



# 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 our 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 non-violent 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)



*Aerial view of pipeline construction taken Nov. 3.*

## VFP stands with Standing Rock

by Barry Riesch

For several months now Veterans For Peace nationally and locally has stood in solidarity with the struggles of the Native Water Protectors on Standing Rock encampment in North Dakota. We do this not only to keep the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) from crossing under the Missouri River just north of the Standing Rock reservation, which is the source of life for their community and many thousands downstream, but to bring to light the ongoing struggles of the First Nation People of this land.

This struggle is nothing new for Native Americans. Basically anytime our government or a corporation needs a place to mine, pollute, or dump toxic waste, or, in some other way harm the earth, they choose Native People's land.

The history of Native oppression goes back at least 524 years to the Doctrine of

Discovery. The Papal Bull *Inter Caetera*, issued by Pope Alexander VI on May 4, 1493, played a central role in the Spanish conquest of the New World. The document supported Spain's exclusive claims to the lands discovered by Columbus the previous year. The Bull stated that any land not inhabited by Christians was available to be discovered, claimed, and exploited by Christian rulers and declared: "The Catholic faith and the Christian religion be exalted and be everywhere increased and spread, that the health of souls be cared for and that 'Barbarous' nations be overthrown and brought to faith itself." This became the basis for all European claims in the Americas as well as the foundation for the United States western expansion.

Sound familiar? Those battles which began centuries ago continue to be America's

**Standing Rock, Continued on page 3**

# Notes from the President

by Dave Logsdon

*“Skating away on the thin ice of a new day.”*  
Jethro Tull

This has been a most interesting year for Chapter 27, a roller coaster ride that at times looked like it was coming off the rails. Reflecting on the tumultuous times we live in, sad times for sure, but not without hope, we try to keep our collective chins up and keep our eyes on the prize.

## Moving on up.....

We started 2016 by moving from our West Bank office to 4200 Cedar. Personally, I loved the West Bank location, but when Dave Bicking (our new landlord) called last December with an “offer I couldn’t refuse,” I knew it was time to move. To say the move was not without problems would be an understatement. Along with the usual chaos of a move like this, Wayne Wittman passed away, which really complicated the process. Other than being the heart and soul of Vets For Peace, the “Deacon” was someone who collected the mail, answered the phone, and who took care of so many details on an everyday basis.

Somehow we muddled through and slowly have embraced our new home. In the same building are some amazing tenants that share many of our values. Women Against Military Madness has always been a strong partner in the peace and justice movement and now, with their paid office staff, has helped forge an effective collaboration. The Anti-War Committee, MIRAC (Minnesota Immigrants Rights Action Committee) and Communities United Against Police Brutality are often allied with us on many of the same issues. Needless to say, at the end of the day, this has been a strong and positive environment for us to thrive in and to grow.

## Who’s up next??

When we lost someone, we needed other folks to step up. In our local chapter’s 30 year history, someone always does! This time former treasurer, Tim Hansen, became the interim treasurer. Tim made it clear that April 1st he was done! In came former VFP president, John Varone to the rescue. John’s efforts and expertise kept us from being a rudderless ship. Personally, he saved me from total burnout, and I thank him.

There are so many kudos to hand out. Most of you could

care less for recognition and praise, but I’m going to do it anyway. First of all, the many behind the scene heroes like Frank Fuller, who very adeptly and quietly puts out this valuable newsletter four times a year is one of them. Not so quietly, Dick Foley, our “anti-recruiter,” on his own initiative contacts area high schools like Cretin-Durham Hall and Benilde, and tells his powerful story. After Dick talks about his life-changing experience in Vietnam, the students write letters. These letters and just listening to Dick’s story are a powerful healing force for many, especially Mr. Foley.

On a more day-to-day level, people like Ron Staff, our secretary, is always there and a steady, positive presence. Mary McNellis in her unofficial post as the gatherer and disseminator of data and e-mail lists (what a mess) has, through many thankless hours, been a real trooper. She is a perfect example of how non-veteran associate members can be valuable additions to our group.

These days there are so many fronts in the fight for peace and justice. Kudos to all the brothers and sisters who pitch in, show up, and speak truth to power, you know who you are! Specifically, some members who have been at this effort a lot longer than me, are folks like Barry Riesch and Steve McKeown. Barry, the top canoe raffle salesman, former president of National Vets For Peace, who travelled to Jeju Island to protest the building of a military base just off the coast of Korea with other vets from around the country. He ended up in the hospital after that trip. He also participated in Black Lives Matters actions and has been to Standing Rock to stand with the Water Protectors. Steve, one of the founders of the local chapter, after 30 years still hard-noses the highway. Steve is the chapter visionary and the moral bedrock. All of our bell-ringing on behalf of the Armistice, the recognition of the Kellogg-Briand treaty, and this very newsletter are all part of his legacy. He still can shoot free throws with the best.

Finally, hats off to Larry Johnson, whose storytelling and networking with other social justice through his work with Minnesota Alliance for Peacemakers have added so much to growing our presence in the greater community. Hats off to our artists, poets, musicians, and sign-makers! Bruce Berry, Craig Wood, Penny Gardner, Vern Hall, Steve Gates, Mike Madden who, sometimes grudgingly, always answer the call. As we push forward, we hope to add more new energies to the mix (It could be you!).

Next year and beyond, to state the obvious, there are many challenges and opportunities for Veterans For Peace to spread the word and stand in solidarity with the oppressed people of the world. Fight the power! Water is Life!

*“We have met the enemy and he is us.”*  
Pogo

## Standing Rock, from page 1



longest running war at home. To further dominate the earth, the U.S. has steadily expanded the attacks on nations overseas, with no end in sight. This is why Veterans For Peace is involved.

With a gathering of over 500 different clergy on November 3, 2016, at the Oceti Sakowin Camp (main camp at Standing Rock), the Doctrine of Discovery was condemned by all present. At a gathering around the Sacred Fire at the camp, a copy of the document was given to Tribal Elders and they were asked what they would like to do with the document. They said burn it. Not in the sacred fire but separately the document was burned. Now it is time for this Doctrine to be disavowed by Pope Francis and the Catholic Church.

