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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)



Chapter 27 was present on Saturday, May 30, at 38th & Chicago in Minneapolis. We are, along with thousands of others, protesting the killing of George Floyd. People of all colors are demanding huge changes, not only with the Minneapolis police, but with society as a whole. We support of these efforts.

A view from the protests

by Dave Cooley

I spent a short amount of time on Lake Street in Minneapolis, the day after massive arson and demonstrations, in the wake of George Floyd's brutal murder. It was weird being there, not unlike *Apocalypse Now*: burned out buildings, some still smoldering others already burned with sprinklers still spraying water on cold ash. Young people all about, many helping with clean up, others taking selfies like tourists, one asked me to pose in front of a burned hulk in my Veterans For Peace shirt on. What could I do but weep.

Mostly what I saw were people of good will caring about justice and their community. People taking care of each other as it should be. I think VFP should make up a bunch of t-shirts that say: Veterans For Peace /

Community Builders and hand them out. I took a broom, dust pan and bucket with me to offer small assistance.

I talked to a woman who lives in an apartment on Lake Street and she was up much of the night sitting in a chair near her sidewalk. She observed a system for burning and looting: first they case a building(s), maybe on bicycle, and after that windows are broken and the looting begins. Then, accelerant is placed inside businesses and fire-starters go up-and-down the line torching buildings. She also mentioned a looter who parked his truck in front of her building who said he was "not interested in justice."

As of this this writing, there are few confirmations of who is responsible for the

Protests, Continued on page 5

The Prez says. . .

by Michael McDonald

With the shut-down and stay at home orders, our lives have certainly changed. We are all going to be called “Zoomers” in the future.

Both of our April and May general meetings were held on Zoom, plus a couple of social get togethers.

We’ve had two well-received programs on KFAI. In April, SueAnn Martinson presented her “militarism and the environment” program. Dave Logsdon had a mostly musical show Memorial Day weekend.

The Peace Bridge regulars headed up by Carol Walker have not missed a beat on Wednesdays.

I have been working online with a group preparing for the virtual convention in August. We are focusing on the military’s effect on the environment. We brought the bus to a Palestinian caravan in Fridley. Unfortunately there was some conflict with some people from the other side, but we kept our cool.

Our Memorial Day (Zoom) program was highlighted by touching words from Chante Wolf, Tom LeBlanc and Stephen Lovasik. Bill McGrath added two songs.

On May 25th, George Floyd was killed by Minneapolis police officers. The video of this has gone worldwide and stunned us all. The mayors of our Twin Cities and the state governor have walked a fine line in honoring those who wish to protest and controlling those that want to bring



The new normal on the Lake Street Bridge.

chaos. On Saturday, May 30th, we had 16 people with flags and signage honoring George Floyd at 38th and Chicago. It was a sobering scene but inspiring to see citizens of all colors and persuasions coming together and voicing their concerns. We call for all four policemen to be charged. It’s time not only for police revamping, but society as a whole needs huge changes. Stay safe, and mask up.

Peace.

A virtual Peacestock?

by Bill Habedank

We here at VFP Ch. 115 were very excited for the program that was put together for Peacestock 2020. The theme this year was to be “Where’s the Truth?” It was a topic that occurred to me back in December when the headline in the *Star Tribune* was “US lied about the war in Afghanistan.” Of course we all knew that they have always been lying to us. But within two days that topic faded off the news. I decided that we will not let it. Both of our speakers, Andrew Bacevich and Norman Solomon were anxious to speak to that.

Then we were hit with a pandemic and things were shutting

down. As time went by, it was obvious that we could not put 150 people into the Hobgoblin Barn. A live Peacestock was canceled in mid-May.

I reached out to Tom Feehan from PromoVideo, the man who videotaped last year’s Peacestock. He called me back within a few days saying that he had located a Red Wing person by the name of Stacy Wegner who was very good with doing virtual events. It was a deal not to be refused and we are in serious planning to do a virtual Peacestock on the same day, Saturday, July 18th. We will let you know about the event plans as they develop. Stay tuned!

