



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)



The so called "baby fence" ten feet from the border fence that created a no-man's land on the U.S. side of the border.

2018 SOAW Encuentro: "Dismantle Border Imperialism!"

by Mary McNellis

This year's Encuentro, "Dismantle Border Imperialism! Fight, Create, Power to the People," was timely and topical to put it mildly. There were over 1,000 students, survivors, community leaders, activists, and organizers from across the country and the globe, united in their resolve to close the School of the Americas, to end U.S. imperialism, and to challenge state violence. The SOAW gatherings are more relevant than ever in the midst of rising levels of state violence, xenophobia, white supremacy, and fascism.

This was the sixth year Stephen Gates and I attended the annual SOAW gathering; the first three years were at Fort Benning, the last three straddling the Mexico/Arizona border at

Nogales. We were joined by fellow VFP Chapter 27 members Dave Logsdon, Charlie Bloss and Steve Clemens. Doris Braley was also present, a familiar face at SOAW events, as well as other Minnesotans from the Mayflower Church contingent, and a large Witnesses for Peace delegation.

With all the Trump-generated hysteria over the arrival of the "dangerous" caravan of refugees from Central America heading to the border, we were greeted by coils of shiny, new concertina-wire coiled around the top of the pre-existing 30-foot steel wall on the border. Also new this year was steel mesh installed along the U.S. side from the ground up to about 10 feet, making it impossible to reach

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Prez sez: It's been an honor to serve

by Dave Logsdon

*"It's better to light a flame than to curse the darkness."
Eleanor Roosevelt*

My five year "reign of terror" is coming to an end on January 1st. It has been a genuine honor to serve as the president of Chapter 27. Although I wanted to strangle some of you (non-violently of course), we have shared some amazing journeys together, shared some good times, and hopefully, touched some lives. You know, you get by with a little help from your friends and I'm proud to call y'all my

In Memoriam

JOHN BRAUN

by Steve McKeown

This coming April will mark the 20th anniversary of weekly hour-long Wednesday Peace vigils on the Lake Street Marshall Avenue bridge connecting Minneapolis and St. Paul. John Braun and his wife Marie were two of the originators of this vigil, and were the mainstays in keeping it going. Even in declining health, John was there until earlier this year. The former priest, activist, scholar, father, and grandfather ran a family counseling business with Marie for many years. He was at countless demonstrations at Honeywell, Alliant Tech, The Guard Base, SOA, anti-torture rallies, and against our endless wars. He also stood for welfare, immigrant, and labor rights. John knew what he was talking about, what he stood for, and how to put it into action, including being arrested numerous times for those causes.

I met him 33 years ago when we were being tried for trespass at Honeywell. I still remember him representing our trial group with a very sound closing statement that did not equivocate. Above all, he was a good man with a kind and gentle spirit, and he treated everyone with fairness and dignity. The whole Peace Community is better off because of John's presence and influence on so many different levels, and he will be sorely missed.

friends.

I am a candidate for the National VFP Board and if I win, I will represent Chapter 27 with pride! If I should lose, I will still be around to help our new president any way I can. Mike McDonald is a good one, who has already made his presence felt as Vice-President and I have no doubt he will be a worthy successor to the throne. It's been a nice run, and I am proud of what I've done, especially this past year, in leading in a collaborative way.

*"Castles made of sand fade into the sea, eventually."
Jimi Hendrix*

Recently, I was at the School of the Americas Watch *Encuentro* at the Border. The school is now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security (WHINSEC), still training torture techniques and terrorism to Latin-American soldiers sent by some, not all, countries to the south.

The wall that separates Mexico and the U.S. is about as oppressive as it gets, but something that an activist who lives outside of Nogales, Mexico, said gave me hope. She told of a recent incident where a section of the wall collapsed. Because the concrete base is set in very dry desert soil, when there is a heavy rainfall the ground beneath this heavy structure turns to mush. As we are seeing with global warning, "Mother Nature" often has the last word. Let it rain, brothers and sisters, let it rain!

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/

Blocked message

Chapter 27 encourages all to contact their representatives to halt VA privatization and to fully fund and staff the VA. See article on page six for further information.

Encuentro, from page 1

through the steel columns. In the past people could hold hands. But the only contact now possible was to touch with “pinky” fingers. It is ironic that had this steel mesh been present on October 10, 2012, the mesh would have prevented U.S. Border Patrol Agent Lonnie Swartz from sticking his rifle through the fence shooting 16-year-old José Antonio Elena Rodríguez 10 times in the back. (Agent Swartz was recently acquitted of second-degree murder in a Tucson courtroom. The jury was hung on the charges of manslaughter, so those charges might be re-tried.)

Another new addition on the U.S. side was a “baby” fence placed 10 feet away from the “mother” wall, a no-man’s land where no one is allowed. It was announced from the stage that people were supposed to stand another three feet back from this barrier, although I didn’t see that this was enforced. At the concert Saturday night, from my vantage point on the Mexican side I noticed that the U.S. crowd stepped into this no-man’s space and hugged the wall as in years before. Apparently the border patrol was not expecting a crowd at that hour or couldn’t be bothered to harass the crowd. It’s interesting to note that the only place this “baby” barrier was erected was the space previously occupied by SOAW participants the past two years. This “baby” barrier is, I believe, typical of the hazing that used to accompany the SOAW events at Fort Benning, along with low-flying helicopters. The SOAW gathering must be making an impact!

In 2016, the first year the SOAW was held in Nogales, there were stages on both sides of the border, literally side-by-side, microphones being passed back and forth through the fence. Last year there was a smaller stage on the U.S. side. This year, with the no-man’s space enforced, there was only a token stage on the Arizona side, almost all of the activity happening south of the wall. This separation made the border seem all the more real, the gulf between the peoples of two countries all the greater.

This year Steve and I opted to stay on the Mexican side, giving us an opportunity to attend workshops at the school grounds where the Mexican workshops were held. It also gave us an opportunity to spend time with the Deported Veterans. Their presence has been powerful the past three years, their influence and profile growing since the SOAW moved to the border. At the Deported Veterans workshop, I



learned more about their plight. In 2016 I first learned about this group of veterans of the U.S. military living in Mexico after they had been deported from the U.S.

Nobody knows, not even the Department of Homeland Security, how many deported veterans there are. There are hundreds of deported military vets living in at least 30 countries around the world.

