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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)



VFP Members travel to CUBA

by Barry Riesch

After years of admiring the ability of the Cuban people to stand up to the U.S. government and hoping to one day visit, opportunity finally knocked last December. Medea Benjamin of Code Pink announced plans to take a group prior to the holidays, so Dave Logsdon and I grabbed the chance to go.

The U.S. imposed an embargo against Cuba beginning in 1958 to prevent arms sales to Cuba during the Batista regime. This also involved a series of trade and travel restrictions enacted in response to the Cuban Revolution. It is the longest trade embargo in history.

While President Obama worked to ease restrictions with Cuba in 2017, President Trump repealed individual people-to-people travel more than one year after President Obama introduced it. On June 4, 2019 President Trump issued new travel regulations

barring most commercial cruise ships sailing from the U.S. to Cuba.

That is when the Treasury Department announced that the U.S. will no longer allow cruises to Cuba or the group educational and cultural trips known as "people to people" travel to the island. As of June 5, 2019, cruise ship and yacht travel, as well as private and corporate aircraft travel from the United States to Cuba is no longer allowed by U.S. regulations. The Department of Commerce's Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) made it illegal for passenger and recreational vessels (including cruise ships, yachts and private and corporate aircraft) to visit Cuba.

Despite the easing of restrictions under President Obama, the embargo is strictly enforced and companies have been fined \$5.2 million for violations since December 2014.

Cuban trip, Continued on page 3

Notes from the President . . . **Military spending is killing us**

by Mike McDonald

The U.S. military budget is higher than the next 12 countries combined! The average U.S. taxpayer pays the military over \$4,000 a year. And the President's budget wants an increase. Each taxpayer already gives twice as much money to Lockheed Martin than to child nutrition programs.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s words are truer than ever. "A nation that continues year after year to spend more money on military defense than on programs of social uplift is approaching spiritual doom."

VFP Chapter Goals 2020

Speaking in schools, churches and community groups;
Reminding the public of the costs of war;
Working to eliminate nuclear weapons;
Militarism effect on the environment;
Collaborating with other groups on mutual issue actions and responding to crises when possible;
Recruiting veterans who are younger, female, and people of color;
"Save Our VA" anti-privitization fight and working towards single payer medical care;
Advocating for gun laws, especially banning assault weapons;
Meeting with congressional members and their staffs.

F-35 boondoggle

According to Vice.com, the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program is the poster child for "government waste and dysfunction."

For the cost of this \$428 billion Lockheed Martin program, the U.S. could: bring fiber optic internet to every home in the country; pay for a year of mental health care nationwide; repair or replace old bridges in the country; or abolish student loan debt.

Those are just a few examples. Instead, we have an airplane that can't shoot straight.



Socialism?

This is a letter to the editor of the Star Tribune which Mike McDonald wrote.

A recent writer claims democrats are dangerous agents for socialism.

Here's the definition for Democratic Socialism: a philosophy that advocates for political democracy alongside a socially owned economy, with particular emphasis on workers' self-management and democratic control of economic institutions within a market socialist economy or some form of a decentralized planned socialist economy. In simpler terms, empowering people over corporations.

Here's the definition for Fascism: a form of far-right authoritarian ultranationalism characterized by dictatorial power, forcible suppression of opposition, and strong regimentation of society and of the economy. In simpler terms, close to what we have now.

We can argue forever about what kind of 'ism' we have now, or want in the future. But perhaps the old 20th century labels don't fit 21st century problems. We need drastic changes soon to deal with a myriad of problems worldwide.

Cuban trip, from page 1

The statutes prohibit most imports and exports between the U.S. and Cuba, with exceptions to exports that support Cuban people, information dissemination, and humanitarian assistance. Travel is restricted for Americans with exception of 12 categories of legal travel. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce estimates that the costs to U.S. economy are \$1.2 billion annually, while Cuba estimates its own losses are \$753.69 billion.

Our trip with Code Pink was legal and licensed under "Support the Cuban People." That means we can support the Cuban people but not their government. Our visit was primarily educational as we traveled to many sites in and around Havana. We visited an organic farm, a Community Project Granjita Feliz, in Guanabacoa. We met with senior citizens who teach and take classes at the University of Havana. (Cubans take their education seriously and it is a top priority for them.) We visited a neighborhood, much of which was wiped out by a storm, and is now being rebuilt with government help. Housing is a priority in Cuba where basic housing for all is provided. We met at the community theater Alba with the grassroots cultural project Okan-Tomi, dedicated to works of traditional music and dance, offering workshops to young people and the environmental education community project Espiral. We learned about their work and challenges, and how we can support them. We visited the community project Muraleando, which promotes arts and culture among independent artists. We visited a street cultural project founded by painter and muralist Salvador Gonzalez Escalona in 1990 with the objective of creating an arts space full of murals, sculptures, music, etc., to improve living conditions for inhabitants of that community, as well as rescue and offer tribute to the African Diaspora. We visited Cuba Libros, an English-language bookstore and coffeehouse founded in 2015 that has built around coffee and literature, ethical and social responsible business practices, a cultural events schedule, an organic farm share, donation projects and more. We Visited SANTA CLARA the central province of Villa Clara to explore the city and visit various historical sites including the Ernesto Che Guevara memorial and museum.

We also spent time in old Havana and ate daily at fine restaurants with entertainment by Cuban musicians. Plus many other great meetings with economists, professors, organizers, etc. All in all a full and educational trip.

I found the Cuban people to be very warm and welcoming. Their struggles are primarily caused by the stranglehold the U.S. government imposes on them. They are a remarkable people who have endured the U.S. blockade and still have a high level of literacy. Cuba has 100 percent liter-

acy (while the U.S. is 125th in the world with 86 percent literacy) and universal healthcare.