Local VFP members Craig Wood, Bruce Berry, Barry Riesch and Roger Cuthbertson have traveled several times to Standing Rock to stand in solidarity with Native Americans. We went as visitors and guests of the camp and to do whatever tasks we are asked to do, from preparing meals, washing dishes, picking up trash, and erecting large tents to civil disobedience; we were there in solidarity and to learn. Visiting the camp has been an enriching experience for all of us as we witness how truly spiritual, committed and beautiful these people are. For anyone to visit the camp and witness the spiritual strength of these people and go on to consider them violent is offensive. It is truly a shame that Kelcy Warren (CEO Energy Transfer), Obama, Trump and all our supposed leaders have not shared in this experience.

We also experienced first-hand the police and military oppression as they acted outside the

law. Of course the mainstream media aid and abet this corruption when they refuse to report on these illegal activities. Basically, taxpayers are paying the bill for our police and military to be private security forces for a privately-owned pipeline. Not to mention that the pipeline itself is illegal and has never fully complied with the laws for a complete environmental impact study. First Nation People are rightfully upset that their sacred sites, ancestral burial grounds and drinking water are being jeopardized. As Mr. Warren states, "We are going to build it here." And probably will, as Obama and the Corps of Engineers cave in to their demands. It is so obvious to see who really runs this country. Of further note is the fact that the oil will be shipped to

Standing Rock, Continued on page 9



## Encuentro at the Border



by Mary McNellis

For the first time in 25 years, VFP Chapter #27 did not send a delegation to Georgia this year to demand closure of the notorious WHINSEC/SOA. Instead, local VFP members went to the first SOAW International Convergence October 7-10 in Nogales, Arizona/Sonora, Mex., organized by 400 social justice groups to protest the destructive U.S. foreign policy that leads to thousands of refugees fleeing extreme violence.

The Drug War in Mexico where hundreds of thousands of people have been “disappeared” is one reason people flee and try to come north. In Honduras, seven years after a military coup led by SOA graduates, those who speak out against the repressive regime are attacked and murdered. In Columbia there are more than 220,000 confirmed victims of political killings along with 92,000 disappeared.

Global warming has also become a driving force. According to most reports, “the number of people being displaced by climate change will be staggering and without precedent. In 2015 there was also an unprecedented drought that dried up harvests throughout Central America. More than one million people, mostly small farmers, were affected.”

Every day, as many as 75 migrants arrested along U.S./Sonoran border are rushed through federal court in Tucson with little or no due process. Convictions can result

in two years in a private prison run by Corrections Corporation of America (CCA). According to Source Watch, CCA “is the largest owner of for-profit prisons and immigration detention facilities in the United States. In 2013, CCA was converted into a real estate investment trust (REIT), which will help the company avoid tens of millions of dollars in corporate taxes. CCA’s revenue in 2013 was nearly \$1.7 billion, and it had profits of \$300 million, 100 percent of which came from taxpayers via government contracts.”

According to the ACLU, CCA abuses include “denying necessary medical care to children as young as five-months-old, refusing to provide diapers for infants, confiscating and not returning legal documents and personal belongings, making racially-charged insults and death threats, and strip-searching and shackling children in three-point restraints during transport.”

Eloy, a for-profit CCA detention center 65 miles south of Phoenix, is known as the deadliest in the country. ICE data shows that there have been 152 in-custody deaths in detention centers nationwide between October 2003 and January 2016. Fourteen of those occurred at Eloy, including at least seven “suicides,” accounting for nine percent of all deaths at the nation’s nearly 250 detention centers.

Like most detention centers, this one is hidden in a remote location so that most people are unaware of it. On Friday October 7th, *Encuentro* at the Border sponsored a



*The Puppistas at the border wall.*

rally at the Detention Center in Eloy.

Hundreds of migrants, students, members of religious communities, veterans, and human rights activists gathered to call for the release of the incarcerated migrants, and for an end to profiteering from human suffering. Speakers

addressed the connection between U.S. militarization in Latin America and forced migration to the United States, and described the horrors of living inside detention centers like Eloy.

On Saturday morning Veterans For Peace led concurrent marches on both sides of the border. **The march south of the border was led by Mexican-born, honorably-discharged U.S. veterans who were promised U.S. citizenship in exchange for their service but were deported to Mexico.** On both sides of the border there were two stages erected side by side, separated by the tall, giant, steel border fence. This artificial barrier was bridged by a huge rally; the message, music and program were one, microphones switched from one side of the border to the other. It felt surreal and artificial as people spoke to each other and shook hands through the fence.

Throughout the weekend, there were events held simultaneously on both sides of the border. Saturday afternoon, there was the Anniversary Vigil for Jose Antonio Elena, which started with a march from the Plaza de las Palomas in Nogales, Sonora, to the site where Jose Antonio was killed by Border Patrol forces.

Sunday morning, the program on both sides of the border wall commemorated those whose lives were lost as a result of state violence, with the traditional SOAW *¡No Más! No More!* and *Presentes*. The wall was finally



*Dave Logsdon with LCpl Hector Barajas-Varela, director of the Deported Veterans Support House.*

*Encuentro, Continued on page 6*

## Encuentro, from page 5

breached by the puppetistas' giant, paper mache monarch butterflies migrating between the tall, steel bars.

One reason for moving the convergence to the border was to shine a light on the increasing U.S. militarization at the border. U.S. Border Patrol agents are now being trained at the notorious School of Assassins in Fort Benning. The Border Patrol Agency is the nation's largest law enforcement agency, yet has no oversight or accountability, leading to epidemic abuse and corruption. They are a law unto themselves. The agency's own records reveal recurring examples of agents violating the most basic civil and constitutional rights on a dramatic scale, a de facto policy of "stop and frisk" for border residents as well as detaining, searching and terrorizing individuals and entire families at interior checkpoints.

Following the Sunday *¡No Más! No More!* and *Presentes* ceremony at the border wall, more than 200 activists continued their demonstration in a march to the Border Patrol interior vehicle checkpoint on the I-19 highway, 20 minutes north of Nogales, demanding the permanent closure of all checkpoints throughout the U.S. and an end to militarized borderlands.