Memorial Day 2020

by Barry Riesch

Memorial Day 2020 will be one to remember. This year as our world struggles with overcoming our Coronavirus pandemic, we are learning new ways to conduct our lives while isolating ourselves from social contact. Thanks to our resourceful President Mike McDonald and the Zoom app, our Memorial Day gathering was made possible, live on the computer. VFP does not glorify war, but remembers the sacrifices and unnecessary suffering which war creates, and works to end its existence.

Our numbers are not large and we may be aging, but we have some really talented people in our organization. The event began with John Varone doing the Native spiritual ritual of smudging the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on the capitol grounds, assisted by Bruce Berry holding a Golden Eagle feather over the wall as John did the smudging. John also did a "Pipe" ceremony with a very special ancient pipe he owns. The event was hampered as usual by a little dampness, but was still accomplished.

We have some fine poets and spoken-word members who blessed us with their readings: Chante Wolf, Thomas LaBlanc and Stefan Lovasik. As has been the case for many years Bill McGrath provided us with a couple of songs: "Sam Stone" by the late John Prine, who we lost this past year, and "Green Fields of France" by Eric Bogle. Other members offered their own readings, which added meaning to the solemnity of the day.

We, of course, allowed time to remember friends and loved ones lost over the past year, as well as those lost due to our warring madness. Will it ever cease? The event was concluded with a virtual bell-ringing and Barry Riesch's attempt to play his Native flute (hopefully it will be better next year).

Thanks again to Mike for making the event happen and to all who participated.

New York Chapter 80 also provided a Memorial Day event hosted by Susan Schnall (Naval Nurse during the Vietnam War). At one point there were 138 folks participating and it lasted for nearly two hours, primarily with letters



John Varone doing his Native spiritual ritual on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Memorial Day.

written to the Wall, which started in reaction to Obama's \$53 million effort to rewrite the history of Vietnam. Some great letters, spoken word and music.

I can't express enough of my gratitude for the heartfelt passion of our membership in our pursuit of making this world a better and more humane place.

Looks like Zoom can become an effective tool for our organization as we move forward.

National VFP Perspective...

by Dave Logsdon
National VFP Board member

Greetings from the edge of the Zoom-averse! What an incredible time we are living in right now. We stand on the precipice of the history of life on the planet! So many of my fellow human beings are constantly striving to reach the mountaintop in a material world, to build these castles made of sand, and we all know where castles made of sand go. Had to get that off my chest! Allow me to indulge in a little poetic license (mine was revoked many years ago) and start with a quote from Maya Angelou.

“My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style”

When I first came on the National Board, I was a little boy lost, all wide eyed, trying to figure out how I fit in. Now, the big dreamer that I am, I see so many opportunities, so much potential, such fertile ground to plant seeds of peace. Getting in the trenches with my sisters and brothers around the country, I have come to a deeper appreciation than ever for what we do here in Minnesota! Any good baseball manager will tell you, you are only as good as your players, and do we ever have players in Chapter 27. Around the country in VFP, people are amazed at what we have been able to do here. Arts, education, action, we touch ‘em all!

VFP Convention . . . Zooming to your living room...

I said recently on a zoom conference call, that this upcoming virtual convention in August will either be the worst virtual convention or the best! The young leadership team at the national office and our young Executive Director, President and Vice-President are working hard to pull this off.

The cool part of this venture is that more people can take advantage of what the convention can offer without leaving the comfort of home! A lot of people cannot afford to attend conventions can now attend plenaries, workshops and the annual business meeting (free for VFP members) all for \$100, which is a lot cheaper than plane fare and lodging!

It will start on a Sunday and end the next Sunday. The workshops and speakers will not run at the same time, allowing those registered to pick and choose during the week. Having done workshops in past conventions, I know this format is much more appealing than the usual classroom setting with all the attendant distractions. There is that intimacy factor of being up close and personal. Ironically, communication over the internet is somehow more intimate than in person! We are all just realizing the potential for this new medium (Zoom). My imagination is running overtime these days, so let's keep the wheels moving!