Nobody knows, not even the Department of Homeland Security, how many deported veterans there are. There are hundreds of deported military vets living in at least 30 countries around the world. Their issue has been slowly brought into mainstream American consciousness, largely by the efforts of committed activists in Tijuana. Veterans for Peace has a chapter located in Tijuana where they have a center called The Bunker, which is very close to the border crossing.

The Bunker has become less a refuge and more a cause: Their vision is to end the deportations of veterans, repatriate the ones who have already been deported, and offer support until they all go home.

I was surprised to learn that serving in the United States military does not automatically confer citizenship. It can smooth the way, provided the aspiring citizen is aware of what they need to do in order to apply for citizenship and gets it done within a certain time-frame. However, it’s not uncommon for enlistees to wrongly assume, having never been told otherwise, they have done all they need to do in order to be awarded citizenship, and thus all they have to do after their honorable discharge is wait.

Some veterans are deported due to bureaucratic snafus. One man was deported after he was unable to attend a hearing because he was in the hospital receiving surgery at the

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Encuentro, from page 3



time. Others do everything the way they're supposed to, filing their paperwork and appearing at their meetings, but still get deported, and no one seems to know exactly why. Once they are outside the U.S., they maintain a legal right to VA benefits such as healthcare, and to whatever funds they might be entitled, but they have no way of getting back into the United States to obtain that assistance, and there are no satellite offices outside the country to help them.

Because these particular veterans are either in the United States on green cards or without documentation after their discharges, they can be deported with cause, or for no reason at all. Past and present members of the armed forces are supposed to receive special consideration during deportation hearings, but the guidelines are inconsistently applied.

Some of these veterans have spent time in prison for assault or drug offenses, which makes their situation more difficult to parse, at least politically. Sympathy for those wounded on the battlefield under the American flag suddenly falters when it turns out they had entered the country without documentation years before.

Unless something changes for them, the only way most of the deported veterans will be able to return to the United States is by dying. By law, all military veterans (except those who have been dishonorably discharged) are entitled to burial in a national cemetery, and immigration laws don't apply to corpses.

On April 20, 2016, lawmakers introduced a bill to re-admit military veterans who were deported and who were not previously convicted of serious crimes. It would also prevent the removal of military veterans from the U.S. in the future. On April 13, 2018, Hector Barajas, the deport-

ed veteran who was one of the first to shine a spotlight on their plight, received his American citizenship, potentially paving the way for hundreds of other former U.S. military members.

The Deported Veterans I met in Nogales were very warm and friendly. Many have spent years living in the U.S. and are separated from their families and homes when they are deported. Some, having lived their entire lives in the U.S. don't even speak Spanish! Ironies never cease. Hector Lopez, Director of the U.S. Deported Veterans, insisted we visit The Bunker

next time we're near Tijuana, which we will certainly do. National VFP Prez Gerry Conlin went from Nogales to Tijuana to spend Thanksgiving with the deported veterans. He said quite a few veterans and friends turned out to share in a great feast and warm camaraderie. They saw many Central American asylum seekers camped out at the border. The Unified U.S. Deported Veterans chapter of VFP is helping to provide food and shelter, and appreciates any donations toward these efforts. (See website below.)

Maurice Martin, member of Berkeley VFP Chapter 162, served with the 82nd Airborne in Central America during the Reagan years. At the Deported Veterans workshop in Nogales, he told his story about why he is such a strong supporter of the Deported Veterans. He could be among them, having been discharged from the military with "catastrophic" PTSD from his experiences in Central America. He maintains that some veterans have been deported after committing crimes due to undiagnosed, untreated PTSD acquired during their military service. His battle cry is: "STOP AND RETURN." Stop the deportations, return deported veterans. It is a national disgrace to deport veterans who gave their blood, sweat and tears in service to our nation and be denied the privileges and care they earned.

I spoke briefly with Father Roy Bourgeois who said to be sure and give his love to all his friends in Minnesota. He said there will be a large SOAW gathering at Fort Benning in 2019 to honor the 30th anniversary of SOAW. He wasn't sure, but thought that there might also be a gathering at Nogales as well at some time during the year.

To learn more about this year's activities at Nogales, or make a contribution, visit the SOAW website: www.soaw.org/border

On the road again in our peace bus

by Craig Wood

If you want to get people's attention, drive around country roads in a white school bus with "ABOLISH WAR" written on it in bold, black letters. It's always a learning and teaching experience.

On October 12, now known as Indigenous People's Day, members of Veterans For Peace Chapter 27 took their show on the road to honor First Nation People and collect signatures for nuclear disarmament. On board were Dave Logsdon, Steve McKeown, Mary McNellis, Steve Gates and me. Mike McDonald and Paula and Ron Staff tagged along in their cars.

The first stop was Reconciliation Park in Mankato, a memorial dedicated to the largest mass execution in U.S. history; On Dec. 26, 1862, 38 Dakota Indians were publicly hanged after the U.S. Army sentenced them to death for attacking New Ulm settlers.

Our Twin Cities group was soon joined by others, including longtime activist Sister Gladys Schmitz and local VFP member Jim Brown who has been participating in a weekly peace vigil at Mankato's Jackson Park for over 10 years.

Armed with VFP flags and bells, we trooped around sidewalks next to a huge ceremonial buffalo and an imitation buckskin scroll inscribed with the names of the 38 executed Native Americans. Our vigil lasted 38 minutes with a pause every minute to commemorate each of the lost lives with a bell ringing. It was encouraging to hear appreciative honks and see so many peace signs flashed from vehicles driving along the busy road beside us.

Next we accepted an invitation to tour the First Presbyterian Church not far away. Our gracious hosts not only let us take turns ringing the congregational bell, which was rung during the first Armistice Day, they let us scramble up ladders and through ceiling access panels to see it. Visiting a belfry might be worth the climb if you like being up high and the airiness and scent of a drafty pigeon coop.

After spending a night in Luverne, where hundreds of Minnesotans had flocked to participate in the governor's annual pheasant hunt, we drove our eye-catching bus to the Pipestone National Monument near the South Dakota border. This area is considered sacred to tribes throughout North America because of a reddish, smooth stone harvested from its quarry's called catlinite or "pipestone." This material which is used primarily for carving ceremonial pipes was considered so vital by Native Americans that it

became a catalyst for truces between warring tribes who were mining the stone at the same time. Sworn enemies were expected to put their weapons down while in Pipestone.

