stanton (near Northfield) to Prairie Island, with an evening stop at the lighting of the Pumpkins at the Depot in Red



Larry Johnson

Wing, to ward off the evil of nuclear cancer producers. Day 3, United Nations Day, will be from Red Wing, down the Wisconsin side of beautiful Lake Pepin, now grotesquely polluted with industrial and agricultural toxins generating cancer and other modern diseases.

## Seven things you can do, related to what's in my pack

(1) Read your own property insurance policy, as it doesn't cover for disasters at nuclear power plants. The government has insured them from the beginning, thus providing a large, secret subsidy for nuclear power. Ask why and then buy into Xcel Windshare and/or a solar garden program. (2) Ask lawmakers to support HR 1976: Nuclear Weapons Abolition and Economic and Energy Conversion Act of 2015, as well as S.1041 End Polluter Welfare Act. I personally believe **NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE IN THE WRONG HANDS NO MATTER WHICH COUNTRY HOLDS THEM.** (3) Carry your own list of veterans who have taken their own lives, or family and friends who have died or suffered from cancer. **I'M CONCERNED ABOUT NUCLEAR POWER'S CANCER FOOTPRINT.** (4) Read the books I plan to carry: Major General Smedley Butler's *War is a Racket*; H. G. Wells *The Last War*; Sally Denton's *Profiteers – Bechtel and the Men Who Built the World*; *Horton Hears a Who*; and pretty much anything about the nuclear threat by Dr. Helen Caldicott. (5) Join **MOVE TO AMEND** at [www.movetoamend.org](http://www.movetoamend.org), to get brave people, not big money, in control. (6) Read Judith Vigna's picture book, *Nobody Wants a Nuclear War*, to your younger children or grandchildren. (7) Encourage high school juniors and seniors in your life to participate in this year's **MAP-SPONSORED LESLIE REINDL PEACE ESSAY CONTEST**. Topics will be announced September 21, International Peace Day, and will be carried on the hike. **WALK ON.**



## SOAW *Encuentro* at the border

by Mary McNellis

On November 16, 1989, six Jesuit priests, their co-worker and her teenage daughter were massacred in El Salvador. A U.S. Congressional Task Force reported that those responsible were trained at the U.S. Army School of the Americas (SOA) at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Sadly, the patterns of violence and forced migration established during the dirty wars of the 20th century have continued unabated as a direct result of US economic and security policies in Mesoamerica, as well as the U.S.-led Drug War. The SOA Watch (SOAW) movement began in the 1980s as a response to what was happening in El Salvador. It continues today as an independent organization seeking to close the U.S. Army School of the Americas, under whatever name it is called, through vigils and fasts, demonstrations and nonviolent protest, as well as media and legislative work.

For the first time in 25 years VFP Chapter 27 will not be sending a delegation to Georgia this fall demanding the notorious SOA be shut down. Last November SOAW made a decision to move the annual convergence from the gates of Fort Benning to the militarized U.S./Mexico border. The first binational Border Convergence will be held this year from October 7-10 in Nogales, Arizona, and Nogales, Mexico, to shine a light on the destructive outcome of U.S. foreign policies represented by the School of Americas: thousands of refugees (including many survivors of U.S.-sponsored atrocities in Latin America) fleeing extreme violence, dire economic conditions, and human rights violations. The change of location goes along with broadening the issue and expanding the fight against U.S. militarization at home and abroad. SOAW continues to demand an end to state-sponsored terrorism and violence on both sides of the border.

Explaining the timing, SOAW states: "The convergence is taking place right before the November election to demand a fundamental shift in U.S. foreign policy. Action needs to be taken to challenge the racist status quo. Immigration has been the biggest issue so far in the 2016 presidential election campaign, yet every major candidate has remained silent about the connections between milita-



*Border wall in Arizona.*

rized U.S. foreign policy and the reasons why people flee here for their lives."