My experience with the Cuban blockade is that it is cruel and unnecessary. Why is Trump continuing with these sanctions? My guess is that our government dislikes the current Venezuelan government, and because Cuba supports President Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela and relies on trade with them, they must be punished, too. Also I believe Trump wants the Florida Cuban vote, and caters to Senator Rubio, who he hopes will deliver them.

Irish update

by Paula Staff

Two members of U.S. Veterans For Peace, Tarak Kauff and Ken Meyers, were arrested in Ireland on St. Patrick's Day, 2019, at Shannon Airport while carrying a banner protesting the misuse of this civilian airport in neutral Ireland by the U.S. Military and CIA on their way to and from illegal wars and occupations in Afghanistan and the Middle East.

Both activists are charged with a misdemeanor and were treated as dangerous criminals. They spent 13 days in an Irish jail. They were not offered a speedy trial and their U.S. passports were seized.

While in Ireland, Tarak and Ken teamed up to walk through different communities under the name of "Boots On The Ground For Freedom." They talked to support Ireland's neutrality, to protest its role in facilitating U.S. wars in the Middle East, and to demand that they be allowed to go home.

Tarak arrived back in the U.S. last Dec. 3rd to a welcoming committee. Ken arrived the next day and flew back to New Mexico on Dec. 5th. He was met by a welcoming committee there.

In the future, Tarak plans to return to Ireland in March 2020 to support Irish friends facing a trial. Both peace activists are required to return in April, 2021, for a trial in Ireland. Tarak also put out a new publication called "Peace&Planet News" in February. If you are on the Peace in our Times mailing list, you probably will receive his publication.

View from VFP National Perspective

by Dave Logsdon

"The secret to getting ahead is getting started."

Mark Twain

Well, like a bad penny, I am back on the National VFP Board of Directors! Someone dropped out and I got the call. Actually, I was continuing to do the same projects I was working on when I was on the board before; now I have a direct line to our new leadership team! Speaking of which, our new President and Vice-President are both younger vets. Adrienne Kinney and Jess Medvan are President and Vice-President respectfully, the first top leaders of VFP that are women! There are still four 'Nam vets and the rest are all post-Vietnam. There has been a sea change in our organization which has been, in my humble opinion, mostly good. We continue to work on the ongoing funding issues, etc, but my comrades on the board are a talented bunch. These are intense times, and we can't mess around.

*"Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement.
Nothing can be done without hope and confidence."*

Helen Keller

Trying to do too much and over-committing can be as counter-productive as doing nothing. With Veterans For Peace and their standing in the community, the opportunities to leverage our mission statement for the greater cause of world peace comes fast and furious sometimes. We are a very small slice of the veteran community and nobody's get-

ting paid, at least not on the local level. Nationally, we have a hardworking crew at our national office in St. Louis, and they are paid. A vital cog, these folks are our communication hub and are worth every penny we pay them. We are very lucky to have in place a dynamic bunch of folks on the board and in our office. There is a ton of work that needs to be done, and if we all pitch in we can accomplish a lot.

Sail on..Sail on!

The Golden Rule is one of those big dreams that has become a reality. Not unlike our own battles to make the Harold and Louise Nielsen Peace Center Bus a reality, we are also making the Golden Rule ship-shape and seaworthy! The ship has been island-hopping around Hawaii and beyond, garnering lots of press and doing presentations to increase awareness in our quest to abolish nuclear weapons. The next stop is Hiroshima in August for the 75th memorial of the dropping of the atomic bombs on both Hiroshima and Nagasaki. If you have some money to donate, the Golden Rule Project is a worthy cause. Please go to veteransforpeace.org for information on how to do that.

*"Oh no I said too much,
I haven't said enough!"*

REM

If you have picked up this Newsletter by chance and are looking for a way to amplify your voice, to create a legacy for you, your children and grandchildren, please feel free to join our ranks!

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/

Nuclear disarmament treaty

by Steve McKeown

A member of Veterans for Peace and the WAMM “End War” Committee, Jay Kvale gave me an excellent book, titled *Disarming the Nuclear Argument, The Truth About Nuclear Weapons*, written in 2017, by Dr. Timmon Milne Wallis. The author dedicated his book with the following inscription: “to all those nation-states taking part in UN negotiations to ban nuclear weapons worldwide...may your efforts help to move us towards a world free of nuclear weapons.”

Wallis’s approach was to “dig out the truth about nuclear weapons by examining the arguments for these weapons and putting them to the test.” In every case spanning 20 common arguments for them he found that they failed their premises. He claimed that his book wasn’t about presenting a balanced view, in which “each side of the argument is given equal weight; and neither turns out to be more right than the other.” Instead, he writes that his book is about “the truth of the matter, and how he tries to seek this out to determine what that is.” In my estimation he succeeds not only in his arguments, but also in his concluding summary of “30 Truths About Nuclear Weapons.”

Besides respecting Jay’s considerable knowledge about the subject, what drew me to this book was something Wallis wrote on the back cover: “Nuclear weapons are too important to be left to politicians and generals. They need to be discussed in the pub, at the school gates, and even the kitchen sink so that people are aware of the issues involved and have the opportunity to think them through.”

The End War Committee and our local chapter of Veterans for Peace has done that, and done so on an extensive scale by collecting nearly 23,000 signatures on paper in support of the UN Treaty to Ban All Nuclear Weapons. We obtained signatures from all the 851 incorporated towns and cities and from 41 that aren’t incorporated in Minnesota. We are now in the process of making appointments to meet with our U.S. Representatives and Senators. Representative Omar has stated that she supports the Treaty. Calls to them, especially to our Senators (they are the ones who need to ratify the Treaty), are important. Something to remember when calling is a quote from Gandhi: “Action expresses priorities.”

Our Senators’ phone numbers are: Sen. Tina Smith (651 221 1016), and Sen. Amy Klobuchar (612 727 5220).

Falling on his sword for the Constitution

by Ron Staff

At the impeachment hearings, Lt. Colonel Alexander Vindman upheld his interpretation of defending the Constitution. To whom might he turn for a review when his Commander in Chief seeks punishment?