Inside the park center complex we were treated to a live carving demonstration and received some schooling on First Nation history. After that we did a little site-seeing around the park's 3/4 mile Circle Trail, stopping now and then to admire the pristine beauty of Pipestone Creek, Quartzite Cliffs and Winnewissa Falls.

In keeping with the centuries old spirit of peace in Pipestone, we circled up for a little bell ringing of our own before heading home.

Were the founding fathers,
the creators of our
Constitution, legal immigrants?

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How Vets Can Save the VA: An Interview With Suzanne Gordon

by Jeff Roy

Suzanne Gordon is an award-winning journalist and author of a variety of books, including "Wounds of War: How the VA Delivers Health, Healing, and Hope to the Nation's Veterans" (Cornell University Press, 2018). Gordon is also a Senior Policy Fellow at the Veterans Health Care Policy Institute (VHCPI). She spoke on Nov. 30 in St. Paul at the Eastside Freedom Library. This phone interview was done recently by VFP 27 Member Jeff Roy, USMC, Vietnam, 1968-69.

Jeff Roy: How does the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) work?

Suzanne Gordon: The VA is the second largest federal government department. The VA has three agencies and the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is the largest of the three. The VHA is also the largest health care system in the U.S., entirely funded by the public, with its own doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals and more than 150 hospitals. It is the only fully integrated national health care system in the U.S. Veterans can seamlessly seek treatment anywhere in the country, and their medical history is immediately available to any of the facilities. Just as important is the integrated care that patients receive within each VHA hospital or clinic. To qualify for health benefits, veterans must prove they have either a service connected disability and/or are low income. Post 9/11 veterans get five years of coverage. Unfortunately, only about nine million of America's 20 million or more veterans are enrolled in and served by the VHA.

JR: The issue of VA health care and privatization is complicated, and many veterans find it confusing. The Trump Administration claims that the VA is doing a bad job caring for the health of veterans. The criticisms often refer to wait-time issues or geographic access to VA medical centers. What is the difference in care received by veterans at VA Medical Centers versus private sector providers?

SG: Multiple studies have found that VA care is equal to or superior to care in the private sector. For instance, many more medical staff at the VA understand military culture and use evidence-based practice. They understand the physical and mental health problems that have been created by military service, which people in the private sector just don't understand. I had a friend who was a Vietnam vet. He got treated at the VA for PTSD and all was fine. Then he got a job with a private health plan. When he retired, and this is

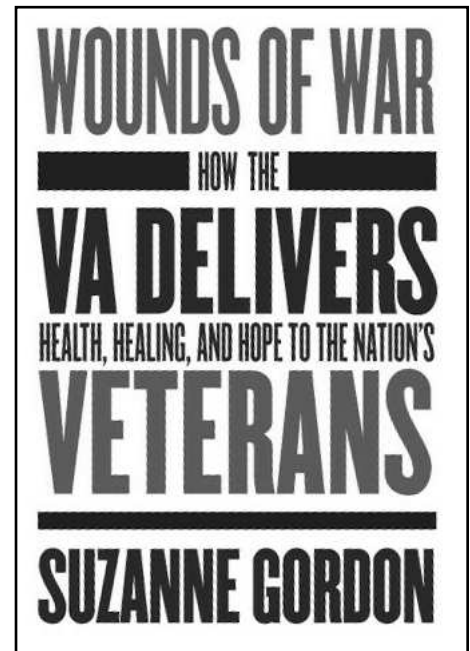
a common story, the PTSD re-occurred because he had so much time on his hands. He went to his private-sector doctor and reported that he was having trouble sleeping and having nightmares. The doctor didn't know about veterans, much less a Vietnam veteran and prescribed

Ambien, a sleeping pill. That's not how you treat PTSD. He went back to the VA and now is being successfully treated there.

JR: And yet in spite of those studies and the lack of knowledge among private-sector physicians, the Trump Administration succeeded in passing the 2018 Mission Act. Although allegedly designed to improve veteran access to health care, it essentially takes funding away from the VHA to enable vets to have a "choice" of health care in the private sector. Makes no sense, does it?

SG: It only makes sense if you are trying to privatize the VHA. The 2018 Mission Act provides no supplemental funding for private sector care. **Every dollar that goes to a less qualified private-sector doctor or hospital is taken out of the hands of more qualified VA providers who cost less but give veterans more.** These physicians in the private sector may be very well-meaning, but they have little or no competency in military health or culture. And, why should they! If you as a private sector doctor have 100 patients who are vets out of 3,400 total patients, it makes no sense to invest the time to learn about their particular problems. There's no incentive! You need a certain volume of veteran patients to understand these problems and that's why the VA is so good at dealing with vets.

JR: Let me play devil's advocate. What about a veteran who lives in a rural area, far from a VA center, and doesn't have much money. Is this lack of access not a valid criticism of the VA system and the need to outsource their care to the



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private health care sector?

SG: Access is a valid concern. But in reality, for veterans who cannot get to a VA, it's very unlikely that there is a hospital or specialty care clinic near them. Currently, there is a huge national shortage of primary care doctors and all sorts of professionals in rural areas. Eliminating the VA will only worsen the problem! About 55 percent of American rural counties have no socialworker, psychiatrist or psychologist. About 700 rural hospitals are expected to close in the next 10 years. That's because most health care professionals don't want to work in rural areas. There is not a high enough volume of patients to maintain their skills. And because lots of rural patients are on Medicare and Medicaid, and not on private, higher-reimbursing insurance, this is a disincentive for doctors who want to make the level of income they think they are entitled to.

JR: Why should veterans currently NOT eligible to receive care through the VA, like me, be concerned about the privatization efforts of the Trump Administration?

SG: First of all, if you are a veteran, whether you're eligible now or not, you might be in the future. So you would really want the VA to be there for you, in case you lose your job and health insurance. Second, if you have a catastrophic injury like an amputation, you will be covered by the VA. And third, if you're a young vet coming back from Iraq and you're fine now, but later develop asthma, which could be because you were posted near a burn-pit in Iraq, then you potentially have a service-connected disability.

JR: So, do you currently see vets responding to this privatization?