At their arrival, a group of 20 brave protestors linked arms, staged a vigil and refused to leave the checkpoint for more than five hours, even after threats of the use of tear gas, arrest and federal felony charges.

At a "die-in" at a checkpoint, Father Roy Bourgeois, SOA Watch founder, was pulled by the legs and kicked on different occasions by a Border Patrol agent. The Border Patrol and Arizona State Highway Patrol declined to make any arrests during the five-hour demonstration. The abundance of cameras and live-streaming might have had some influence on their decision.

The 2016 *Encuentro* at the Border event provided a unique opportunity for those most directly impacted by state-sanctioned violence in the U.S., Latin America, and other parts of the world to learn from one another, and begin building inter-racial, transnational solidarity networks. Personally, being at the border was humanizing and humbling, helped to put a human face on a subject which I previously only understood intellectually. To see the size and extent of the border wall is mind-boggling; to hear first-hand the stories of the victims and families of those abused and murdered is horrifying. On the plus side, being with fellow activists is thought-provoking, energizing, inspiring and healing.

Veterans for Peace and SOAW supporters continue to be



*Vern Hall and Steve Gates walking along the Arizona side of the wall.*

hopeful and encouraged by the fact that thousands across the country have been mobilized following the election of an openly racist bully, and have taken to the streets in cities across the US in protest. We must continue to organize, take action, and build broad-based grassroots power to push back against racism and xenophobia and against the militarization of our communities at home and abroad.

*For more details and photos of the Encuentro, please visit [soaw.org/border](http://soaw.org/border) and also [soaw.org/media](http://soaw.org/media).*

### **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/)

## *The peace index*

# Peace through bravado

by Frank Fuller

It feels like we are living in an alternate universe now that Trump is president-elect. The world changed Nov. 9 and not for the better. Trump's plans for The Defense Department offer some clues. It's hard to know exactly what will happen, because he changes his mind a lot and contradicts himself.

But basically he campaigned on increasing the military budget enough to scare other countries into acting the way he wants them to act. It's hard to put a dollar amount on what he wants to spend, but a number of experts have estimated that his defense budget would increase defense spending by \$8-900 billion over the next 10 years.

They base this on what he has said he needs in order to "make America great again": 90,000 more active troops; an increase in Marine battalions from 24 to 36; forty-two more ships; about 100 more fighter aircraft; a modernized missile defense system; the quick defeat of ISIS; and the end of the sequester on defense spending.

Where will that \$900 billion come from? One area might be health care funding. Since his pick to head HHS, Tom Price, has said he wants to end The Affordable Care Act/Obamacare, Medicare and Medicaid, at least as we know them, let's look at those. What would we lose?

First, Price is strongly opposed to the ACA and has had a plan to replace it for several years called The Empowering Patients First Act. While similar to the ACA, it would replace the subsidies in the ACA for purchasing health insurance that are based on income to subsidies based on age. They'd be smaller and so as you aged, you'd be spending a larger percentage of your income on health.

Second, repealing the ACA would also provide a huge tax cut for the wealthy. ACA subsidies are funded partly by a tax on the wealthy. **If the ACA is repealed, that is one tax cut specifically going to the one percent.**

Third, what will happen to Medicare? Trump campaigned on keeping Medicare and Social Security as they are, but as soon as the magnitude of the Republican victory Nov. 8 became clear, Republicans began to promise to end Medicare as we know it. There are no clear plans out there, but Republicans in the past have said they would replace Medicare with a voucher system so the elderly could go and buy their own private insurance with that voucher helping to pay for it.

To me that's sort of like throwing a rope with an anchor attached to it to a drowning person. A program like this

would eventually drain the resources of many senior citizens. They would have to pay more for insurance because they are old. The voucher would not cover the cost of a policy as good as Medicare, it's that simple.

Those who have chronic problems, which are many of the elderly, might even have trouble finding a policy to purchase. Policies might be available for those with chronic preconditions, but the bigger question is what will they cost. Chances are they would be very expensive, beyond the reach of many.

Fourth, Medicaid will also be greatly diminished in Trump's America. Price has said he wants to eliminate the Medicare expansion the ACA provided. There aren't any numbers to put on these changes but one thing Republicans have mentioned is to give block grants to states for Medicaid. These grants would be smaller than the amount now spent on Medicaid, and some states would cut the amounts even further.

And fifth, women's health care. Price has said that he does not believe any woman has ever had problems paying for her own contraception. Under the ACA, contraception is covered by law. Under Price, it probably will not be. He has also supported eliminating funding for Planned Parenthood and has cosponsored bills that give personhood to fetuses. He is also associated with a group that believes abortion causes breast cancer, vaccines cause autism, and global warming can be beneficial for humans.

So who will win and who will lose? The winners will be the wealthy who get more tax cuts, the healthy and the young. And defense contractors. The losers will be the elderly, the poor, and those with chronic and/or expensive health problems. And women.

The irony is that so many of those who supported Trump basically voted to eliminate their health insurance; as many as 5.5 million of his supporters will lose their health insurance if Obamacare is repealed.

## PIVOT TOWARD WAR

Missile Defense and the Weaponization of Space:  
25th Annual Space Organizing Conference and Protest,  
April 7-9, Huntsville, AL.

Our chapter and the Duluth VFP went in 2001.  
More info in next newsletter.

# Veterans will tell you, if you ask, that Armistice is what's needed

by Coleen Rowley

Another Veterans Day has been marked on the national level with a lot of meaningless “thank you for your service” gestures, seemingly even more of an afterthought this year since it fell only three days after the shocker 2016 election. Sadly, few Americans seem concerned about the costs of perpetual war and fewer still remember that, in the judgment of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, “a war of aggression is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole.”

So our Tackling Torture at the Top committee of WAMM, working with VFP Ch. 27, was lucky to get former Afghanistan Chaplain Reverend Chris J. Antal and retired Colonel Lawrence Wilkerson to speak at various “Armistice Day” events in the Twin Cities this year. The veterans did explained why peace is now needed, perhaps as much as it was needed nearly a hundred years ago, in 1918.

Former Army Chaplain Antal pointed out:

“Veteran’s Day too often only serves to construct and maintain a public narrative that glorifies war and military service and excludes the actual experience of the veteran. This public narrative is characterized by core beliefs and assumptions about ourselves and the world that most citizens readily accept without examination.