“When you get in a tight spot and everything goes against you, til it seems as you can't hang on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time the tide will turn!”

Harriet Beecher Stowe

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/

Protests, from page 1

arsons. What is known is that long-established businesses along with newer minority-owned businesses up and down Lake Street were burned.

I returned to Lake Street the next day, about a mile from yesterday's location, a block from where George Floyd was murdered. I met up with an African American man, veteran and I must add, a member of Veterans For Peace who I've visited with in prison on a twice-monthly basis for five years. He's now in a halfway house, having arrived two weeks prior to Floyd's killing. In spite of the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism, Willie would much rather be where he is in South Minneapolis after spending 40 years behind bars.

To be sure, Willie was not heaven sent. He's also not the same man who was put away. Flash bang grenades and helicopters continue to make it hard for him to sleep at night. Moreover, there aren't many services left in his neighborhood area after the arson's torch lent its touch to the area. Whether it's Willie or other residents who don't have money for a car or depend on public transportation, this puts more obstacles in their life's path. Visiting with my old friend will be different over the next eight months in his new loca-

tion. I wonder, if there will be any lifting of boats in these communities?

I don't believe the demonstrations will stop. Demonstrators, pressing on has already achieved part of what they've been working for: The prosecution will now be done by Attorney General, Keith Ellison. The conviction of these murderers will be difficult because of the law's built in racism. This is worthy of long-term work to change this by all of us citizens. I'm concerned what the failure of a conviction in this case could mean for local neighborhoods and beyond.

On a positive note, lumber sales of 4 x 8 plywood must have been a boon for some. On my way home, this afternoon, businesses near and distant from the epicenter were wearing plywood instead of glass, thus giving graffiti practitioners ready canvases.

I don't like the feel of a militarized presence in our city but, if it keeps the looting and arson a-bay, combined with real progress on systemic change, I could swallow hard. If it's status quo, the matches will be unboxed. We can pray real hard still, I wonder how does new blood enter hardened arteries, our arteries? We all have work to do.

Lebron James weighs in: *Which knee bothers you more?*



WAR IS OVER!

IF YOU WANT IT

Love and Peace from John & Yoko

(This image was created by John Lennon and Yoko Ono in 1969)

Imagine

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people living for today

Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people living life in peace

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one

Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people sharing all the world

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope some day you'll join us
And the world will be as one

*John Winston Ono Lennon (1940 – 1980)
We honor the man and his music,
40 years after his death.*

Little Free Libraries...Yes!

by Dave Logsdon

You've often seen these very creative structures throughout the metro area and beyond. It started in Hudson, Wisconsin, as a simple way to share books with neighbors. It has grown to be a worldwide phenomenon! In my Longfellow neighborhood they are ubiquitous!

One of the changes that COVID has brought to the VFP Newsletter has been to the distribution of the paper. Our usually busy hot spots have disappeared or the traffic has disappeared so this is how the Little Free Libraries became a godsend to us, distributing over 300 of them.

Support Mayday Books

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

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

Mayday Books has been a 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's 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.**

What have you got to lose?

by Steve McKeown

I am writing this on Memorial Day about a topic that I have written on before that seems to be more and more relevant today. Taken from the Gospel of Luke 12: 16-21 from the parable of the Rich Fool: "I will pull down my barns, and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. I will tell my soul, Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years. Take your ease, eat, drink, be merry." But God said to him, "You foolish one, tonight your soul is required of you! The things you have prepared, where will they be? So is he who lays up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God."

Luke isn't referring to the modest farmer building an addition or a better structure to store grain or better care for animals. Although, today that would be very applicable to large landholders or corporate farms with their treating of the land and its people as nothing but commodities. The reference also is not just to farmers, unless one adheres to a strict fundamentalist interpretation, but to the rich man's greed and false pride. By any stretch of the imagination we see this happening right before our very eyes in the name of draining the swamp or getting rid of the deep state, etc. for the claim of making "America great again."