Instead of being welcomed, as required under international humanitarian standards, refugees fleeing U.S.-sponsored violence are being branded as criminals, rapists and terrorists and imprisoned for profit. "Moreover, the U.S. 'solution' to the so-called child migrant crisis has been to further militarize the borders of Mexico and Central America. Mexico now deports more Central Americans than does the U.S., with our tax dollars. As anti-immigrant rhetoric continues to poison the public discourse in this election year, it is important for people of conscience to take a stand and to offer a different narrative. As politicians build walls, we must build bridges."

The convergence will include workshops and events on both sides of the US/ Mexico border, as well as art, music, and resistance. Individual members of VFP #27 plan to attend this year's vigil and urge others to join them. To learn more please visit the SOAW website: <http://www.soaw.org/border/>.

### Changing Address?

If you are moving please let us know, so you can receive your newsletter. Even if you leave a forwarding address with the post office, it still may cost us an additional \$ 1.10 each time Thank you

## Choosing service, from page 7

mote world peace and justice and express concern for others—particularly the poor.

Many of us firmly believe that when we the people of the United States have the facts, we want to do the right thing. For us to be honored as a people, we need to examine our nation's story; where we are less than honorable, we need to change and do what will promote life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for everyone.

Many of us, when we found out what was happening in Latin America, and recognized our complicity in the terrible oppression of the people, could not sit idly by and see such atrocity, intimidation, and human degradation continue. Father Roy Bourgeois and others found that the School of

the Americas was central to the oppression of the Latin American people; SOA Watch, subsequently, has provided leadership and exemplified perseverance in the struggle to call attention to the plight of the poor and our need to change our policies.

Some of our most valued freedoms are our rights to free speech and free assembly, as well as the right to petition our government for redress of grievances. Our right to search for and act on the truth as we see it is essential to our freedoms. This principle is what many of us thought we were defending when we risked our lives in the service of our country, and we are still willing to risk our lives to preserve this principle today.

## Peace index

### Building a good fence on the border

by Frank Fuller

A wall along the Mexican border is a major campaign issue this year because Trump promised he would build one that would keep us safe. But I bet many of his supporters don't realize that we already have about 670 miles of fence along the border built during the Bush administration, at a cost of \$2.4 billion. That was thanks to the Secure Fence Act of 2006. Finishing a fence along the border could cost as much as \$25 billion, with annual maintenance costs running as high as \$750 million. That's a lot of money for a fence that even many elected officials who voted for it now say doesn't do much.

So is there something else we could have done with that \$2.4 billion? Here are a few ideas.

**Start a company that will make EpiPens.** One of the major topics now is the cost of EpiPens, the auto-injecting system for epinephrine, a life-saving drug for people having allergic reactions. The pharmaceutical company Mylan bought the company that was manufacturing EpiPens and over the next few years, raised the price over 400 percent, from about \$100 to over \$600. The EpiPen itself only costs several dollars to make and the auto-injection system was invented over 40 years ago for the military as a way for soldiers to treat themselves if exposed to

nerve gases. (EpiPen sells in France for about \$75 now, but that may change because Mylan is trying to buy the company that manufactures it there.) About 40 percent of Mylan's profits come from EpiPen sales, sales that now bring about \$1.2 billion a year to the company.

So for the cost of what has already been spent on a fence between the U.S. and Mexico, maybe two companies could be funded to make EpiPens.

**Fund efforts to fight Zika.** Congress could not agree on how much to spend on this proven danger. The Senate wanted to spend \$1.1 billion on it, while the House only would offer \$622 million. The Obama administration said it needed \$1.9 billion. Because of the impasse, nothing was provided. Now the Zika virus has reached our shores and there is little money to fight this public health danger or to work on developing a vaccine. And, of course, if more of the wall is built, there will be even less funding available for Zika.