“The U.S. public narrative reconciles deep religiosity with a penchant for violence with an often unexamined American National Religion. The core beliefs of this religion include the unholy trinity of governmental theism (One Nation Under God, In God We Trust, etc.), global military supremacy, and capitalism as freedom. These core beliefs provide many U.S. citizens with a broad sense of meaning and imbue the public narrative with thematic coherence. . .

“Imagine a Veteran’s Day where communities join together for authentic dialogue between veterans and civilians. Such a gathering would empower veterans to share the kind of stories that would help the community face real problems. What new story might emerge in the process? How might we become a better people as a result?” (from “Learning Horrors of War from Vets” on Consortiumnews.com)

While Col. Wilkerson emphasized:

“Today, it is crucial to listen to that less-than-1-percent of us who have gone into harm’s way on behalf of the other 99 percent. It is crucial because the country is perched on the edge of a dangerous new Cold War, potentially more military deployments to western Asia, and a looming battle in the South China Sea. This is to say nothing of the growing likelihood of the use of nuclear weapons, from Korea to Ukraine, and of a Congress dead-set on unraveling the only successful diplomacy in several years, the nuclear agreement with Iran.

“Does our nation’s ever-increasing militarization cause abuses of power, as almost every one of our Founders warned it would? Could our massive and costly counter-terrorism efforts be counterproductive? Do mass surveillance, indefinite detention, torture, ceaseless war and the expenditure of a trillion-plus dollars every year for national security, help or hurt our real security? If we always look forward and never backward, are we doomed to repeat history’s most serious mistakes? Could we be sleepwalking right into World War III?

“What if we could ask the hard questions of someone like World War II General Dwight Eisenhower, architect of the Normandy landings and our 34th President? In January 1961, Ike presciently tried to warn us about the dangers of the Military Industrial Complex, now more accurately called a “global merchant of death.” He also expressed grave misgivings about nuclear weapons and the decision to use them in 1945 against Japan. Strange thoughts for a five-star general — unless we stop to think about the pinpoint accuracy of his remarks about the Complex and the almost religious intensity of his dislike for weapons of mass destruction. Truth about war more often emanates from the warrior than the non-warrior. We needn’t wonder why.

“What advice might America’s veterans of the First World War give us? In 1918, at the 11th hour, on the 11th day, of the 11th month, the armistice for the “war to end all wars” was signed in Compiègne, France. The date and specific timing were carefully chosen as a lasting symbol of that goal to end war for all time. While this eleventh day of November is still commemorated as “Armistice Day” in most countries, in 1954 the name

Armistice, continued on next page



## Standing Rock, from page 3

China to enrich a few and impoverish the many.

It breaks my heart to read at the time of this writing that the large camp Oceti Sakowin has been ordered to be cleared by the Army Corps of Engineers. They say they are concerned about cold temperatures and people getting sick at the camp. There was a big problem, however, with water cannons in freezing temperatures, mace, tear gas, rubber bullets, concussion grenades and even rifles with live ammunition being aimed at non-violent Water Protectors. We at VFP will continue to stand with the First Nation People.

Please make calls to Obama, the Army Corps of Engineers, Morton County Sheriffs office and all the other states who are sending police support to Standing Rock. Tell them to require Energy Transfers to comply with federal law and that no permits be granted until completed.

*Update: On Dec. 4th the Army Corps of Engineers denied Energy Transfers the permit to drill under Lake Oahe. A huge victory and a powerful reminder that collective direct action is the path forward to reclaiming our country. Great work all.*

*Our work is not done, however, as Energy Transfers has stated that nothing has changed for them. However if they continue to press forward with the pipeline under Lake Oahe they are breaking Federal Law and appropriate action should be taken, meaning the Military or Police should now intervene and arrest them. Please call President Obama and the Corps of Engineers and press them on this issue.*

*For those of us who have served in the US Military defending this country overseas, we find this work for the First Nation People of this land to be the first real service we have provided for this country*



*Jon Eagle Sr., Tribal Historic Preservation Officer at Standing Rock Sioux Tribe reported something wholly unexpected that happened at the Standing Rock Reservation Dec. 5. Veterans who gathered to join the Dakota Pipeline protest took a knee and asked for forgiveness. Wes Clark Jr. and the assembled veterans collectively asked for forgiveness for the genocide and war crimes committed by the United States Military against tribal nations in this country. Leksi Leonard Crow Dog on behalf of the tribes in attendance accepted and asked for forgiveness for any hurt that might have been caused when the Great Sioux Nation defeated the 7th Cavalry. The last thing he said to the veterans was, "And today we forgive and ask for world peace." All the veterans replied in a single unified voice, "WORLD PEACE!!!!"*

## Armistice, from previous page

and focus were shifted in the U.S. to "Veterans Day." Would the WWI doughboys be disappointed in our having relinquished that lofty goal? Have we conceded that we will be locked in perpetual war for the foreseeable future, war with its insatiable consumption and waste of lives, treasure and the environment? (from "Armistice is what's needed" published in St. Paul Pioneer Press, 11/10/16)

*Please share the following videos with those who did*

*not get the opportunity to attend this year's excellent forums:*

*Does our increased militarization cause abuses of power both abroad and at home? filmed at Hamline University by Bill Sorem at <https://vimeo.com/191087467>.*

*Forum at First Unitarian Society, Minneapolis, moderated by Mnar Muhawesh at [mintpressnews.com](http://mintpressnews.com).*

*Vets for Peace "Armistice Day" by Bill Sorem at <https://vimeo.com/191237318>.*

# I'm a conscientious objector to militarism

by Larry Johnson

It's not well known, but John F. Kennedy once said something like, "War will end when the conscientious objector has the same hero status as the Warrior." *Hacksaw Ridge*, the story of World War II conscientious objector medic Desmond Doss, is a small move in that direction. The movie has much more Hollywood battlefield violence than necessary, but the film definitely tells the story that C.O.s are not cowards, the standard accusation even from people who didn't serve. Not only does Doss refuse to cave on his position of weapons refusal, but he later risks his life repeatedly to save even fellow soldiers who beat him up physically and verbally.