The teardowns of environmental and worker protection, nuclear treaties, the Affordable Care Act, the gutting of the State Department Diplomatic Corp, the CDC, the Pandemic Team, Social Security Offices, the undermining of the World Health Organization, and the United Nations, and even threatening to close the Post Office, with the aim of voter suppression, is just an introduction of what the Trump regime is trying to pull off. And then there is the border wall, detention centers, and the kidnapping of children, a teardown of incalculable suffering by families to build his bigger "barn" of support.

With 100,000 dead from COVID-19 in our country, one could have expected a nation that has launched SPACE FORCE to have been better prepared. Much can be written about this, but the fact that Trump has shown no empathy or responsibility for any of the victims can best be summed up by a banner made by chapter member Bruce Berry with an orange toupee entitled "UNFIT TO SERVE."

No matter how many churches Trumps wants to order

open, I believe his soul as well as those of his followers are on the line for the sake of being adored. And as he has said to his followers, "They Love ME." Ultimately it is The Creator who makes final judgement on matters of the soul. Yet, given the multitude of lies and the reveling in nationalistic hubris as greatness, is it not the sign of the times we are witnessing today from the prophetic voice of Martin Luther King who said, "A nation that continues to spend more on military spending than on programs of social uplift is in danger of spiritual death." That has become a badge of honor for Trump ?

What do they have to lose ? What do we ? We have work to do.

Addendum

Shortly after I wrote the above article George Floyd was murdered by four Minneapolis policeman. As we go to press, I heard one of the CNN newscasters, Don Lemon, say, "We now have a choice between Democracy and a Dictatorship ." Just prior to that I saw Floyd's brother on TV weeping by the mural at the site of his brother's torture and murder. Terrance pleaded with people to be calm and to vote, yes, to vote.

What Lemon was talking about was the peaceful protest in front of the White House being met with rubber bullets, tear gas and being clubbed by a variety of rioting armed authorities all the while the President was talking about how he believes in peaceful protest, but now wants to dominate protesters.

With the area cleared out, this "brave" man then walked between two lines of guards over to the nearby Episcopal Church where the pastors had also been cleared out by the rioting police. In an "historic" moment (just ask him), he rigidly held up the Bible for a photo-op. This was later condemned by the pastors and their Bishop. Right-wing church leaders praised Trump.

Although there is a different magnitude here, I am reminded of the hollow grieving by the Republicans following Wellstone's death. "Vote," says Terrance. You better believe it, and now is not the time to think oneself so pure as to not vote, but also to go beyond that and call for justice, so far removed from his filthy hands holding a sacred book.

Johnny Breadless - a Pacifist Fairy Tale

by Larry Johnson

Johnny Breadless, recently released by Jack Zipes, was originally published in 1921 by Paul Vaillant-Couturier, a French soldier who participated in the 1914 Christmas truce. Coming out of World War I, a veteran, for peace, Vaillant-Couturier was jailed for speaking out. Upon his release, he determined to continue educating all ages about war. “Johnny” was written for older children in the vein of recent “fantasy” like Harry Potter. I have used storytelling to teach peace and justice, mostly to children and young people, since the 60s, and this book is now on my list.

Jack Zipes, friend and mentor, is a worldwide authority on folklore. He has written, translated, or edited more than 50 books on thinking critically about world stories, and using them for good in the culture. Long before I met him, I read an early book, *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*. Jack’s 60s activism got him interested in folk and fairy tales, and he says, “The world projected by the best of our fairy tales reveals the gap between truth and falsehood in our immediate society.” To get a sense of all of his work, go to www.jackzipes.com, or just scan the long list at the library.