How will our media treat this mere question of justice? Do they even know or care to ask? Or is this another matter of “our essential country” falling down in the practice of democracy? While our citizens are instructed that their concerns are being attended to by their elected human citizens, who are so much better at understanding what is happening, that everyone can relax.

Unfortunately, just a little scoop embarrasses those “vaunted-betters” so only small publications, locally circulated for free, become the source of useful questioning.

As veterans of the same employer, the Department of Defense, as the colonel, perhaps it is up to us to make note of the wrinkle in the system, which encourages those who seek to lower justice standards for personal benefit. Enlisted men often make such verbal critiques a part of their language. Thus the phrase “ring knocker” arises; indicating military academy graduates who might well sacrifice men to advance their own personal military careers.

During the American war on Vietnam, the body count race may have played into officer advancement. Would the public ever know or care? Yet, these are the human citizens who are called upon “to protect and defend the constitution against all enemies, foreign and domestic,” like the colonel did.

All humans are subject to flattery. Those with some sense of humility quickly recognize it for what it is. Those unfamiliar with humility are easily beguiled by skilled flatterers. Perhaps such could be attributed to the “current occupant.” Would he even recognize that he was being manipulated?

What might that mean for self government and an “essential country’s” influence? Constant doubting undergirds any real democratic organization. Welcome to our work.

Heroism?

by Jim Lovestar

Reprinted from MEN TALK, Twin Cities Men's Center, www.tcmc.org, 612-821-6424

Fifty years ago, when others my age were going to college or dropping out, I was struggling to find meaning in being a member of the United States Marine Corps. Keep reading, this isn't a story of Vietnam tragedy or mayhem. Well, some of it is.

During my high school years, I was a dork. Bullied, low grades, an outsider. I slogged through with one goal in mind: join the Marine Corps and be a hero. Like in the books. I thought that the uniform would mean men would respect me and women would love me, carnally as well as emotionally. In recent years, as a member of Veterans for Peace, I sometimes speak to high school students and boil it down to this: "I joined the Marine Corps to get laid. It worked. Later, she dumped me."

So, I wanted to be a hero. As John Lennon, or someone, once said, "Life is what happens when you're making other plans." My plans involved combat in Vietnam, medals, the romantic war story.

Life, acting through the Marine Corps, happened and made me an office clerk, miserably sitting at a typewriter behind a desk every day. Every day. Of course, I know now the romantic war story is BS. My first lesson in that came several months after I began sitting behind that desk. I was taken out of my unit and assigned to another one called Escort Platoon. The men in that outfit were tasked with escorting the bodies of Marines Killed in Action (KIA) back to their families. There were too many bodies to manage, so along with two other men in my unit, I was also given that duty. I asked the old-timer driving me to the airport, with the dead Marine in back why I was picked for this assignment. I had been in less than nine months and was working with quite a few men with more rank and time in the service than me. So I was puzzled. He simply asked me to compare my height to those with all the aforementioned qualifications. **I was taller than all of them, and he noted that appearance was more important than experience. He was pointing out the BS of the situation for me.** I took a while to grasp what he was saying.

The first Marine I escorted home lived the life I, in my naivete, so much wanted. He was a big, strong all-conference linebacker, senior class president, greatly beloved, and married his high-school sweetheart.

AND, he was sent to combat in Vietnam. He was definitely not a dork. None of that protected him when he

tripped a booby-trap that vaporized his body from the ribcage down. This outcome was not part of my romantic war story. He didn't even die a heroic death, just made a simple mistake. Everybody makes mistakes, right?

Many people assume doing the body escort must have been difficult. It wasn't. For some reason I intuitively understood that there was nothing, I say again, nothing I could do to make things better. Just follow the orders I was given and be quiet. At the time I did that without knowing what I was doing. The realizations I note above are the product of many years sitting in a men's group and looking at myself. That, and listening to what other men observed in me.

And that part about being a hero? I consider the times I step up and do something I'd rather not do as heroic, especially when it is in service to my community. When someone says, "Thank you for your service," that is what I am accepting thanks for. Fifty years ago, I wasn't really paying attention. Now I am. Oh, and the people who I say, "Thank you for your service" to are the ones who pick up my garbage every week, no matter what the weather. That, in my eyes, is heroic.

Support Mayday Books

*Find a wide range of books and periodicals
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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, have a cup of coffee and talk with whomever happens to be there. Find that book you have been looking for.

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

Save Our VA National Conference report from Washington

by Jeff Roy and
Arlys Herem,
SOVA Action Committee

We came together from across the nation to confront the American political establishment over the future of veterans' healthcare. And where better to do that than in the establishment's own backyard: the House of Representatives in Washington D.C. Veterans For Peace activists came from San Diego, San Francisco and Portland in the west; Minneapolis, Milwaukee and St. Louis in the Midwest; and Boston, New York City and Asheville, North Carolina in the east.

We descended on Washington D.C. for the first "Save Our VA" National Conference where we met each other, developed and deepened our lobbying skills, and held 33 meetings with Congressional Representatives and staff from both parties as well as most members of the House Veterans Affairs Committee. We always pushed our message that Congress needs to fully fund, staff and strengthen the VA, as called for under House Resolution 701, and we met with the staff of Minnesota Representatives Collin Peterson and Ilhan Omar. Rep. Omar's staff was particularly supportive of our cause. Lastly, we participated in solidarity at rallies organized by two VA worker unions: The American Federation of Government Employees and the National Nurses Union.

Veterans have no time to waste! Under the continuous assault being waged by both Congress and corporate interests (big Pharma, etc.), the VA healthcare system has been systematically maligned, defunded and de-staffed. Today there are some 50,000 vacant positions at the VA (mostly clinical staff like doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, psychologists and others). If this continues unabated, the high-quality healthcare provided by the VA for such conditions as PTSD, Toxic Exposure, Military Sexual Trauma and Traumatic Brain Injuries will be lost!