I went to the movie the first day out because I served as a medic with no weapon, 1970-72. I was seriously working in the milieu that believed the Bible to be literally true, which included the need to kill godless heathen who might take our God-given freedoms. I was stunned, ethically and logically, with the discovery of equally conservative theology, the Mennonites and Church of the Brethren, continuing refusal to kill in warfare because the early Christians did that. I went through the C.O. process, writing a statement in the vein of John Prine's later "Jesus don't like killin', no matter what the reason for," but signed the blank that said if drafted, I would serve as a medic. That's what happened.

Leaders today don't want the kind of resistance forced by virtually everyone facing possible "service," so the draft is inactive. I conscientiously object to all militarism. The framers of the Constitution were opposed to a standing army, and I was asked to swear, when drafted, to support the constitution. I do, but I believe in total Universal Service, where all young people serve as "volunteers" for two years (as the military of old) at low pay, with housing and meals provided. If truly needed for defense, they can elect military service, particularly prevention of cyberattacks, treating climate change as a security issue, and nonviolent negotiation to eliminate the hypocrisy factor, e.g. "Why do you get to have nuclear weapons and we don't?" They can also choose social service, doing all the things that currently suffer because we constantly subsidize the massive portfolios of shareholders benefitting from the worldwide presence of the U.S. military. For those too old to serve, I support free

enterprise guru Adam Smith's recommendation (virtually unknown, toward the end of his classic, *Wealth of Nations*). He said peace is more prosperous for all, and everyone should be taxed up front, as prevention, to pay for wars. If they know they have to pay, they won't get into war unnecessarily, or carry it on indefinitely.

I am conscientiously opposed to violations of the Geneva Conventions, as well as the so-called "Just War Theory." Both forbid harming civilians, today's main war casualties, and I actually believe nuclear weapons, landmines, and such should be judged illegal to manufacture, because they kill civilians. The Pope has just convened high level ques-

tioning of the viability of Just War Theory, and the Lutheran Church in Minnesota has passed a resolution asking for in-depth questioning of our perpetual warmaking. I applaud these large church bodies for taking this on at the top, since the original, individual C.O. status requires religious backup. I think a lot of church hesitancy in these areas involves fear of losing big donors, but after World War I, Andrew Carnegie was donating vast sums to mechanisms for world peace. We ought to be able to get back to that, at least in churches.

I'm conscientiously opposed to the long history of covering up sexual assault in the military, and I applaud the brave women soldiers who have dared to speak out and make change. As a lifelong educator of children, I'm also conscientiously opposed to deploying parents, as I am to letting veterans come home to inadequate trauma treatment. The collective impact of these perpetuates dysfunction and violence into civilian family life as children grow up.

Finally, I'm conscientiously opposed to allowing guns to be sold as toys, as well as video games that let children kill for fun. Militainment, Inc. is a comprehensive study of the Pentagon's long involvement in funding "entertainment" like John Wayne war movies. Today it's the use of violent video games to overcome soldier resistance to killing, and that game spills over, accidentally or deliberately, into toy stores.

My book, *Sixty-one*, just published by Shipwreck Books ([www.shipwreckbooks.com](http://www.shipwreckbooks.com)), is about this broader

*I support free enterprise guru Adam Smith's recommendation; he said peace is more prosperous for all, and everyone should be taxed up front, as prevention, to pay for wars. If they know they have to pay, they won't get into war unnecessarily, or carry it on indefinitely.*

C.O., continued on next page

# Transformation to Peace at Carondelet Chapel

by Joan Johnson

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet and Consociates have been holding monthly services in their chapel on the 11th of each month since our country's September 11th, 2001 tragedy in New York City. For the last 12 years, Veterans For Peace Ch. 27 has been invited to help organize and participate in the Armistice Day (a.k.a. Veterans Day) program each November 11th. VFP member Steve McKeown has taken the reins on behalf of our chapter for this event, lining up speakers, bell-ringing and music. This year VFP member Roy Wolff joined him, and worked together with the Carondelet Justice Office Staff, Megan Bender and Marty Roers, to organize the Armistice Day service. Brigid McDonald (Sister of St. Joseph and Assoc. VFP member) and I led the singing.

VFP Assoc. Member Mary McNellis and husband VFP Member Stephen Gates each spoke on the theme of Transformation to Peace. Harkening back to the time of the original Armistice in 1918, Steve talked about the transformation of a war-mindset to a peace mindset and how the majority of people back then wanted a world without any more war, having just witnessed or been a part of this brutal slaughter. He reminded us that Armistice Day had been designated as "a day to be dedicated to the cause of world peace and to be thereafter celebrated." I was touched by Steve's remembrance of his grandfather and uncle, both of whom had been in World War I. His Grandpa came back whole, he said, but his Uncle Billy came home blinded and burned by mustard gas. "He rarely left the house and gave

up a career as a concert pianist," Steve lamented, adding "War is the same hell now as it was then; it is as urgent as ever to ring the bells for peace." Describing the bell he created, he gave us the story of bell-making with fellow VFPers. He stressed the importance of building a culture of peace, especially in this time of reckless military interventions by our government, as well as a hate- and fear-filled political climate. Steve ended with the words to all of us in attendance, "Thank all of you for your service to peace." That felt really affirming to me, and also motivating!

Mary spoke about her own personal transformation and journey into awareness of the impact of war on people. Her activism had been previously restricted to environmental causes, she said, but through helping Steve deal with his PTSD at the VA hospital, she became exposed to what she describes as "a whole other world." Through her cousin, she learned about VFP member Michael Orange, and subsequently attended VFP's Peacestock with Steve, where they heard Father Roy Bourgeois describe the School of the Americas (SOA) and the yearly protest held at Fort Benning. Mary immediately signed up for the 2012 bus ride down, which was the start of Steven and her becoming very involved in VFP and SOA Watch. She explained how her involvement in both organizations greatly changed her sense of justice and transformed her into more of a peace person, which she says is an ongoing process! In early October of this year, she and Steve trekked to the new SOA Watch location Nogales, a city shared by both Arizona and Mexico, and she gave a very moving description of that event (see article page 4). There was a stage on each side of the fence, and people shook hands and talked through the fence. The message was "tear down this wall," the opposite of "build that wall" heard frequently these days. Referring to the large Monarch butterfly puppets, "Migration has historically always occurred, it is unnatural to stop migration," she exclaimed. "Borders are artificial." Mary emphasized the truth that "Peace is not just the absence of war; there can be no peace without justice."