SG: No! I think veterans in general, except for Veterans For Peace, are not responding aggressively enough to the issue of privatization. The Veterans Service Organizations (VSO) set the stage for the privatization of the Veterans Health Administration when they supported the Mission Act. The VSO's knew it was unfunded. Now, basically, they're having buyer's remorse.

JR: Every Presidential Administration and Congress spends billions of dollars on military preparedness. Why is the VHA not fully funded and staffed as part of that preparedness?

SG: As Trump once said in disparaging Sen. John McCain, "I like winners!" We love people when they're playing soldier. And, it's not play, as you personally know. But, ever since the Revolution, we have not put our money where our mouth is. We've historically underfunded their care. The VHA costs much less than it would to provide high-quality care in the private sector. Because private care is so costly.

JR: Are you seeing some positive signs that VA privatization efforts are being resisted effectively? Now that

Democrats have taken back the House, do you feel more hopeful?

SG: Unfortunately, Democrats know next to nothing about these issues. I think veterans need to go to their Congresspeople to educate them. You know, many Democratic legislators voted for the 2018 Mission Act. And, the Trump Administration is currently considering implementing an eligibility standard based on "drive times" to the VA. So anybody who has to drive more than 30 to 60 minutes for an appointment would be eligible for what they refer to as "community care" (aka private care), all of which comes out of the VA budget. But, it's almost impossible to get to a doctor in the urban or rural areas without driving 30 to 60 minutes, particularly with traffic. **If you divert 30 to 40 percent of veterans into the private care sector, and underutilize the local VA hospital, you won't have a VA any longer.** I applaud Veterans For Peace and the Veterans Health Care Policy Institute as well as the American Federation of Government Employees (AFGE) and the National Nurses United (NNU) for their assertive stance on this. But, I don't see nearly enough attention being paid to this. This is a national crisis! Veterans need to pay attention!

JR: How can we get our Congressional leaders to listen to our concerns?

SG: It is the Congressional staff who are the ones who determine everything. Veterans need to sit down with staff immediately! And, Veterans For Peace is an amazing model of what else to do. Holding rallies, organizing talks on the subject. And we need to also educate the media. You can go to your local newspapers and ask "Where are the stories about what a good job the Minneapolis VA is doing?"

JR: What does your new book, *Wounds of War*, add to the conversation about VA healthcare and the push for privatization?

SG: I think my book is critical because it shows veterans and policymakers what the kind of care and services the VA provides. We don't appreciate our government or our VA. We don't understand the positive things that government does. Part of what the government does is take action that is often invisible to keep us safe when there are problems. Like keeping the air clean. By making sure the water supply doesn't have lead in it. By making sure the roads and bridges are safe. By preventing health problems. This is something the VA does well. We may focus on a particular veteran's suicide, but we don't think about the many suicides that the VA has prevented. We don't know about VA research and teaching, because the VA doesn't have the kind of advertising and marketing budget of private hospital systems. So, I think people need to read more about the issues, about the good things the VA is doing, and educate others.

The bells as a presence for peace

by Larry Johnson

I will always argue for being a “presence for peace” in the lives of young people. Whether they are children or grandchildren, or we work with them as teachers or youth leaders, young people want to see us BEING PEACE, talking from the heart, about important things. They don’t want a lecture.

About a month before November 11, my youngest grandson, Lincoln (11), honored me by asking for help with an assignment to write WHY I HONOR THE AMERICAN FLAG. I can hear many of us getting angry about the many injustices perpetuated by gift wrapping oneself in the flag, but most 11-year-olds, indeed most adults, aren’t ready to have that dropped on them like a bomb. Lincoln’s paper started with some of the traditional language, but I could see he had also been influenced by involvement in meaningful fun. I just helped with some editing, and the gist of his longer paper was this:

I honor the American flag because I am honoring my country and all its people. I honor the flag because I honor the troops that died in wars, the people that go to the moon, and the mechanics who make space ships. I honor the flag because then I am honoring Veterans.

My grandpa is a veteran. When he was 15, he did the 50 mile hike President Kennedy promoted.

When he was 61, he did a 61 mile hike, calling for less war and better veteran care. He was a medic in the military and he thinks we have too much war. When he was 70, his book, SIXTY-ONE, was published, and he did the 70 mile BEATING WEAPONS INTO WINDMILLS WALK. I walked with him on part of that hike. The book is about the hikes and what my grandpa believes about war and loving country.

He also made a bronze bell and rings it 11 times, especially on November 11, like people did when they hoped World War I would be the last. I get to ring it when I’m with him.

When he is older, my grandson may or may not deepen his connection to peace and justice, but I know he would not if I were stern, rigid and “lecturous” about it.

On November 11, we were part of a DAY OF PEACE

at Landmark Center, with our regular morning Armistice ceremony, hosted by President Dave Logsdon, and the afternoon event led by Landmark’s Judy Brooks. There was music by Dakota Blue, Larry Dittberner, Larry Long, and Jacqueline Ultan, as well as the healing harmony of Native American drumming and our Armistice Bells. We also had words of peace by Father Harry Bury, Tom LaBlanc, and Jack Nelson Pallmeyer. My part was to organize the PEACE FAIR, and to tell a story for “children of all ages”, something more inclusive for younger attendees. I was also pleased to be able to honor Ed Mucha, VFP member in whose memory the scholarships were given for this year’s MAP youth PEACE ESSAY CONTEST. Before recognizing Daisy Leonard of Dennison, Kyle Little of Cokato, and Joe Ramlet of Golden Valley, my statement was:

As we honor three young people who have written articulately on peace and justice, we also honor the 100th anniversary of the Armistice, ringing bells to remember all soldier and civilian war dead, but also to work for peace to end such needless slaughter. Our chapter, of course, has been doing that for 30 years, and 6 years ago we helped similar events to begin nationwide.

This year a national World War I Commemoration effort encouraged “traditional” Veterans Day events to remember soldiers who died with bells tolling 21 times, a remake of the usual 21-gun salute. In war, too many bells have been melted down for weapons, and would that multiples of the 21 guns be melted back into BELLS FOR PEACE. It is right to remember soldiers, mostly young people, who never got to live out their lives. It is more right to honor youth choosing to lessen the number of war-related dead, working and writing on issues of gun violence, climate change, refugees, abolishing nuclear weapons, and ending illegal war. It is our honor to support and empower them, and as needed, connect the dots so they see how all these problems are caused by, or heavily impacted by, our overdependence on war to solve international conflicts.