Much of this systematic plundering of the VA has been happening as a result of the 2014 CHOICE Act and 2018 MISSION Act that were sold as "pro-veteran" and mistakenly supported by major veteran service organizations like



Veterans for Peace national members Jackson Shepard, Jeff Roy, Bruce Carruthers and Arlys Herem lobbying with Rep. Ilhan Omar's Veteran Legislative Staff, Ryan Morgan (center).

the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and Disabled American Veterans. These Acts promote the diverting of veterans to often lower quality private-sector care. And yet, several studies, including the VFW's own annual report on VA healthcare, show that over 83 percent of veterans across the nation clearly prefer VA healthcare to private-sector services.

How You Can Help!

Since June, 2019, Chapter 27's SAVE OUR VA Action Committee has organized monthly informational picketing actions near the VA Medical Center. These actions have had as many as 20 activists turn out, including VFP veterans and supporters from VA workers' unions and universal healthcare advocates.

But we need you, who are reading this article, to join us. Please consider and contact us soon at sovaminn@gmail.com.

We are also planning a late-April event featuring noted Veterans Health Policy Institute researcher and author Suzanne Gordon, who wrote the definitive analysis of the VA healthcare system, "Wounds of War." We encourage you to attend and to learn more about the issues.

Finally, the "Save Our VA" Action Committee has successfully reached out to unions and veterans groups like the VFW to encourage them to support SAVE OUR VA resolutions that will broaden public understanding of the issues, draw more activists to our movement and thereby impact the views and voting of our state's Congressional Representatives.

For the Kent State 50th, truth matters

by Laurel Krause

On May 4, 1970, my sister Allison Krause was one of the four students killed by Ohio National Guard gunfire, with nine students wounded, during a Kent State University student demonstration against the Vietnam War.

Fifty years later, credible evidence that emerged in 2010 indicates that when Allison protested President Nixon's Cambodian invasion, the military occupying her Kent State campus and the draft lottery, she was target-assassinated by the U.S. government.

Back in 1970 my parents, Arthur and Doris Krause led the fight for accountability, truth and justice by taking Allison's killing to U.S. courts. My parents fought for Allison's right to protest and against her wrongful death as she protested, and against Kent State's continual whitewash of massacre truth. Nine years later, civil litigation settled and Kent State lawsuits ended. In the 1979 settlement for Allison's killing, we received \$15,000 and a "statement of regret" as an Ohio National Guardsman countered, "This is not an apology."

Instead of investigating, acknowledging and making amends for a government's militia killing unarmed student protesters on May 4, 1970, over the last 50 years the U.S. government and Kent State University have ignored, minimized and propagandized the true facts and impacts of what happened that day. In 2020 for the 50th, they're still revising the narrative to support their view of the facts of Kent State.

Wishing to learn Kent State truth from observers and participants, Emily Kunstler and I launched the Kent State Truth Tribunal at the 40th anniversary of the Kent State massacre. In 2010 at three Truth Tribunals (Kent, San Francisco, New York City), we filmed the stories and testimonials of original witnesses and participants of the Kent State massacre.

Also in 2010 at the 40th, Kent State truth exploded with Stuart Allen's forensic examinations of a tape that was recorded on a Kent State dormitory window ledge at the time of the massacre. Allen isolated the Kent State Commands-to-Fire in the massacre that authorities have consistently denied. Allen also discovered elements of U.S. government complicity in the recording he examined.

Instead of Kent State or the U.S. Dept. of Justice examining and investigating forensic expert Stuart Allen's Kent State reports, Kent State University worked to discredit and bury Allen's forensics, and the U.S. Dept of Justice refused

examination into the Kent State Commands-to-Fire.

At a Kent State 45th meeting with KSU President Beverly Warren, we asked Kent State University for support to complete the online Kent State Truth Tribunal archive. Warren offered no resources to Allison's family or the Truth Tribunal, and denied us. Warren chose to ignore Kent State Truth Tribunal as a recognized contributor.

When President Warren presented her Kent State plan for the 50th, she told everyone her plan was endorsed by 12 of the 13 Kent State surviving families. Allison Krause's family, my family, still hasn't received Warren's communique that the other 12 received,

because Warren didn't include us. We are still not permitted to share our views and remain persona non grata for the 50th. Failing to treat all Kent State survivors equally, Warren denied my family's participation at the 50th.

In March 2019, when Kent State University Trustees voted on Warren's 50th plan, KSU administrators took over the Kent State massacre 50th festivities and a more than \$2 million budget for commemorative planning and events. Ending four decades of Kent State commemorative tradition, Warren's plan also revoked the KSU student-run May 4th Task Force's meaningful participation in commemorations.

After the 49th Kent State in May 2019, Stephanie Danes Smith, a retired 25-year CIA Senior Intelligence Executive, was hand-selected by Warren to lead the Kent State 50th committees, making national headlines via Common Dreams. Across America, supporters of Kent State peace reacted with revulsion, noting Vietnam War crimes and torture perpetrated by the CIA. A robust email protest ensued, forcing Danes Smith to step down as Chair.

At Kent State for the 50th, Danes Smith still promotes her version of May 4th, molding the perceptions of current Kent State students in a class about the massacre for Kent State freshmen. With cohorts at KSU they're even offering two five-day Summer 2020 classes, **PAYING middle and high school teachers \$1,200 to earn CEU credits as they learn Danes Smith's massacre propaganda.**

Looking into Kent State's 50th team, we see the Kent State Executive Director of University Media Relations for the 50th was a 20-year careerist in the Ohio National Guard. And the May 4 Visitors Center director was employed at the

Over the last 50 years the U.S. government and Kent State University have ignored, minimized and propagandized the true facts and impacts of what happened that day.