Roy Wolff read from Kurt Vonnegut's book *Breakfast of Champions*, which describes Kurt's conversations with WWI veterans. At the 1918 Armistice, many soldiers relayed how the silence that resulted when the bombs and guns stopped "felt like the voice of God." After Steve M. and Steve G. rang their handcast bells 11 times, there was a time for quiet reflection. "Prayers of the people" was led by the Justice staff, and we sang the closing song, "Peace is flowing like a river, flowing out from you and me, flowing out into the desert, setting all the captives free." Amen!

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## C.O., from previous page

conscientious objection, sandwiched around my 2007 *Sixty-one Mile Hike*, done to end unjust war, create fewer veterans, and stop throwing them under unethical defense contracts when they return. It is 61 short stories or essays, and the 61st says, "The Good Samaritan in Jesus story was one of those labelled the derogatory 'other' of his time (the one we bully, with fists or with bombs). I don't know how long a walk he was on when he stopped to help the injured member of the name-calling class, but I walk to emulate him. I was trained as a medic, and I walk with the hope that all of us will stop to help anyone injured on the battlefield of life." I conscientiously object to anything different.

## Preserving the message

by Ron Staff

The Minnesota Humanities Center held four evenings of facilitated discussions called, “Echoes of War.” The central text, *Standing Down: From Warrior to Civilian* from The Great Books Foundation (a non profit educational organization that developed the book for its program A Shared Inquiry) was circulated to participants at the third gathering. The fourth meeting was to observe the Ten Thousand Things theater companies’ production of Shakespeare’s *Pericles*.

Humanities centers all across the country are promoting conversations by veterans of their experience in the light of human recordings about that experience. The general public was also invited, but few showed up.

*Standing Down* was dangled in front of attendees as the trophy for attending all of the discussion groups.

Short pieces were read in the book during the first and second meetings. The discussions following each reading entered the wide areas of common experience.

Just the title of the book, *Standing Down*, has powerful meaning for most infantry soldiers and was identified as originating from WWI trench warfare. The soldiers who had been firing at advancing enemy soldiers in the no-man’s zone between opposing trenches, after a period of time were told to “stand down” into the deep trenches for a break from this fighting. Those waiting in the deep trenches would then be told to “stand to” the battle in the fighting trenches above. The military is always so very rational. Veterans know that that pose is merely the altogether human response to the chaos of humans taking one another’s lives. Such reasoned discussions, stand in stark contrast to those moments of utter randomness.

Yet, those moments are the magical times to which our monkey minds are attracted. Civilians always want to know “what was it like?” And the “You had to be there,” response is the short cut way of saying one feels nothing as there is “no time” for “feeling” at those moments. Emotions only come if you are the survivor.

But the killing and avoiding death of war are not the whole story. *The Iliad* was over a woman. No one has told

me what Vietnam was about beyond the platitudes about communism versus capitalist-democracy. With carefully managed discussion such issues are avoided. We were just dealing with the texts at hand. **Why Iraq needed to be**

**attacked for the second time in less than a decade was not a topic. The experience of the troops there was.**

Civilians and active duty personnel and veterans contribute to democratic understanding. With about one per cent of our total population participating in the military, veterans often end up in lonely places with no one near who has any idea of the sacrifice. Other veterans at main-line veterans groups, do provide an outlet for “war stories,” but questions about whether there should even have been a war don’t arise there.

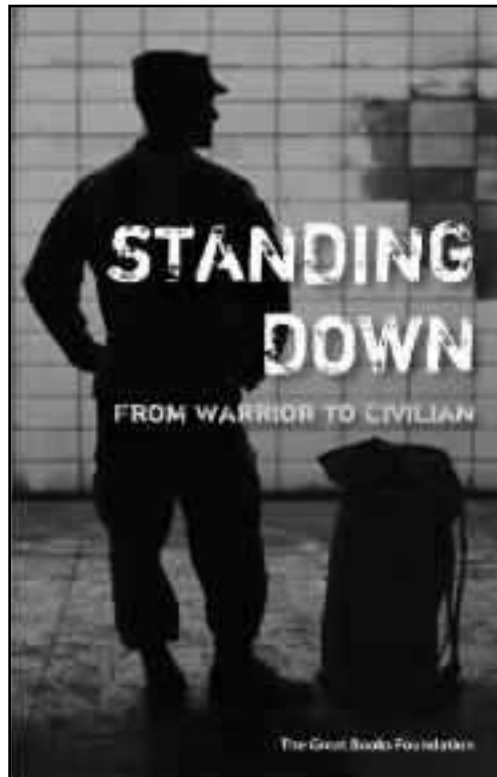
Leave it to “our betters” to decide where to send the killing forces. It is such a terrible responsibility and they are very important, special citizens who reach for and attain public office. Oops, my doubt does show through. I need to be more careful. One might think me unAmerican.

As the discussions began the first night; just about enough time had been devoted to introductions and getting to know one another. The very first piece discussed turned out to be from the *Washington Post* of May 24, 2013 by Sebastian Junger. Photocopies were passed around and people were given time to read the two page opinion piece.

The topic was the moral burden of war. And the author admitted to not being a pacifist, and then puts forward an interesting claim that “every war I have covered as a journalist has been ended by armed Western intervention.” No note is made of covert money in Afghanistan. The actions of American secret organizations are not included. The utility of creating war to engage our military so as to profit from the acquisition, use and replacement of ordnance is somewhere else in no narrative that is openly shared.

As James Welch notes in the epilogue to *Killing Custer*, “Since Vietnam, we have been questioning the need for war, or at least American involvement in wars.” Yet, Mr. Junger sees these activities as saving lives of foreigners whose countries we invade. No question about whether there is need for the activity.