**More money to fight forest fires.** The costs of fighting fires has gone up due to global warming. The US Forest Service says that the fire season is now 78 days longer than it was in 1970, which has raised its fire fighting costs a little each year. It spent about 16 percent of its budget in 1995 fighting forest fires while it currently

## Bringing together VFP and Black Lives Matter

by Barry Riesch

Many in VFP ask how does our mission of abolishing war relate to the issues facing Black Lives Matter? The convention just focused on peace at home and peace abroad. To me part of the answer is that, what is happening at home is just a continuation of the bigotry, racism and violence we have been perpetrating on the rest of the world for years. Surely we cannot carry forth those efforts on the rest of the world and not be affected here at home.

In addition, our police become more and more militaristic, armed with weapons and machinery left over from our wars abroad and the changing mind set that civilians are not to be “served and protected” but instead viewed as potential adversaries and threats (or even as “the enemy”).

I understand the threat police feel as a result of our conceal-carry laws. They have good reason to be frightened. But police are not taught how to de-escalate situations; instead, they are great at escalating (which our military is so good at) as was the case locally with Jamar Clark and Philandro Castile. Had the police taken a couple of deep breaths and slowed down to evaluate the situation they would likely still be alive.

This is so true of our military madness; we rush in with bombs and violence rather than stepping back and asking “is this really the best course to take?”

Imagine how our world would be today had we prac-



*Philandro Castile memorial on Larpenteur Ave. in Falcon Heights*

ticed that type of behavior more often. Of course, it is not just the violence and racism of our wars that can take root domestically, but the whole business of arms production and sales. Arms dealers are only too happy to produce and sell more guns to frightened citizens. Arms purchases are relatively easy and being able to carry weapons makes them even more attractive.

But please tell me why anybody needs an automatic weapon, as we see their use is becoming more prevalent. I feel the strongest reason for us VFPers to be involved with the work of Black Lives Matter and

similar organizations is that it is a teachable moment for us to draw this connection between our wars abroad and the violence here at home. Also we Caucasian VFPers need to take a look at our own racism. People at home are concerned about the violence and I hear the word “Peace” spoken in relation to it often here, but many do not make the connection. Once again, we need to connect “Peace at home” and “Peace abroad.”

Ultimately the point is that “all things are connected as we human beings are connected, harm done to one affects us all.”

I am glad to see on a local level that as a result of current events police are now starting to be trained in de-escalation, which is a good thing. We don’t often make progress in our work but I think this is valuable.

spends about half of its budget fighting fires. In 10 years it expects to be spending about two-thirds of its budget on fires. Right now, that’s about \$1.8 billion. The cost of the border fence already constructed would pay for that. The cost of the rest of the fence might help pay for a decade’s worth of fire fighting.

**FEMA will need more money.** The recent floods in Louisiana, also due to global warming, could cost FEMA about \$2.7 billion in grants to homeowners whose homes were damaged. That is just from this one flood. But, again, the border fence already in place would have paid for most of that. The fence that might be built could pay for 10 or more floods.



# How our Hiroshima mythology insults veterans

by John Laforge

*Reprinted from the online magazine Counterpunch with the permission of the author.*

*"The atomic bomb had nothing to do with the end of the war at all."*

— Maj. Gen. Curtis LeMay, WWII Air Force Commander of the 21st Bomber Command, Sept. 20, 1945

With President Obama's May 27 visit to Hiroshima, reporters, columnists and editors generally adhered to the official story that "the atomic bomb...ultimately spared more Japanese civilians from a final invasion," as Kaimay Yuen Terry wrote for the Minneapolis StarTribune, or that, "Without it, more Japanese would have died in a US assault on the islands, as would have tens of thousands of Americans," as Mike Hashimoto wrote for the Dallas Morning News.