Kent State, Continued on page 12

The Little Bus that could . . . and did!

by Dave Logsdon

In the Fall of 2014, we received a \$20,000 gift from the Estate of Harold Nielsen “for the purchase of a building to be used for peace activities.” That language in the bequeath became a quandary, nay, a popsicle headache for the chapter. After almost a year of trying to decide how we were going to acquire a building for \$20,000, our attorney, Ellen Abbott’s husband Jerry Krause, suggested, “How about a peace bus?” We went back and forth for a while on how to get permission from the estate to interpret the bequeath in this way. So as chapter president at the time, I sent a letter via our attorney stating how we were going to honor Harold and Louise’s memory with a peace bus that will travel the state promoting peace. On Christmas Eve I got a phone call from our attorney, “They loved the idea!” Then it was on to the next step.

The Next Step...

Democracy is a messy business! We formed a committee to figure out what kind of bus, what to spend, what size bus, yadda, yadda, yadda. Bruce Berry and Craig Wood wanted a ready-to-go bus in great condition, but more expensive. Steve McKeown and I wanted a older bus (cheaper) that we could upgrade. A year lapsed and we could not get past the stalemate until finally Steve and I prevailed. We shopped online where Craig and Steve found an old small school bus in Fairbault, and we made the \$3,000 plunge!

Can you say Sweat Equity?

Now we had this funky old bus that had to be transformed into a Peace Bus! We had to fix a hole in the roof to keep our minds from wandering. We had to dismantle and strip down, and paint to “de-school bus” it! Craig Wood, to his credit, along with Steve did the bulk of the heavy lifting on this project even though he (Craig) was a vocal opponent of getting this fixer-upper. Rick Jacobs, Doug Drews, Mike McDonald, and Vern Hall pitched in as well. And I helped too, kind of, well not much at all. Later that year we took it on the road to the annual Fort Ripley Open House protest and the bus was roadworthy. We made it there and ALMOST made it back! Breaking down by the Walker Sculpture Garden got us a lot of free exposure!

The Year of the Walk!!

Early the next year (2018) Kyong Jung came to our February meeting with a request. She had heard about VFP

through her art teacher, who was a friend of VFP’s David Cooley. Kyong wanted to do a 323-mile walk from Rochester to Bemidji to mirror the walk her mother did from North to South Korea. We told her that she would not walk alone! Enter the Peace Bus! This was a 20-day commitment and we only had three VFPers who could drive the bus legally. Craig and I took turns being the “sag wagon” for the walk. The walk and the people we met were described in the Summer 2018 issue of our newsletter. What a powerful experience.

Le Grande Tour...on the road again

Last year was a busy year for our little bus! We parked on five different “Open Street” events in Minneapolis, which are attended by thousands of people. We handed out stickers, invited people onto the bus to ring a bell for someone they lost and write in a logbook any remembrances. We also gathered signatures to ban nuclear weapons. Our goal was to collect signatures from every incorporated town in Minnesota!

Steve drove his car to all parts of Minnesota, petitioning at garage sales, county fairs, restaurants, bars, coffee houses, VFW’s and even door-knocking at people’s houses. This is also where the bus came in handy, because towards the end, Craig joined him, taking turns with driving the bus to missed areas and corners of Minnesota. The intrepid duo collected signatures and stories and finally got signatures from every town (851) in this very big state!

Well, there you have it, get ready, the magic peace bus may be coming to your town next!

**"When we Glorify War,
we are not
honoring the dead,
we are enticing the
living to join them."**

**Smedley Butler
Four-Star USMC General**

An Assassination and Five Days of Propaganda

by Mike Madden

On January 3, 2020, General Qassem Suleimani, head of Iran's Revolutionary Guard Quds Force, was assassinated outside of the Baghdad Airport in a missile strike launched from a U.S. Reaper drone.

The assassination was unlawful. It violated long standing domestic prohibitions on the political assassination of foreign leaders. Iraq called it a violation of its sovereignty and voted to expel U.S. forces from its territory. The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Killing, Agnes Callamard, called it a violation of international human rights law.

This rogue attack, placed in the context of decades of disastrous U.S. interventions in the region, deserved universal condemnation. Yet in the next five days, while the story dominated the headlines, the PBS NewsHour deployed the many techniques of propaganda that defend the indefensible and maintain public support for U.S. hegemony.

Let the Demonization Begin

Even though legal justification for the strike was non-existent, PBS NewsHour could still manufacture consent for the deed by persuading their audience that General Suleimani had it coming. With near unanimity, hosts, reporters, and guests alike set about assassinating the character of the already-dead General:

Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA): "Was he a despicable killer? Absolutely he was."

Senator James Risch (R-ID): "This was a bad person."

Admiral Mike Mullen: "The loss of Suleimani is equivalent to the loss of bin Laden or Baghdadi... so it's good riddance to him."

Mara Karlin (John Hopkins School): "We can all agree he was a horrific human being."

Senator Mitch McConnell (R-KY): "This evil man operated without constraint and countless innocents have suffered."

Ambassador Ryan Crocker: "...he was a blood enemy."

And no PBS newscast is complete without comment from anonymous sources. Foreign affairs correspondent Nick Schiffrin paraphrased unnamed administration officials thusly: "We had to kill this person. He's got so much blood on his hands. We couldn't give this shot up."

Understanding that Suleimani was alleged to have provided materials and training to Iraqi insurgents who in turn targeted U.S. troops in Iraq, an objective observer might wonder just how that makes him any different from U.S. generals who formulate strategy, logistics, and training for the proxy forces that America backs around the world. PBS NewsHour held no such curiosity.

Neither was the nation of Iran spared the torrent of negative words that serve to create prejudice and advance the U.S. goal of regime change:

Correspondent Nick Schiffrin: "The symbol of Iran's ambitions is dead, but the ambitions themselves are very much alive and unchanged."

Correspondent Jane Ferguson: "...their tentacles have spread so far across the region."

Representative Mike Gallagher (R-WI): "The obstacle to peace is their own terrorist sponsoring, murderous regime."