Finally, as we enter the holiday season, I thank the churches, all faiths, who rang bells with us on the 11th. I am reminded that in 1863 Henry Wadsworth wrote I HEARD

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The Peace Index

\$200 million to keep mothers and children away

by Frank Fuller

I don't know when this country became so frightened that we think a relatively small group of women, children, old people and, yes, some young men, all of whom are fleeing poverty, disease, failing governments, violence and hopelessness, will totally destroy us if we let them into the country. So we send our military to meet them at the border, knowing the military cannot enforce domestic laws, so soldiers just do administrative stuff and string razor wire.

All at the bargain price of about \$220 million. Six thousand soldiers sitting along the southern border wasting their time and training and our money.

This is happening at a time when reports are coming in that the deficit is growing "bigly" because of the tax cuts passed recently by Republicans.

And it is happening at a time when, here in the Twin Cities (as well as nationwide), there is a crisis of homelessness. Two large encampments of the homeless popped up seemingly overnight here and officials struggle to find solutions. And there is no easy solution because solutions require money and, of course, the money is going to the military. Just to help our president score some political points and get some kind of win.

So what are we losing?

Here are a couple of things where that money could be used to actually help solve, or at least alleviate, the problem of homelessness.

There is very little affordable housing in the Twin Cities

(or nationwide as well). But one affordable housing complex is being built along the Light Rail line on University Ave. at Hamline in St. Paul. It is a 108-unit building that costs \$28 million. The Metropolitan Council considers a \$1400 a month (or about \$16,000 a year) apartment affordable (but maybe not to the homeless). At any rate, all the rents in that apartment could be paid and would cost less than \$2 million a year. So five affordable units like that could be built and the homeless could live in them for nothing for five years and that would cost less than deploying soldiers along the border to fight off mothers and children.

Giving the chronic homeless apartments has been shown to save money. New Jersey spent \$5.4 million to provide housing vouchers to 450 homeless and found that overall costs of helping the homeless dropped by about half. Much of these savings came from the cost of health care.

The homeless account for about 33 percent of visits to emergency rooms, which is the most expensive way to treat patients in America today. Homeless people visit ERs an average of five times a year, costing an average of \$18,500 per person per year. They then spend an average of three nights in the hospital each ER visit, costing an additional \$9,000.

And 80 percent of the ER visits by the homeless are for problems that could be solved with preventive care and access to a primary physician, at a much lower cost.

But we send 6,000 soldiers to the border. It's a waste of money and keeps us from fixing the real problems we face.

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THE BELLS ON CHRISTMAS DAY when his son, a young person, was severely wounded in the Civil War. Usually we just hear the first verse, sounding like a Norman Rockwell Christmas card, saying, "I heard the bells on Christmas Day, their old, familiar carols play, and wild and sweet the words repeat of peace on earth, good will to men".

Rarely do we hear the end:

And in despair I bowed my head. "There is no peace on earth," I said. For hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on Earth, good will to men. Then pealed the bells more loud and deep.

God is not dead, nor doth he sleep. The wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on Earth, good will to men.

Would that churches everywhere ring bells of peace, paying attention to the whole lives of the "saints." Today, Dr. King is honored, even by Christians who once derided him as "communist." Yet, they, and indeed most others, leave out one of his final, most striking statements: "I had much hope when the Great Society began, but now I see clearly. We will never really end racism and poverty till we stop spending so much to send our young people, mostly poor, overseas, to kill poor people, mostly of color."

Keeping the Armistice Sacred

by Steve McKeown

Many of the churches that rang bells for Armistice Day put something into their bulletins regarding this day. The following is what St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church put in their bulletin:

“Today we commemorate the centenary of Armistice Day, which ended World War I and was to be the end of war. Parishioner Mikki Lindsay will share a story of childhood in wartime, and Prudence Johnson will sing for us. Veterans for Peace is also with us to ring the bell in remembrance, and our peacemakers are on hand in the Welcome Center. Also, join Veterans for Peace in the Daisy Room after the 11:00 a.m. Mass to learn how Armistice Day became Veterans Day in the United States. Thank you to all our guests as they call us to reflect on the tragedy of war and the great hope of peace.”

Julie Madden, the Social Justice Director at the Church, wrote the following passages which were read at both Masses :

“One hundred years ago today, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, churches rang their bells 11 times to mark the armistice that ended World War I. The war had claimed more than eight million lives. The Armistice was to be the end of war. The U.S. Congress passed a resolution in 1926 calling for ‘Armistice Day exercises designed to perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding, inviting the people to observe this day with ceremonies of friendly relationship with all other peoples.’

“Then, in 1954, Armistice was renamed Veterans Day, and the practice of commemorating the end of war and a commitment to peace faded away. Now, thanks to Veterans for Peace, we honor the Armistice again. We ring the bells and remember all we have lost to war.”

Fr. George Zabelka was the Catholic chaplain who blessed the Enola Gay on its mission to drop an atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, Japan in 1945. He spent the remainder of his life seeking forgiveness and reconciliation from the survivors.

He said: “War is totally incompatible with Jesus’ teaching. Christians should declare that we cannot and will not engage in or pay for it from this point in history on. What the world needs is Christians who will proclaim the follower of Christ cannot participate in mass slaughter. He or she must love as Christ loved, live as Christ lived, and, if necessary, die as Christ died, loving one’s enemies. We must all become prophets. We cannot leave this to our leaders, both political and religious. We must all do something for peace-

to save our world.”

Father Jim DeBruycker gave the homily and spoke about the senseless slaughter of the War, and the devastating terms afterwards that led to WWII. A bell was rung by Jean Heberle, Roy Wolf, and me. The music was exceptional and very relevant, and certainly very moving.