"The dropping of the bombs stopped the war, saved millions of lives," Harry Truman wrote in his memoir *Truman Speaks*. Oddly, historians have found no record of any memo, cable, command projection or study, military or civilian, where this estimate was suggested to him. In his book *The Invasion of Japan*, historian John Ray Skates says, "... prophecies of extremely high casualties only came to be widely accepted after the war to rationalize the use of the atomic bombs." And historian Martin J. Sherwin has "cited a 'considerable body' of new evidence that suggested the bomb may have cost, rather than saved, American lives. That is, if the US had not been so determined to complete, test, and finally use the bomb, it might have arranged the Japanese surrender weeks earlier, preventing much bloodshed on Okinawa."

Obama — uttering not a word about the historical controversy roiling since 1945 — perpetuated the rationalization, cover-up, and nostalgia that guarantees the US will never apologize for the needless and experimental massacre of 200,000 Japanese civilians. As Hashimoto wrote, "No apology [is] needed for sparing lives on both sides..."

The New York Times reported vaguely that, "Many historians believe the bombings on Hiroshima and then Nagasaki, which together took the lives of more than 200,000 people, saved lives on balance, since an invasion of

the islands would have led to far greater bloodshed."

While "many" historians may still believe this, the majority do not. As noted by the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission's chief historian J. Samuel Walker: "The consensus among scholars is that the bomb was not needed to avoid an invasion of Japan and to end the war within a relatively short time. It is clear that alternatives to the bomb existed and that Truman and his advisers knew it," Walker wrote in the winter 1990 issue of *Diplomatic History*.

Five years earlier, historian Gar Alperovitz wrote in *Atomic Diplomacy*, "[P]resently available evidence shows the atomic bomb was not needed to end the war or to save lives — and that this was understood by American leaders at the time." Further declassification made his lengthy history, *The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of An American Myth* (Knopf, 1995) even stronger on this point.

*Combat veterans and bomber crews defeated Japan well before August 6, 1945 — by sacrificing so mightily in dangerous bombing raids and in bloody battles for Midway, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and elsewhere.*

## Admirals and Generals Debunk the Myth

Contrary to Gov. Sarah Palin's claim that Obama's visit to Hiroshima "insults veterans," the fiction that the atomic bombs ended the war is the real insult to the people who actually fought and won the war against Japan. The official myth that incinerating Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced Japan's surrender ignores and obscures the fact that combat veterans and bomber crews defeated Japan well before August 6, 1945 — by sacrificing so mightily in dangerous bombing raids and in bloody battles for Midway, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima, Okinawa, and elsewhere. Dozens of high-level military officers have testified to this fact.

Most of the ranking officers who directed the war in the Pacific have never agreed that the atom bombs were conclusive. Maj. Gen. Curtis LeMay, Commander of the 21st Bomber Command, speaking publicly and for the record Sept. 20, 1945, said unequivocally: "**The war would have been over in two weeks without the Russians entering and without the atomic bomb.**" Pressed by a reporter who asked, "Had they not surrendered because of the atomic bomb?" Gen. LeMay — who directed the destruction of 67 major Japanese cities using mass incendiary attacks — said flatly, "The atomic bomb had nothing to do with the end of the war at all."

Likewise, Gen. George Kenny, who commanded parts of the Army Air Forces in the Pacific, when asked in 1969

whether it was wise to use atom bombs, said, “No! I think we had the Japs licked anyhow. I think they would have quit probably within a week or so of when they did quit,” Alperovitz recounts in *The Decision*.

Alperovitz’s research found that Adm. Lewis Strauss, special assistant to WW II Navy Secretary James Forrestal, wrote to the naval historian Robert Albion Dec. 19, 1960 “from the Navy’s point of view, there are statements by Admiral King, Admiral Halsey, Admiral Radford, Admiral Nimitz and others who expressed themselves to the effect that **neither the atomic bomb nor the proposed invasion of the Japanese mainland were necessary** to produce the surrender.”