Representative Jason Crow (D-CO): "Iran has been a dangerous and aggressive actor for decades."

The Bad Actor Narrative Goes Unchallenged

Among the many guests who appeared on PBS NewsHour to portray Iran as an aggressor and a destabilizing force in the region, three stand out as having direct experience in that regard. Prior to their election to the U.S. House of Representatives, both Jason Crow and Mike Gallagher were military officers who served in the Iraq War. Ryan Crocker was the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq from 2007-2009.

The Iraq credentials of all three were highlighted in their introductions. PBS NewsHour anchor Judy Woodruff interviewed Gallagher and Crow, correspondent Nick Schiffrin interviewed Crocker. Surely Woodruff and Schiffrin were aware that many have called the Iraq War an illegal act of military aggression, most notably former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. They must also be aware that, by near-

ly every conceivable measure, the Middle East has become less stable in the aftermath of the 2003 U.S.-led invasion.

This failure to hold U.S. actions to the same level of scrutiny as Iran's can only be described as journalistic malpractice. It is journalism with an agenda. And the agenda being pursued by PBS NewsHour is to cast the United States in the most favorable light possible and to build enmity toward its official adversaries.

Undisclosed Conflicts of Interest

Michael Doran of the Hudson Institute, who was by far the most hawkish of guests, appeared on the January 7th edition of PBS NewsHour. This was their first newscast following the Iranian retaliatory missile strikes on a U.S. airbase in Iraq. In addition to his explicit advocacy for war, his regard for Iraqi sovereignty is noteworthy.

This failure to hold U.S. actions to the same level of scrutiny as Iran's can only be described as journalistic malpractice. It is journalism with an agenda.

"We have no choice now whatsoever. We're under attack. This is war," he said. "The Prime Minister is a lame duck. There's a constitutional crisis in Iraq right now. Until we have a new government in place in Iraq, the statements he's making don't really matter. So the question isn't what the Prime Minister is saying, or what half of the parliament is saying. The question is what are we going to do about this direct attack on American forces, and there's no choice here whatsoever. We have to demonstrate to the world they can't treat us like this.

"Iran is like a puffer fish. It looks powerful because of these militias, because of the precision guided weapons, and because of its boldness... It is behaving in this fashion in order to look much stronger than it is. We can best this adversary with relative ease."

It is a questionable exercise of judgment to invite comment from a person who was a shill for the Iraq War. It is inexcusable to obscure conflicts of interest. The Hudson Institute is not just "a think tank in Washington DC," as it was described by PBS. Its vice president, Lewis "Scooter" Libby, is a felon, convicted for perjury, obstruction of justice, and making false statements. His crimes were committed in his capacity as Chief of Staff to former Vice President Dick Cheney as they sought to gin up a case for war against Iraq.

General Atomics is a funder of the Hudson Institute.

It also just so happens to manufacture the Reaper drone, which fired the missile that killed General Soleimani. Other funders include Northrup Grumman and Lockheed Martin. War with Iran would be good business for these military contractors, and their ties to Hudson should have been revealed.

Ryan Crocker's introduction also fell short on disclosure. It is true that he is the former ambassador to Iraq, but he also serves on the board of the U.S. Agency for Global Media, the government's acknowledged overseas propaganda arm. It supervises longstanding outlets like Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. More recently, it introduced Alhurra, an Arabic-language TV channel which produces content specifically directed at Iraqi audiences, and Radio Farda, a Persian-language broadcast which claims to provide "objective and accurate news and information to counter state censorship and ideology-based media coverage."

Insulting an Iranian Guest and Perpetuating Untruths

PBS NewsHour chose to interview just one Iranian official, Majid Takht-Ravanchi, Iran's ambassador to the United Nations. He appeared on the January 6th edition. Needless to say, interviewer Judy Woodruff did not extend condolences on the death of General Soleimani.

Instead, she opened the interview by laying out the U.S. government claim that the "targeting" of Soleimani was justified because "not only had he killed many Americans, he was responsible for the grievous wounding of many more."

After Takht-Ravanchi responded that the allegations were "fake information," Woodruff put this laughable question to the ambassador: "The U.S. administration, Mr. Ambassador, is also saying they have evidence that General Soleimani was planning more attacks imminently that would have led to the deaths of more Americans. Do you have proof that he wasn't doing that?"

Immune to the embarrassment of asking for proof of a negative, Woodruff proceeded to assert a falsehood embedded with a well-worn canard presented as fact: "Your government has now announced that it is going to suspend any limits that it had placed on its nuclear weapons production program. Why are you doing this? And does this literally

In Memory: Sister Marguerite

by Joan Johnson

Marguerite Corcoran left this world on December 26, 2019. She was an inspiring, passionate proponent for peace, who fearlessly spoke out for what she believed. She said, "I believe I not only have the right but the obligation to do all that I can to resist war." This belief was evident in her frequent letter-writing, meeting with officials, attending peace marches, vigils, protests and sit-ins; and even being arrested. I had the privilege of being in street theater with Marguerite, putting on plays which exposed the atrocities committed by our government, specifically through the SOA and the Iraq sanctions. My husband Steve and I have great memories of standing with her at the Wednesday afternoon peace vigils on the Lake St. Bridge. In subzero weather, she creatively wore a phone booth style box to shield her from the wind. Mostly, I remember Marguerite holding up a bright red giant cut-out of a hand making a peace sign. Passers-by couldn't miss its message, or her smile!

As an Associate Member of VFP, she attended our Chapter's events, and, with others, often provided the delicious home-made treats afterwards. Her radiant smile and genuine "How are you?" made you feel special and welcome. She was this incredibly caring, gracious lady, who made everyone in her presence feel loved and accepted. She, along with her housemates Rita and Kate McDonald,



reached out to all kinds of people from their Riverside neighborhood home, including my niece and family, who lived on the same block. They provided shelter to countless women there, and Marguerite was also responsible for taking in their assortment of stray cats!