Last year Jack started his own press, Little Mole and Honey Bear Publishing, because “there are lots of projects existing publishers won’t risk.” *Johnny Breadless* is the second book resurrected from the out-of-print graveyard from the innocent-sounding company. Honey Bear? Just remember that pesticides are killing bees and many of those chemicals come from those who gave us things like Agent Orange. Plus, A.A. Milne, creator of the honey-loving bear, Winnie the Pooh, was a veteran. He spent his life lamenting the fame of the lovable children’s book, while his *Peace With Honor* was ignored.

In the early 90s, I was on the board of George Gerbner’s Cultural Environment Movement, organized to promote the stories that the media ignore. Gerbner, retired dean of

Annanberg Communications School, said “WE MUST GET THE STORIES INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE WITH SOMETHING TO TELL, NOT JUST BIG CORPORATIONS WITH SOMETHING TO SELL.” *Johnny Breadless* is now in our hands.

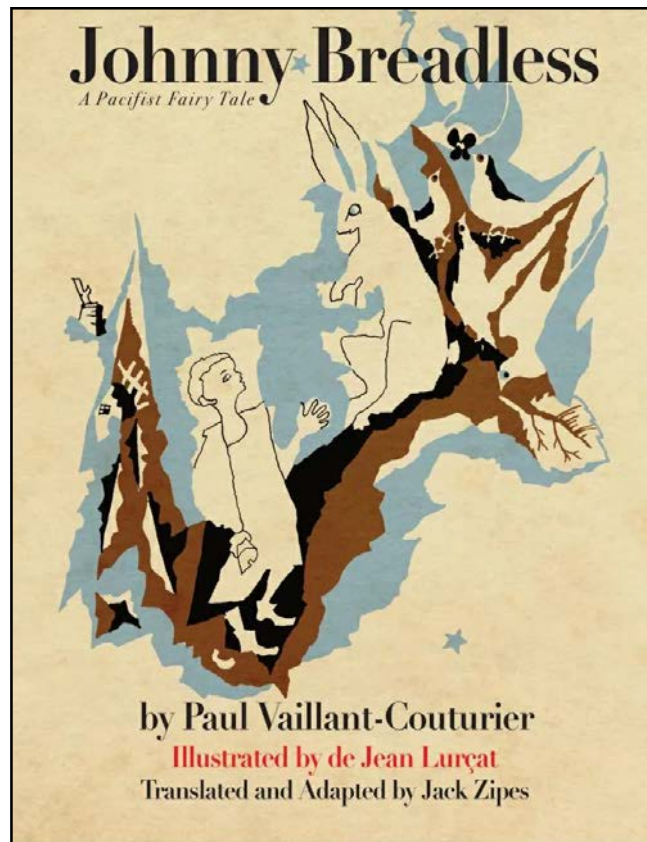
With striking original illustrations, introduction,

author’s bio, and story in both English and French, the book is 100 pages long. To fully appreciate the crucial but delightful complexity, you must read it, but here’s the gist. Johnny is “breadless” because his father was killed in the war, leaving his mother bereft. Unlike another Johnny (Jack) who climbed a magic beanstalk to retrieve what was stolen from his mother, ten-year-old Johnny just leaves home on Christmas Eve. Wandering grief-stricken thru bombed out villages, Johnny encounters a talking rabbit who tells him the wild animals have been looking for him. They want to be teachers to a boy who has never killed.

Reminiscent of Selma Lagerlof’s *Little Nils* learning culture and geography by flying all over Sweden on the

back of a goose, the rabbit brings Johnny to a magic airplane. Screwing his long ears off to insert as propellers, the rabbit directs take off with a flock of partridges running beneath the plane to provide lift. Johnny meets victims of civilian world injustice caused by “Swindlers,” and then **they fly to a battlefield where weary soldiers have called a temporary ceasefire. Fighting back tears over his Father, Johnny cries, “What if the whole world did that?”** The rabbit activist materializes planes for every soldier to fly with Johnny to the Palace where “Swindlers” are starting wars. Because it’s a fantasy that should be reality, the swindlers are imprisoned, and Johnny’s “wild animal band” makes further plans to mobilize.