In *Mandate for Change*, Gen. Dwight Eisenhower wrote that when Secretary of War Henry Stimson told him atomic bombs were going to be used, “I voiced to him my grave misgivings, first on the basis of my belief that Japan was already defeated and that dropping the bomb was completely unnecessary...”

President Truman’s Chief of Staff, Adm. William Leahy, adamantly agreed. As Robert Lifton and Greg Mitchell, report in *Hiroshima in America: 50 Years of Denial*, Leahy said, “It is my opinion that the use of this barbarous weapon at Hiroshima and Nagasaki was of no material assistance in our war against Japan. The Japanese were already defeated and ready to surrender because of the effective sea blockade and the successful bombing with conventional weapons....” Lifton and Mitchell also note that Henry “Hap” Arnold, Commanding General of the

Army Air Forces, said in his memoirs, “It always appeared to us that, atomic bomb or no atomic bomb, the Japanese were already on the verge of collapse.”

Answers to questions about the need of the atomic bombings were given early on, but some were kept secret. “[T]he US Strategic Bombing Survey published its conclusion that Japan would likely have surrendered in 1945 without atomic bombing, without a Soviet declaration of war, and without an American invasion,” Alperovitz reports in *The Decision*. The historian spent 30 years studying the issue and has revealed that a 1946 study by the Intelligence Group of the War Department’s Military Intelligence Division — discovered in 1989 — “concluded the atomic bomb had not been needed to end the war” and “judged that it was ‘almost a certainty that the Japanese would have capitulated upon the entry of Russia into the war.’”

The government’s official pretexts for incinerating Hiroshima and Nagasaki still dominate public opinion. In 2005, a Gallop poll reported that 57 percent of people surveyed in the US believed the bombings were justified and legitimate. The myth retains its usefulness. President Obama’s proposed 30-year, trillion-dollar program to rebuild the nuclear weapons production establishment can only go ahead if taxpayers hold fast to the idea that something good can come from the mass destruction of civilians.

*John LaForge is a Co-director of Nukewatch, a peace and environmental justice group in Wisconsin, and edits its newsletter.*

## VFP invited to participate in Veterans Voices Program

by Chante Wolf

VFP is invited to participate, listen and read at either of two locations, the program put on by the MN Humanities Center (MNHHC), Veterans Voices: ECHOS OF WAR (<http://www.mnhum.org/about>).

This is a public forum that invites veterans and civilians to come together and discuss “how Americans memorialize war and military service.” I encourage VFP members to participate, as it is an excellent opportunity to ensure our side of the military experience gets included in the ‘memorialization of warfare’. It is our opportunity to be seen as more than just in the streets protesters and to tell our stories about why we are Veterans For Peace members.

The two locations are: one at the MNHC and the other at Carlton College (building location TBA) in Northfield on the same Tuesdays, October 11, 18 25 and November 1st from 6:30-8:30 p.m. 987 Ivy Ave. E., St. Paul, MN

55106 (by Lake Phalen).

Over the course of four sessions, participants will discuss a series of literature, art and theater along with sharing personal stories while examining historic and public narratives that memorializing military service in Minnesota. The intention of these discussions is to challenge participants how to think about history, collective memory, memorialization, and personal story. While this opportunity involves active conversation and engagement throughout the four sessions, participants of all backgrounds and experience are welcomed. Veterans and non-Veterans alike are encouraged to participate!

This Veterans’ Voices programming is generously supported through a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Legacy Amendment - Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund.

To register, go to <http://www.mnhum.org/vets#echoes>.

## Peace Pole dedicated at VFP and WAMM offices

by Joan Johnson

On August 27th, the 88th anniversary of the signing of the Kellogg-Briand pact outlawing war, Veterans for Peace Chap. 27 and Women Against Military Madness dedicated a Peace Pole in front of their shared headquarters on Cedar Avenue in South Minneapolis.