After the last Mass, Roy and I led a well-attended discussion about the Armistice. St Joan of Arc Peacemakers passed out Armistice information, and “End War “ stickers that many, if not most, of the 800 or so in attendance at each

Armistice, continued on page 13

Nuclear disarmament update

by Steve McKeown

Out of the 856 incorporated towns and cities in Minnesota, Women Against Military Madness and VFP have collected signatures in 504 of them, with 14,806 supporting the International Campaign to Ban Nuclear Weapons. We again plan on making appointments with our Congressional Delegation starting in January. Meanwhile more signatures are needed; please help. The following towns and cities from Minnesota with 20 or more signatures are as follows :

Andover-26; Anoka-43; Apple Valley-87; Blaine-58; Bloomington-367; Brainerd-62; Brooklyn Center-48; Brooklyn Park-93; Burnsville-78; Cambridge-22; Champlin-20; Chanhassen-25; Chaska-42; Columbia Heights-40; Coon Rapids-74; Cottage Grove-22; Crystal-52; Duluth-219; Eagan-128; Eden Prairie-119; Edina-343; Excelsior-34; Faribault-41; Farmington-26; Fergus Falls-21; Fridley-68; Golden Valley-73; Grand Rapids-38; Hopkins-151; Inver Grove Heights-42; Kenyon-25; Lakeville-41; Little Falls-38; Maple Grove-68; Maplewood-70; Mankato-179; Minneapolis-5,806; Minnetonka-168; Montgomery-22; Morris-30; New Brighton-62; New Hope-40; Northfield-155; Oakdale-24; Owatonna-29; Pipestone-20; Pine River-23; Plymouth-94; Prior Lake-40; Ramsey-22; Richfield-461; Robbinsdale-55; Rochester-56; Rosemount-33; Roseville-119; Saint Cloud-88; Saint Louis Park-274; Saint Paul-1,592; Saint Peter-67; Sandstone-34; Savage-38; Shakopee-58; Shoreview-57; Stillwater-46; South Saint Paul-33; Vadnais Heights-21; Waconia-27; Wayzata-26; West Saint Paul-35; White Bear Lake-36; Willmar-43; Woodbury-61.

Petition to ban nuclear weapons update

by Craig Wood

Most people would rather sign autographs than collect signatures. Veterans For Peace (VFP) Chapter 27 and others involved in the peace and justice community are not in the majority; they prefer to meet strangers and watch them sign their names on a sheet of paper attached to a clip board.

And they'll do it most anywhere, including on our chapter's two-day trip to Mankato and Pipestone. They are part of a collaborative effort between Women Against Military

Madness (WAMM), and VFP called "The End War Committee" who gather signatures calling for the abolishment of nuclear weapons. Their goal is to visit every town in Minnesota and get at least one name. So far, over 14,000 signatures have been collected from nearly 500 Minnesota towns.

The reactions were mixed as we prowled through the cafes, bars, VFWs, libraries, American Legions, antique shops and laundromats of nearly a dozen small towns. It was surprising how many were not only interested, but agreed with what we had to say and asked for a pen.

If the town was too small to support a public business or a post office, we knocked on grain elevator office doors or ambushed people working in their front yards and at an intersections. It was a chuckle watching Steve McKeown while he was driving the bus pause at an intersection and ask a woman inside an SUV on the other side of the street "We have an unusual request. We're going around to all the towns in Minnesota collecting signatures to abolish nuclear weapons and don't don't have one from this town yet. Would you be interested in signing our petition?" She did not think it was too unusual and signed.

Others didn't believe in our mission, like the vets wearing suspenders and playing cards with stacks of nickels, dimes and quarters in front of them at a VFW. Politics aside, they still invited me to join their poker game. Occasionally someone would snicker or offer other points of view; nobody insinuated violence in any way.

In the end, we accomplished what we set out to do which was to raise awareness and maintain a civil interchange of ideas with rural populations who probably wouldn't have heard our message otherwise. This after all was a major driving force behind our chapter's decision to office out of a roving bus instead of a room in the Twin Cities.

Back in town "The End War Committee" continues to collect signatures while making plans for more excursions including a possible trip to International Falls on the Canadian border this winter. McKeown thinks it's a good idea to let the townspeople know the anti-war crowd hasn't forgotten about them, even when it's 20 below zero. "They'd appreciate that" he said.

Meanwhile, don't be surprised if you see "The End War Committee" recruiting citizens for a nuclear-free world at local coffee houses, Menard's or standing in line at a restaurant waiting to order food; they're just doing their job.

Text of letter from the Archbishop

October 9, 2018

Mr. Mike McDonald
Vice President
Veterans for Peace

Dear Mike,

Thank you for your recent request for me to notify our parishes about the Armistice Day church bell ringing effort organized by Veterans for Peace Chapter 27. Many, if not most, of our parishes and schools regularly pray for an end to war and for all of our brothers and sisters to welcome Jesus, our Prince of Peace, into their hearts. I support your efforts to "Reclaim Armistice Day" and to educate all people as to its history and the ultimate goal of world peace.

In consultation with the Archdiocesan Office of Worship, I am asking our Office of Communications to send to our parish bulletin editors information on the bell ringing effort and a short announcement to print in their bulletins, if they see fit. I am confident many of our parishes will participate and most importantly, pray for peace.

Please know of my gratitude for your efforts and my continued prayers for Peace and all those who seek it.

Sincerely in Christ,
Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

Not About Heroes: Play looks at two poets of WWI

by Joan Johnson

Not About Heroes, by Stephen MacDonald, is a very moving play which depicts the relationship between Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen, two prominent British war poets who formed an unbreakable bond of friendship in the midst of World War I. Off-Leash Art Box's well-executed production, directed by Kristin Halsey, with lighting design by Paul D. Herwig, featured Andy Schnabel as Sassoon and Mitch Ross as Owen.

From his experiences of trench warfare and having lost a brother and close friend,

officer and decorated war hero Sassoon gradually became disillusioned with war. Heavily influenced by the pacifist views of Bertrand Russell, he eventually wrote a scathing letter in April of 1917 to his commanding officer, refusing to return to duty and denouncing the war from his hospital bed. It soon became public, read aloud in Parliament and published in "The Times" (July 1917). **"I am making this statement as an act of willful defiance of military authority," he wrote, "because I believe that the War is being deliberately prolonged by those who have the power to end it."**

As expected, Sassoon faced a court-martial, but his



Siegfried Sassoon and Wilfred Owen

friend and fellow poet Robert Graves intervened, convincing authorities to instead send the "shell-shocked" Sassoon to Craiglockhart War Hospital for Nervous Disorders near Edinburgh. This is where he met Wilfred Owen, who suffered from shell-shock (PTSD), and who completely idolized Sassoon for his past writings. At their first meeting, Owen asked him to autograph six copies he had purchased of one of Sassoon's books.