Johnny Breadless, no longer lost forever, is available at Amazon, AbeBooks, or Wayne State University Press at www.wsupress.wayne.edu/books



Education

by Steve McKeown

While tabling between Masses at St. Joan of Arc Catholic Church in Minneapolis for nuclear disarmament, I ran into Kevin Chirpich, a teacher with the Theology Department at the Academy of Holy Angels High School in Richfield. I had spoken there for 18 or 19 years except for the last two, because they were revamping their program. Kevin invited me to come again, and along with chapter member Larry Johnson who has also shared his story for some years we spoke to the entire junior class totalling eight different Social Justice classes taught by Kevin and fellow teacher Dan Meyers.

Larry and I enjoy coming to this school. Over the years I have been accompanied by other VFP members: Michael Orange, John Varone, Bruce Berry, and my wife, Joan Johnson. Each year I marvel at the depth of education these students are receiving from their teachers. This year, all the students were to select a Peace Organization that they were to research and then plug to their classmates at a Peace Fair. Veterans for Peace was one of them as was Women Against Military Madness, Greenpeace and 360.org were also researched, to name a few. For many years students came to the Peace Bridge as an option for their service requirement.

Larry spoke about his experience filing for conscientious objector status, and his choice of serving as an unarmed medic, and how he came to that decision via the Historic Peace Churches even though he was taught as Fundamentalist growing up. He told the students how he still conscientiously takes that objector commitment against war and its preparation in different ways now especially in regard to the war profiteers.

I introduced a trailer short on VFP's Golden Rule sail-

boat that was sailing across the Pacific Ocean to Japan for the 75th anniversary of the dropping of the atomic bombs and to support nuclear disarmament; my military experience; and current work in support of the United Nations Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. The teacher, Dan Meyers, is an avid sailing person, was very interested in the project, and said maybe he could join them. Shortly thereafter, the Golden Rule had to stop its voyage in Hawaii because of COVID-19, and the Academy also closed in-person classes.

I live only a mile from the school and often go to their basketball games. I made it to their first game in the Girls State Tournament, but then that too was canceled. One has to wonder how all this will play out in the lives of these students in years to come, and if classes resume this fall how the teachers and students will interact. From the years that I have been going there I can say that the foundation at the Academy has been well laid. If and when we are able to come back it again will be an honor.

Thanks to a referral from Karin Aguilar, San Juan, Professor and Chair of American Studies at Macalester College in St Paul who we have worked with on numerous occasions, we were contacted by a teacher friend of hers named Sarah Gorton. Sarah teaches 10th grade at Great River Public Montessori in St Paul. Her class was studying Vietnam, and she wanted her students to interview Vietnam veterans as a class project, which we were able to oblige. Some of them were not able to complete the whole project or interview the person assigned to them due to distance learning adjustments, but she wants to continue the project in the coming years and we certainly will be available.

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

**Smedley Butler
Four-Star USMC General**

Blue Angels Travesty in the Midst of a Pandemic

by Joan Johnson

This past April, Dr. Rick Bright was removed from a senior post at the Dept. of Health and Human Services, the “game-changer” being his non-support for Trump’s magic elixir for the coronavirus: Hydroxychloroquine. He has since filed a whistleblower complaint, shedding light on some very troubling events at HHS. He stated that in January and February, his superiors ignored briefings about a potential pandemic, having been subsequently warned by medical experts to immediately ramp up production and procurement of N95 masks and other personal protective equipment (PPE) used by health care workers. Mike Bowen, co-owner of Prestige Ameritech, the largest domestic manufacturer of surgical masks and ventilators, offered to ramp up N95 mask production, but needed an HHS contract to be able to produce 7 million per month. Bright’s superiors declined Bowen’s Jan. 22nd proposal, saying that they were in no way ready for such a move. By mid-March, in the throes of the pandemic, our federal government frantically scoured the globe for masks and ventilators, and ultimately ended up paying 7 times the amount per mask that Bowen had first proposed in January. Sadly, during most of the first 3 months of 2020, our alleged “president” touted Covid-19 as “the flu,” claiming it would “magically go away” by April once the weather warmed up. With an unscientific and extremely narcissistic and politically-motivated approach, he saw no need to take the many steps he could have taken early on, which should have included ordering U.S. companies to mass produce PPE.