Dave Logsdon of VFP and Lucia Wilkes Smith of WAMM spoke about the significance of the Peace Pole's message "May Peace Prevail on Earth," which is written in different languages on each of the four sides (some peace poles are six-sided). Each pole is "an internationally-recognized symbol of the hopes and dreams of the entire human family, standing vigil in silent prayer for peace on earth," as described on their website <http://www.peacepoleproject.org>.

Currently, there are tens of thousands of Peace Poles in nearly every country dedicated as monuments to peace. This project was actually started by the late Lynne Elling, from the Minneapolis area, who was a WWII veteran and a member of VFP. After Dave and Lucia spoke, VFP members and Audrey Aby-Keirstead rang the hand-made veterans' bells 11 times in unison, to commemorate the Armistice of 1918, ending WWI, when bells rang out around the world.

After the outdoor program, the more than 50 people in attendance shared a meal together, got a chance to visit with one another, heard many announcements of upcoming events, and then sang two songs, including "Last Night I had the Strangest Dream." Steve McKeown spoke about the significance of that song, of the KB Pact anniversary and that VFP's statement of purpose is in complete alignment with this pact: "to renounce war as an instrument of national policy," which, he reminded us, is still the law of the land today. After President Logsdon presented our building landlord Dave Bicking with a KB Pact banner replica, Bicking emphasized how each group who rents in his building is working so hard day-in and day-out for a peaceful and just world. He described the focus of each group, and said that "This pact really speaks to what our mission is all about," and promised it would hang in a prominent location for all to see.



*Ringing the bells at Peace Pole dedication*

### EVENTS CALENDAR

#### ONGOING EVENTS

Monthly meeting 2nd Wed., 6:30 pm, 4200 Cedar Av. S,

**5-6 pm** Weds. Lake Street/Marshall Ave. Bridge vigil.

#### OTHER EVENTS

October 11, 18 25 and November 1st from 6:30-8:30 p.m., Minnesota Humanities Center, 987 Ivy Ave. E., St. Paul, MN 55106 (by Lake Phallen). Veterans Voices: Echoes of War, explores how Americans memorialize war and military service. FFI see article page 13.

Oct. 22-24, Beating Weapons In Windmills Walk. See article on page 8.

Sun. Oct. 23, 5-8 pm. WAMM's Halloween Hoopla and Autumn Auction. St. Joan of Arc Church, 4537 Third Ave. S., Mpls. \$10-\$30 or contact WAMM to reserve a table for eight in advance for \$25 per person. Complimentary buffet, desserts and beverages. Win variety of items such as local restaurant gift certificates, gourmet dinners, health and wellness services, books, expanded raffle and more.

Nov. 11. Twin City Armistice Day events. Times to be determined. Call office at 612-821-9141 FFI.

Nov. 11, Mankato State University, Making Meaning of War. See flyer on page 15.



# GOOD THUNDER

## READING SERIES

### 2016-2017

November 11, 2016

## Brian Turner, Dunya Mikhail & Gwen Westerman

In partnership with Veterans for Peace, Chapter 27 and St. John's Episcopal Church

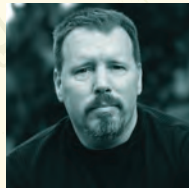
Fri., Nov. 11 • 7:30-8:30 PM

### Making Meaning of War

A talk and reading with Brian Turner, Dunya Mikhail and Gwen Westerman  
St. John's Episcopal Church  
302 Warren St., Mankato

### Free and open to the public.

For more information, call Diana Joseph at 507-389-5144 or visit [gt.mnsu.edu](http://gt.mnsu.edu)



**Brian Turner** is a poet and memoirist who served seven years in the US Army. He is the author of two poetry collections, *Phantom Noise* and *Here, Bullet*, which won the 2005 Beatrice Hawley Award, the New York Times "Editor's Choice" selection, the 2006 PEN Center USA "Best in the West" award, the 2007 Poets Prize, and others. Turner's work has been published in *National Geographic*, *The New York Times*, *Poetry Daily*, *Harper's Magazine*, and other fine journals. Turner has been awarded a United States Artists Fellowship, an NEA Fellowship, a Lannan Foundation Fellowship, and more. His recent memoir, *My Life as a Foreign Country*, has been called, "achingly, disturbingly, shockingly beautiful."