From this moment on, we witness the changing dynamics of their unfolding friendship: the poetry mentoring Sassoon gave Owen, their profound discussions as they

grappled with the horrors of war and their own involvement in it, the eventual influence of Owen upon Sassoon's writ-

Heroes, continued on next page

Suicide in the Trenches By Siegfried Sassoon

I knew a simple soldier boy
Who grinned at life in empty joy,
Slept soundly through the lonesome dark,
And whistled early with the lark.

In winter trenches, cowed and glum,
With crumps and lice and lack of rum,
He put a bullet through his brain.
No one spoke of him again.

You smug-faced crowds with kindling eye
Who cheer when soldier lads march by,
Sneak home and pray you'll never know
The hell where youth and laughter go.

I Saw His Round Mouth's Crimson By Wilfred Owen

I saw his round mouth's crimson deepen as it fell,
Like a Sun, in his last deep hour;
Watched the magnificent recession of farewell,
Clouding, half gleam, half glower,
And a last splendour burn the heavens of his cheek.
And in his eyes
The cold stars lighting, very old and bleak,
In different skies.

Witness against Immigrant Deportation



On a cold November morning VFP members Dave Logsdon, Pepperwolf, Joan Johnson, Mike McDonald, Steve Clemens, Tom Bauch, Craig Wood, and Steve McKeown were present at a monthly vigil protesting the deportation of immigrants at the Federal Whipple Building in Mpls. Dave spoke about his upcoming trip for the SOA Watch presence at Nogales, and Steve read a statement by National VFP Executive Director Michael McPhearson regarding deported veterans. People should call in support of HR 3103 to help count the thousands of veterans world wide that are deported.

Heroes, from previous page

ing, and their tender declarations of love and loyalty to one another.

They both returned to active duty, and each gave a reason for returning. That part of the play was extremely difficult for me to watch, much less comprehend, especially after viewing their enlightenment about war and its futility. Sadly, Owen was killed on Nov. 4, 1918, one week before the Armistice was to be signed. Sassoon was wounded again, but survived and, although very heartbroken over the death of his dear friend Owen, went on to write more poetry and autobiographical novels.

Superb acting, effective stage lighting, coupled with very relevant and powerful poetry recitations, resulted in a captivating play that gripped our attention from start to finish (you could quite literally hear a pin drop in that theater!). Several printed war poems by Owen, Sassoon, P. Shelley and R. Brooke were included in the program. Two of their poems are reprinted on opposite page and I encourage the reader to research more of their poetry and prose, as well as the stories of their lives.

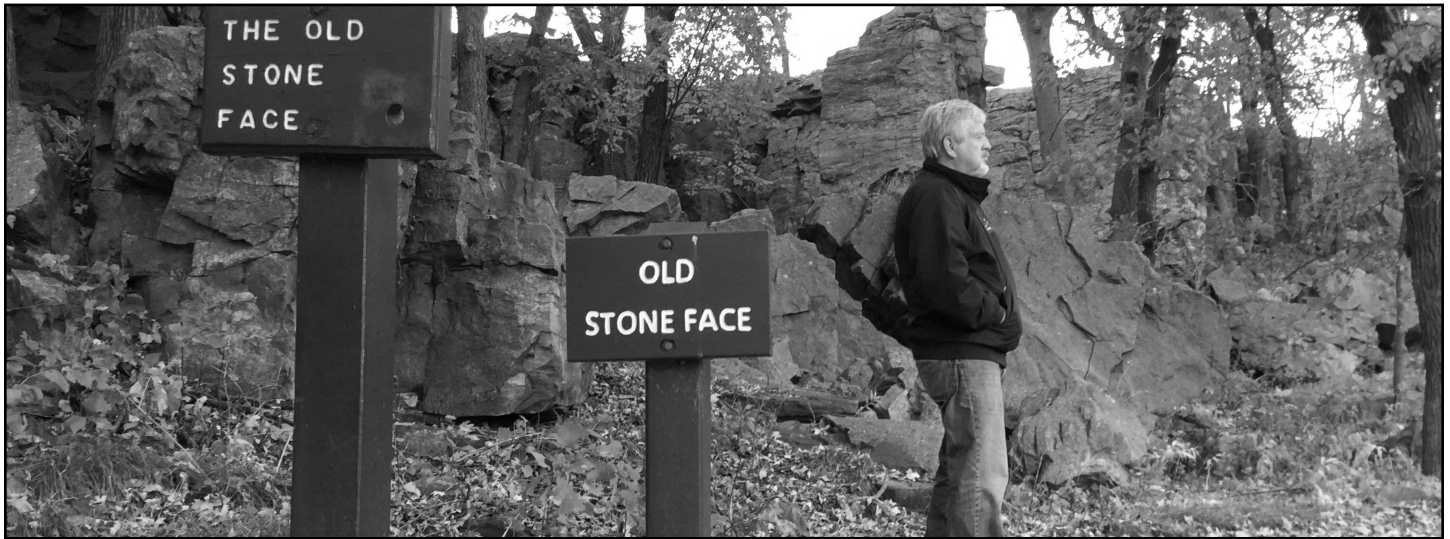
Armistice, from page 10

Mass wore.

There were 36 churches in Minnesota (that we know of) who rang bells and informed their congregations about the Armistice. Given the extent of Larry Johnson's outreach, and the letter that our VFP Vice President Mike McDonald received from Archbishop Hebda that encourages parishes to honor this Armistice Day (see copy of letter on page 11), there undoubtedly were many more churches who participated. A couple of other examples were the Basilica in Minneapolis, ringing its large bells for 11 minutes, and St. Albert the Great, thanks to Mickey Patterson, where the ringing of 50 hand bells by many children was done.

Later in the evening, Roy and I spoke again at the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, with Joan Johnson providing the music, along with Kathleen Olesen. Prayers for the community and the world were led by Megan Bender, with participation from the congregation. We have helped put on a service with the Sisters of CSJ for many years now, each November 11th.