She joined the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet in 1947, where she first worked in hospitals, calling them "holy places, with opportunities to celebrate and rejoice in new life and healing, and also to mourn and weep with those who were suffering and dying." After 25 years of doing hospital work, she spent the next 30 years working with women and children in long-term shelters. With sisters Brigid and Rita McDonald, she founded Incarnation House, a treatment center for women. Of this very important work, she writes: "It was inspiring to witness the courage of women breaking the prison bars of addiction and abuse, and freeing themselves to live a more satisfying life." Her whole emphasis/purpose in life seemed to be to help others and to see them succeed and flourish. I just marvel at all the wonderful things Marguerite accomplished in her life and the values/beliefs/convictions she steadfastly held to and lived by.

As her family and friends spoke to a packed sanctuary, at her January 7th memorial service at Our Lady of Presentation Chapel, we heard stories with so much fondness and admiration for Marguerite. Steve and I will greatly miss having her in our lives. The world is a much better place because of her beautiful presence in it. Thank you, Marguerite, for touching our lives in such profound ways.

Kent State, from page 8

Nixon Presidential Library before she came to the center at Kent State.

Ever since May 4, 1970, Kent State has aimed to control what is known, and now to be taught and learned, about the May 4th Kent State massacre. For the 50th on May 4, 2020, as the perpetrators of the massacre operate the commemoration, we have to wonder if the American public, along with survivors of the massacre, will ever know the

true story of the May 4, 1970 Kent State massacre.

Will You Please Take Action?

1) Sign the Open Letter for an Antiwar Commemoration at the Kent State 50th <http://bit.ly/2m8zHfL>;

2) Sign a Petition from current Kent State students seeking participation in planning the 50th and other issues <http://bit.ly/31PurhT>; and

3) Support Kent State truth, the People's Truth, at Kent State www.TruthTribunal.org.

The Good Hike

book review by Craig Wood

It took Vietnam Veteran and Veterans For Peace (VFP) member Tim Keenan 172 days to hike the legendary Appalachian Trail. Apart from wanting to test his athletic abilities, he hoped to get some relief for his post-traumatic-stress-disorder (PTSD).

For Keenan, the unforeseen consequences of firing a rifle started with shooting a small bird with a BB gun when he was a boy. He recalls being excited about shooting a living creature but had no idea how lousy he'd feel after doing it. Those feelings of anxiety and regret intensified later while in Vietnam combat zones and haunted him throughout his life, especially when he stepped into a forest. He hoped a long and rugged walk in nature without a gun would bring him peace of mind.

His book takes readers on a two-part journey through the mountains and valleys of 14 states, nearly 2,200 miles long. The first part is the reflections of a war-weary soldier remembering and confronting the things he felt and did in Vietnam. The other, a travelogue of day-to-day personal hardships and accomplishments, interlaced with descriptions of pristine environments and conversations between hikers he meets with quirky names such as Prairie Dog, Mij (Made in Japan) and Angry Beaver.

The book is full of surprises and written from the heart by a writer who never missed a day along the trail putting his thoughts down on paper. His writing is extemporaneous and flighty, so he can jump from describing a surprise encounter with a moose to recalling a monkey touching his backside when he was on guard duty.

His parallels between hiking activity and combat experiences are frequent, and there's no guessing when a scent or situation will trigger a past event. One paragraph he'll be talking about the goodwill of strangers (Trail Angels) leaving cold Gatorade for hikers in Virginia, and perhaps a few pages later, he'll recall the camaraderie he felt with fellow soldiers near the Cambodian border.

Other times, he goes deeper. When a hiking situation clashes with a combat flashback and busts loose an old memory, a catalyst that can lead to examining the stubborn fact that comparing and contrasting things can only take you so far. Breaking camp in freezing New England rain might be compared with walking through spiderwebs and inhaling



Asian bugs. Or, drinking beer in the jungle with army buddies can be likened to smoking dope out of a motel vaporizer with fellow hikers; some things may be incomparable or never understood.

Combat troops, for instance, may never figure out why a high-ranking officer would tell his own soldiers to keep risking their lives taking hill-after-hill, knowing full well the war they're fighting is un-winnable. A despicable war-game like this can never have a satisfactory explanation. Other things need to be experienced on a personal level to be fully appreciated. Only Keenan knows if summiting a mountain above the tree line near the end of a long American trail feels as exhilarating as leaving the Vietnam

bush for good in a helicopter.

And the narrative doesn't seem disjointed. His recollection of a tender embrace with his mother before leaving for Vietnam complements his description of two wild animals frantically searching for each other when they're temporarily separated by water. A vivid scene of wild ponies running free in the mountains seems emotionally equal to soldiers crying and throwing up in bunkers. He takes us through a wide range of high and low extremes without hyperbole or awkwardness.

Keenan's honesty with confronting old demons is a reminder of how difficult it can be to look a scary secret in the eye: A shell-shocked medic who had to be screamed at to do his job. The new guy just off the chopper who was looking for combat action and shit his pants when he came under fire. All the soldiers who didn't take their malaria pills hoping to get a week or two vacation in a hospital. Or for a soldier back in America who sees the enemy everywhere in a Vietnamese restaurant.

His odyssey is as much about a brutal excursion into the wilderness as it is about a tough inner journey where self-reflection and forgiveness are part of the essential gear. An education that lets an aging veteran know he doesn't have to worry about camping on high ground to avoid ambushes anymore. He learns that it's only the wind or a small animal moving through the trees.

It's been said that death is a journey that can be explored, but never fully charted. The author's sojourn into wellness is much the same - a path without a clear endpoint where we get glimpses of a man healing himself - one chapter at a time.