**Dunya Mikhail** was born in Iraq in 1965 and came to the United States in 1996, after her poetry landed her on Saddam Hussein's enemies list. In 2001, the United Nations awarded her the Human Rights Award for Freedom of Writing. *The War Works Hard*, Mikhail's first poetry collection translated into English, established her as the first female Iraqi poet with a book published in the United States. Shortlisted for the prestigious Griffin Poetry Prize and named one of "Twenty-Five Books to Remember from 2005" by the New York Public Library, *The War Works Hard* was translated by Elizabeth Winslow. Winslow also translated Mikhail's *Diary of a Wave Outside the Sea* (New Directions 2009), which won the 2010 Arab American Book Award. Mikhail's latest collection is *The Iraqi Nights*, translated by Kareem James Abu-Zeid. Mikhail is the recipient of the Kresge Fellowship and the Arab American Book Award, and co-founder of Mesopotamian Forum for Art and Culture in Michigan. She currently works as an Arabic special lecturer at Oakland University in Michigan.

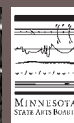


**Gwen Westerman** is a poet and nonfiction writer. Her work has appeared in *Yellow Medicine Review*, *Water-Stone Review*, *A View from The Loft*, *Western American Literature*, and *Natural Bridge*. She has a collection of poetry, *Follow the Blackbirds* (Michigan State University Press, 2013), and co-authored an award-winning historical volume *Mni Sota Makoce: The Land of the Dakota* (Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2012). Her in-progress poetry collection focuses on the experiences of mothers of combat veterans of war.

This activity is made possible by the votes of Minnesota through a grant from the Minnesota State Arts Board, thanks to a legislative appropriation from the Arts and Cultural Heritage fund. The 2016-17 Good Thunder Reading Series also receives support from the Minnesota State University, Mankato Department of English, the College of Arts and Humanities, the Office of Institutional Diversity, the

Nadine B. Andreas Endowment, the Eddice B. Barber Visiting Writer Endowment, the Robert C. Wright Endowment, and individual donors. The Arts Center of St. Peter, the Twin Rivers Council of the Arts, Barnes & Noble Bookstore at Minnesota State offer additional assistance. Minnesota State University, Mankato is a member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System and an Affirmative Action/

Equal Opportunity University. Individuals with a disability who need a reasonable accommodation to participate in this event, please contact Diana Joseph at 507-389-5144 (V), 800-627-3529 or 711 (MRS/TTY) at least 3 working days prior to the event. This document is available in alternative format to individuals with disabilities by calling the above numbers.





**Veterans For Peace Chapter 27**  
4200 Cedar Av. S., Suite 7  
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***Fall 2016 Newsletter***

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## **SUPPORT THE TROOPS! BRING THEM HOME ALIVE NOW!**

As of Sep. 1, 2016:

At least 6,888 dead in Iraq and Afghanistan;  
over one million injured veterans (see below).

An estimated 22 veterans die from suicide each day,  
amounting to over 24,090 over the past three years.

### ***Peacestock again a great success***



*The Wild Colonial Bhoys entertained at the 14th annual Peacestock last July. Its theme was Terrorism: Definitions, Causes and Effects and speakers analyzed the subject from a variety of viewpoints. Dr. Todd Green, a professor of religious history, examined Islamophobia and how that came to be such a powerful force. Michael German, formerly a special agent with the FBI for 16 years who later worked for the ACLU, spoke on the failures of counterintelligence and how they can drive foreign policy at tremendous costs. There were also exhibitions, updates, a bell ringing and meals. photo by Mary McNellis*