Junger says: “In 2001, U.S. forces effectively ended a



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civil war that had killed as many as 400,000 Afghans during the previous decade and forced the exodus of millions more.” There is no attention given to the history of that mountain kingdom, which has been marched over and mainly passed through by armies and caravans for centuries. The Afghans stay and are a tough, fiercely independent and proud people. Who promoted the overthrow of the king? No answer. When Teraki killed Daude in 1978 to claim the leadership was it Russian money or foreign policy, which promoted and supported it? No discussion. After 9/11 the U.S. swept in and people stopped dying? I don’t think it was that simple, even if veteran Junger would have liked that.

One might hope that a humanities center could have provided clearer historic pictures of events; so as to discern the narrative put forward.

The subject of Sebastian’s piece is the disconnect between civilians and veterans, which is not a difficult point to make. However, the narrative about the cavalry riding to the rescue is deeply flawed.

**As a member of Veterans For Peace, opposing this Defense Department narrative is the same as breathing.**

It sucks. In fact it sucks big time. A billion here a billion there in Defense Department spending and pretty soon our schools are starved for funds. Other underfunded human services are portrayed as failing and blamed on those served. “You’re Fired!” is used by the wealthy against alleged immigrant job stealers. Just divide and conquer; over and over. Any nasty narrative to grab headlines and lead the cheer leaders. Thanks to noble leaders who slice and dice the voting herd, our political process is mass entertainment managed by soap sellers. It brings forth such honorable men, oh, and a few women and minorities to form a diverse picture.

In the war I experienced, it was minorities, who first called the whole thing into question by going out on strike, fully armed. The emptiness of “defending” a fictional democracy in Vietnam, had become transparent by 1968, five years before the political establishment caved in and quit. In two years Vietnam had ended the American War and became united as they could have been in the 50’s but for U.S meddling. Oh, and saved uncounted millions of Vietnamese from death and poisoning.

And James Welch is also a minority. Do I note white bias blanching?

## AMERICANISM

by Steve McKeown

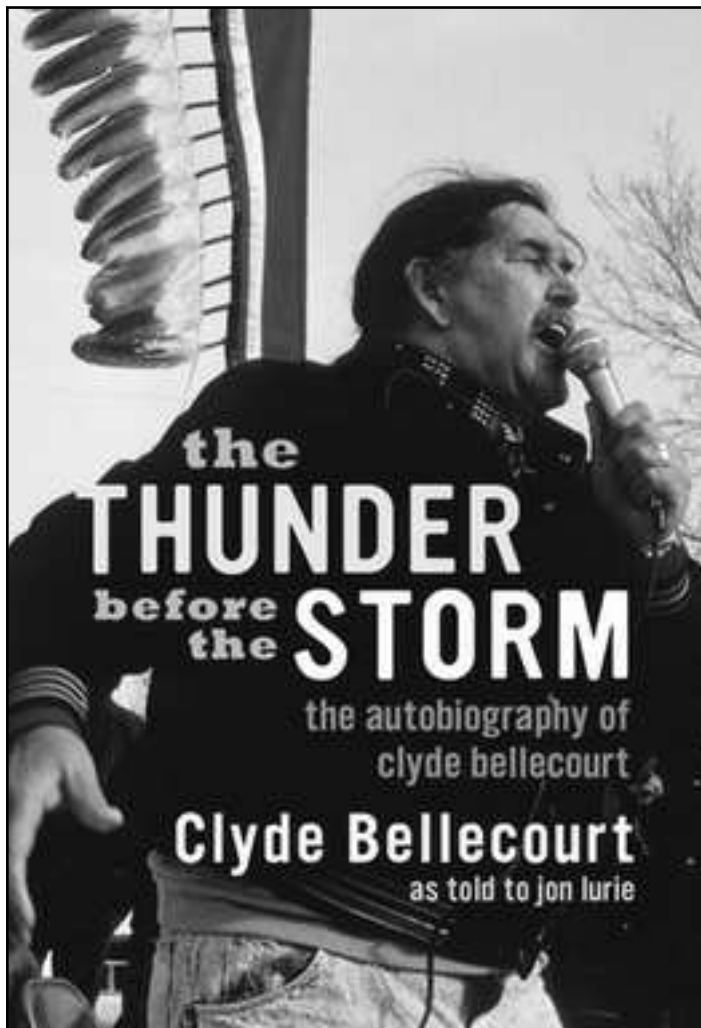
Now that it looks like we will be having 2nd place winner Mr Bigly (Mr B) as our Commander in Chief, and his highly principled Cabinet members in waiting; we should be soon getting a very good dose of Americanism. Since we are so fortunate to be the benefactors of this...thanks needs to be given to our lucky stars for COMEYGATE. I thought America stood a very real chance not to be great again. I suspect orders for flags (especially really big flags) are up as we await with anticipation for Jan 20th to go back in time. Does anyone know if the casinos are taking odds on this? Will students be writing essays? Will we have enough time to time-travel into greatness in between practicing flag etiquette? These are serious questions, but we can be confident that under Mr B’s leadership we will overcome. Someday we may even have our own Tower if only those naysayers don’t turn it into a Biblical Babble with immigrants.

But what if something strange happened, like someone whispering in Mr. B’s ear to go back to 1928 when the Kellogg Briand Pact was signed, and when the U.S. Postmaster ordered all of the 40,000-plus Post Offices to display this Pact because our Government wanted to promote Peace. It would be just as eerie if the other ear heard some propaganda that it was great that once upon a time we didn’t have nuclear weapons. Maybe Mr B would want America to be so great that he would scold the other nuclear nations for not signing the U.N. nuclear weapons ban and take the lead himself. America would be so great again that six-foot portraits of Mr B would be put up all along I-35 to Texas and we wouldn’t remember the Alamo...just Mr B.

Could his great vision for making America great again not just be in the past but in promoting his hotels all along the Mexican border as a Wall of Welcome with border agents and the NRA giving each border crosser a room with flag-draped wallpaper. Do we want to lose our Americanism to a recount? Jam the Washington switchboard now with the code name “Heil now” to save our country.

## I think I will like this book

by Steve McKeown



My son Josh and I had breakfast with Clyde Bellecourt right before he left for the veterans gathering at Standing Rock. He talked about his newly published autobiography *The Thunder before the Storm*, which is his translated spiritual name. In his own words: "This book is the whole truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God."