Vigil and pilgrimage



Dave Logsdon at the Pipestone Monument.

by Ron Staff

Members of our chapter traveled the areas around Pipestone National Monument the day after our witness and silent vigil in Mankato. It was Oct. 12th, the day others observed a European holiday arising out of the religiously authorized taking of non-Christian lands from people living there. Recognizing and honoring the grief brought by the “discovery” of another continent and biological insult brought in the mere meeting, remains a horror which is unacknowledged.

That smallpox came with Columbus and knocked off the ruling Inca, when his court got the report from their “royal messenger,” has been reported but not publicized. Perhaps because it would “rewrite history.” Which brings one to that interesting epithet, “don’t rewrite history.” One wonders how come? How come one would not find it liberating and clarifying to straighten out the first casualty of war: “truth.”

Veterans of Vietnam even named their first printing company, which produced poems about that mess, First Casualty Press. This nodding reference to Aeschylus (525-456 B.C.), “In war, truth is the first casualty,” also initiates conversation around the place for “rewriting history.” Of course, if one does not “rewrite history” then one seems to be left with living with the “myth” of the reason for the war in the first place.

Now we are back in “modern times” and Donald’s “fake news” issues. As is common with politicians, who always want to be first off the line in a new direction, that direction is often a misdirection, as at a magic show. “So it goes,” as

Kurt Vonnegut used to opine.

Having lived through the allied bombing of Dresden as a prisoner of war, Vonnegut’s insights have remained invaluable to any right thinking person interested in the democratic process.

In making the pilgrimage and vigil we veterans displayed our humility before rural citizens since they have a similar amount of time to read and reflect on the doings in Washington and state and local governing bodies. With their governing bodies more apparent due to the few who live there and local actions stand out.

The collection of anti-nuclear weapons signatures fit well with peace at the core of the trip and our mission as a chapter. Finding the outlines of who is willing to show up for peace and justice is always a worthwhile task.

EVENTS CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

4:30-5:30 pm Weds. Lake Street/Marshal Ave. Bridge vigil. Note: time changes Nov. 1: 4:30 to 5:30.

Monthly VFP chapter meeting, 2nd Sun., 6:00 pm, 4200 Cedar Av. S.

Every Tues of Month 7:30 am vigil in front of Federal Whipple Bldg south of Hwy 55 and 62 with the Interfaith Coalition on Immigration.

The People's Protectors is engaging but shameless

by Mike Madden

The People's Protectors is a documentary that was produced by the Twin Cities PBS affiliate TPT. It is the story of five Native Americans (four veterans and one civilian) who recall their memories of the American War in Vietnam and carry a reverence for the U.S. military to this day. The film concludes with veteran Sandy White Hawk's explicit call to military enlistment as the path to becoming a respected leader and protector of the people.

TPT's website places the film in this perspective: "Even as they struggled with their relationship with the United States government from genocidal policies and government oppression; the Dakota, Lakota, and Ojibwe warriors still felt compelled to honor their duty to their people as Akichita/Ogichidaag/ Warriors, as protectors of the people." Given 50 years of hindsight, it should be clear that Vietnam posed no threat to America whatsoever, and the people most in need of protection were those on the receiving end of U.S. hostility.

It is not that empathy was lacking among the interviewed veterans. Vince Beyl described the destruction and relocation of a village. He said that the villagers looked at the soldiers with hate as they burned their homes and killed their livestock, and that "some guys were getting off on it, but I wasn't." Valerie Barber told the story of her cousin, a combat veteran, who at times couldn't bring himself to shoot the Vietnamese enemy because "they looked too much like us, they were just skinny boys trying to be soldiers." What is lacking, however, is any examination of the larger picture. Why did the United States go to war against Vietnam? Was it a just cause? Who is accountable for the enormous suffering, destruction, and death? Protectors concern themselves with such matters and, most importantly, try to prevent recurrence.

The film was engaging. The narrative was coherent. Interviews were interwoven with historic images from the Vietnam era and innovative animation. The interview subjects were sincere, humorous at times, and likable. But overall, it was a shameless celebration of militarism with a complete marriage of U.S. military and native warrior cultures. There is grand entry footage from present day pow wows, where people wear camouflage fatigues together with war bonnets. Eagle staffs are in procession with American flags. The incongruity is jarring. One can see in that image, the

ongoing native conflict between assimilation and decolonization.

Any objective look back on the American War in Vietnam would recognize those who tried to stop it as the foremost protectors. But like the Burns/Novick documentary before it, *The People's Protectors* is more interested in veneration of the soldier than it is in recognizing true guardians and defenders. It perpetuates the myth of the abused coming-home soldier. Vince Beyl spoke of anti-war demonstrators as "contemptuous of our warriors." He is currently part of "Ride for the Troops," a motorcycle group that supports troops returning from present day wars because they "know what it's like to have no support." Of course the anti-war movement has never been anti-troop. Veterans, active duty soldiers, and civilians have long been allies in the movement. Furthermore, when a nation has engaged in an unnecessary or aggressive war, there is no better way to support the troops than to bring them home.

In mainstream America today, there is an obsessive and reflexive idolatry of all things military. It should not be surprising that there is a parallel stream within Native culture. Disheartening as that is, one of the veterans in this documentary exhibited what I believe to be the true character of a protector. Art Owen, who died October 29th of this year, told the story of his return from the war. He found himself living in Minneapolis, adrift in drugs and alcohol and having difficulty re-entering civilian life.

One night while drinking at the Corral Bar, he felt a building rage, and he feared he was going to hurt the next person who "said something stupid." So he left the bar and started to run. He ran until he was exhausted. He woke up the next morning seven and a half miles away in Minnehaha Park. He greeted the new day by remembering his father and saying a prayer. "And it helped," he said. It may have been the day he became a true protector.

Art Owen's expansive view of what it means to be a protector was admirable. It included all people, even those he didn't know and hadn't met. It meant that one's first obligation was to gain control over one's own worst impulses. By extension, protectors strive to eliminate harm done by those who claim to be acting in their name. May you rest in peace Art Owen.



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Winter 2018-19 Newsletter

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SUPPORT THE TROOPS! BRING THEM HOME ALIVE NOW!

As of Dec. 4, 2018:

**At least 6,979 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.**

Minneapolis City Council passes resolution commemorating 100th anniversary of the WWI armistice



VFP members at ceremony after the Minneapolis City Council passed a resolution establishing a commemoration for the 100th anniversary of the WWI Armistice.