Big names for Peacestock 2020: “Where’s the Truth?”

by Bill Habedank

Plans are being made for Peacestock 2020, to be held again in Red Wing on July 18. Last fall, as I was struggling to name a theme, along came a December news item in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*. I was shocked by the headline: “U.S. officials lied about Afghanistan.” This admission by U.S. government officials and military leaders was 19 years too late but was what we in the Peace community had been saying all along. It also greatly irritated me how quickly this subject faded from public view. We NEED the truth, and why are we not given it? Where IS the truth?!

I got in touch with Andrew Bacevich, whom I’ve always wanted to speak at Peacestock. I asked him if he would be willing to speak, but he was not able to be there in person. After I told him about our theme of “Where’s the truth?” he thought this was an excellent topic and agreed to do a live video feed. I am certainly



Norman Solomon



Andrew Bacevich

grateful for his willingness to be with us, speaking and interacting via video. If you do a web search, you will find a lot of information on him.

I knew we would need an in-person speaker as well, so I pursued Norman Solomon by way of his website RootsAction.org. He replied immediately and after I explained what Peacestock is and this year’s topic, he, too, was very interested. It turned out that he will be in Milwaukee on July 17th, and Peacestock is July 18th, so it worked out perfectly for him to be our in-house speaker.

I encourage you, our readers, to put “Peacestock 2020” on your calendars for July 18. Our website will be updated soon, and tickets will be available. In the meantime, we will be making additions to the program, so check out our website later at www.peacestockvfp.org. I believe we will get some answers on Where’s the Truth? See you there.

Propaganda, from page 11

mean now that your government feels you can move ahead with producing a nuclear weapon?”

Iran had made no such announcement, and Woodruff’s assertion to the contrary was a complete fabrication. But false assertions, even in the presence of a person authoritatively able to refute them, can be an effective when the propagandist has been established as a trusted source.

Iran has, in the past, failed to meet its obligations under to Safeguards Agreement of the Non-Proliferation Treaty with regard to declaration of nuclear facilities and reporting of nuclear material. However, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has found “no evidence” that these

deficiencies were related to a nuclear weapons program. In 2007, a National Intelligence Estimate from the CIA determined with high confidence that any nuclear weapons program that Iran may have had was halted in 2003. Since Iran entered into the nuclear deal (JCPOA) in 2015, it has been entirely transparent, and no evidence of a weapons program has been found.

But by conflating a peaceful nuclear program with a nuclear weapons program, PBS NewsHour maintains the idea that Iran is pursuing nuclear weapons in the minds of many Americans.

History tells us how such fears can be exploited.

Get Military Spending Cards from WAMM

US military spending now accounts for 35% of military spending in the world. The US military budget is now \$738 billion, 52% of the budget.

Add in other defense related budget items, like Veterans Hospitals, nuclear weapons safety, intelligence services, and Homeland Security, and the US actually spends over \$1 trillion per year.

Second in military spending and far behind the US is **China, at \$224 billion per year**. The so-called Axis of Evil military budgets are: **Iraq at \$19 billion; North Korea at \$8 billion; and Iran at \$7 billion.**

Compare this bloated defense budget to what other federal departments get:

The Department of Education gets \$62 billion, or 8% of the budget. The Department of Justice gets \$24 billion, or 2%.

These are just some of the facts on a two-sided small card (5.5X4 inches) available from WAMM. It puts in stark relief the choices Americans have to make. Bombs or healthcare? Bullets or Social Security? Imperialist adventures or food security?

“More wars or peace, jobs, education and healthcare at home; IT IS OUR CHOICE.”

The card is available for an \$8 donation for each 100 cards. Mail a check with your return address and the number of cards you want (in sets of 100) to WAMM, 4200 Cedar Ave. S., Suite 3, Mpls. MN 55407.

For many years, VFP member and WAMM member Tom White has made these cards annually.

EVENTS CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

5-6 pm Weds. Lake Street/Marshal Ave. Peace Bridge vigil.

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

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

4:45 pm Weds., 50th and Halifax, Mpls. Grandmothers for Peace Vigil. (FFI call 612-927-7607)

8 am, 2nd and 4th Wednesdays each month. People of Faith Peacemakers Breakfast, at African Development Ctr., 1931 S. 5th St., , Mpls. (FFI 612-333-4772)

UPCOMING EVENTS

April 16, 6 pm, beginning with VFP Bells of Peace ringing. **WORLD STORYTELLING DAY**, Plymouth Church, Franklin and LaSalle, Mpls. For full flyer, email larryjvfp@gmail.com

May 1. The film, PROSECUTING EVIL: The Ben Ferencz Story. Ferencz was a Nazi war crime prosecutor at Nurnberg, but stayed on his entire life, fighting for an International Criminal Court that didn't discriminate. In 2006, he said, "Yes, Saddam Hussein should be prosecuted, but so should George W. Bush, because the Iraq War was started without permission of the UN Security Council." FFI: www.globalsolutionsmn.org or email larryjvfp@gmail.com

July 5. Mn Humanities Center VETERANS VOICES deadline for October 10 Awards Ceremony. Go to www.mnhum.org and click on "Veterans Voices" for details on submitting your written work. Keep Veterans "for Peace" Voices in the running.

July 18, 9 am, Peacestock. FFI see page 14.

Sept 18-27. DAYS OF NONVIOLENCE, Go to www.twincitiesnonviolent.org and plan to be a part of this effort, led by MAVERICK PRIEST, Father Harry Bury, aiming to become a massive peace and justice coalition, like the one after World War I, leading to the outlawry of war and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

Aug 5-9, 2020, VFP National Convention, Albuquerque, NM. (more info in next issue).



Veterans For Peace Chapter 27
4200 Cedar Av. S., Suite 7
Minneapolis, MN 55407

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Spring 2020 Newsletter

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SUPPORT THE TROOPS! BRING THEM HOME ALIVE NOW!

As of Mar. 3, 2020:

At least 7,024 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.



Friend Eric J Garcia on facebook or follow at [elmacheteillustrated](#) @Instagram.