The book is published by the Minnesota Historical Society Press and can be purchased on Amazon, but Clyde would prefer if you ordered it through the A.I.M. Interpretive Center, 1113 East Franklin Av., Suite 103, Mpls Mn 55404 (www.AIM-IC.com or 612 886 2107).

## 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.

### ***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**

### Support Mayday Books

*Find a wide range of books and periodicals at 15% off cover price. All the time!*

**301 Cedar Ave., West Bank  
(downstairs under the bike shop)**

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.

## Johnson's Sixty-one now available

*Sixty-one*, by longtime Golden Valley, Minnesota, storyteller and former VFP chapter president Larry Johnson, emerged from the author's experience as a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War era.

Drafted to serve as an unarmed Army medic, Specialist Johnson was stationed in Germany. These sixty-one short essays span Larry's boyhood 50-mile hike, answering JFK's call for physical fitness in 1961; a 61-mile hike decades later when he turned 61 years old; and a 70-mile hike in 2016 known as the BEATING WEAPONS INTO WINDMILLS WALK.

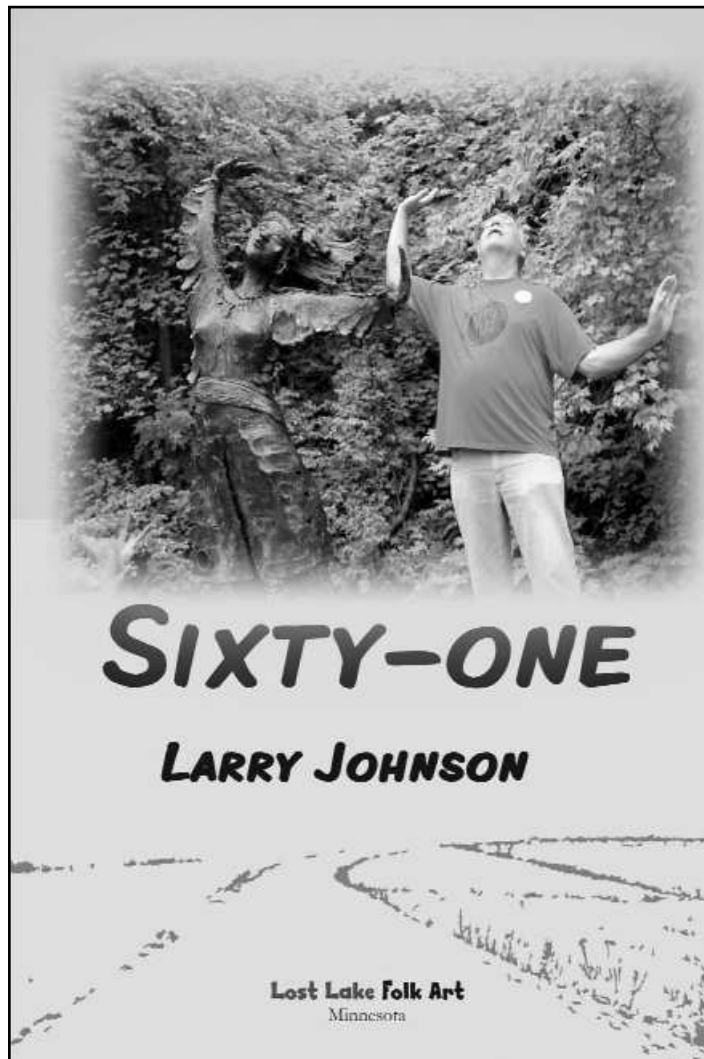
Together, the essays are a mantra for peace: less war, fewer veterans and an end to equivocation about veteran care, especially in areas of mental health and exposure to chemical toxins.

Publication of *Sixty-one* coincides with the recent release of Mel Gibson's new film, *Hacksaw Ridge*, the story of a World War II conscientious objector and Army medic, Desmond Doss.

Johnson saw the movie and responded, "My own experience being a C.O. medic was benign, totally contrary to the heroism of Doss, who risked his life to save many of his comrades, even those who beat him up verbally and physically for being a coward, a soldier unwilling to kill the enemy. Though I had not heard the Doss story before *Hacksaw Ridge*, my military experience led to a lifetime of changing the stories we live by, and sent me on a search for those deliberately left out of the narrative by a world bent on war. Who knew that the early Christians refused to kill in warfare? Who knew that the 'Just War Theory,' intended to replace that belief, stated that war is 'Just' if no civilians are harmed? When the Olympic torch is lit, do you automatically remember that the ancient Greek Olympics were revived in 1896 with the intention of replacing war with international athletic competition? People who quote free enterprise godfather, Adam Smith, conveniently forget that Smith advocated a war tax if armed conflict was pending. Why a war tax? Because, according to Adam Smith, 'If they know they have to pay, they won't get involved unnecessarily, or carry it on indefinitely.'

"Further, I know the majority have never heard of the *Dead Seymour Scrolls*, buried for posterity by a wise gopher, after almost destroying the neighborhood accidentally. It is definitely time to reveal the reluctant secret that the OGP (Old Gardening Party) was started in the late 70s to keep the world safe for children, gardening, and storytelling?"

*Sixty-one* is available for review. Just email [contact@shipwrecktbooks.com](mailto:contact@shipwrecktbooks.com). Put 61 in the subject line,



and don't forget to include your mailing address.

*Shipwreck Books Publishing Company, 309 W. Stevens Ave., Rushford, MN, 55971, 507-458-8190 [www.shipwrecktbooks.com](http://www.shipwrecktbooks.com).*

### 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



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

As of Dec. 7, 2016:

**At least 6,903 dead in Iraq and Afghanistan;  
over one million injured veterans.**

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

### **2016 canoe winner**



Barb Gerten from South St. Paul was this year's winner of VFP's cedar strip canoe. Barb and her husband were thrilled to win the canoe and anxious to give it a try, being first time canoeists.

Sadly this was most likely the final year for the cedar strip canoe raffle. It has been a good run where we have met a lot of folks, made a lot of friends and brought in funds. Fun, but it has been a lot of work too for the past eighteen or so years. Now is time to move into other avenues. Our local chapter is looking at the possibility of having a roving VFP bus and education center.