So, it is no surprise that the U.S. has been hit especially hard; there have been over 100,000 deaths as of this writing, the highest in the world right now, thanks to Number 45 and crew, who ignored warnings and did not act quickly enough, resulting in a massive shortage of PPE, among other terrible outcomes. Many doctors, nurses, EMTs, and other medical staff have been forced to bring their own or re-use issued PPE, which leaves them especially vulnerable to catching the virus. Several thousand have tested positive, and hundreds have died. Between April 15 and May 10, a survey of



A lot of the images for Blue Angels promotions for NFL Blue Angels flyovers and half time shows like this one don't make much sense.

23,000 nurses was conducted by National Nurses United, including both union and non-union nurses in all 50 states and Washington DC. They found that 87% were forced to re-use “single-use” PPE (such as N95 masks and face shields), 84% of nurses had not yet been tested for Covid-19, and 72% said they had experienced skin or clothing exposures with sick patients. Nurses nationwide have staged multiple demonstrations to bring attention to their unsafe working conditions, mainly due to the shortage of PPE. In Minnesota, nurses marched from St. Paul’s United Hospital to the State Capitol on May 20, with their fervent plea for more PPE, as well as more training and staffing to deal with the influx of Covid-19 patients. United Hospital turned a deaf ear to nurses who had requested to wear hospital-issued surgical scrubs, so as not to

bring the germs home on their own scrubs. After repeatedly being told “no,” ER nurse Cliff Willmeng took matters into his own hands and wore their staff-issued scrubs, and he was subsequently fired. I also watched a nurse from Chicago on the news talking about how she wore her own N95 mask into work one day, and how she too was fired. The hospital administration wanted nurses to only wear cloth masks, but she had an underlying health condition, and had purchased her own N95. To make matters worse, Covid-19 patients were to be moved to her floor that day! She was fired for voicing her concern about staff safety.

So, in times like these, what is it our medical workers on the frontlines need most from our leaders? Seven million N95 masks per month at a decent price, to be fairly distributed to each state in need? The Jared Kushner-guarded stockpiles of PPE to be released immediately and equal distribution of the ventilators, gowns, and masks that he and his father-in-law are hoarding? Adequate funding for each hospital to buy enough PPE, so that they can use this equipment in the way it was intended to fight the pandemic? Guess again! The answer should be obvious: Entertainment!! Wait, no – why not make it EXTREMELY DANGEROUS and OUTRAGEOUSLY EXPENSIVE (tax-

Blue Angels, Continued on page 14

The Folly of U.S. Exceptionalism

by Barry Riesch

Leave it up to a crisis like Coronavirus (COVID-19) to show how a country cares for its people and the rest of the world. Little wonder that the U.S. is failing the test big time. The United States has the most confirmed Covid-19 cases in the world, with more than 15 times the number of cases reported in China and about six times as many cases as Italy and Spain, other epicenters of the global outbreak. Confirmed infections in the U.S. make up around a third of the world's coronavirus cases.

Of interesting note, the Communist country of Viet Nam (our former enemy) to date (May 21, 2020), among its nearly 100 million people, the population has experienced just over 320 infections and no deaths. Today is the 33rd day Viet Nam has recorded no new cases in the community. Seems like those Communists care more about helping their people than the U.S.

Why do you suppose this is? I propose that for the most part it lies in the fact that what the U.S. does best is war.

Facts are, we throw out \$740 billion to the Pentagon and we give a mere \$11 billion for the CDC. We have 1.3 million active-duty troops and 865,000 in reserve but not enough doctors and nurses. We have the largest military the world has ever seen but the U.S. is not capable of furnishing its people with enough protective masks, much less ventilators and hospital beds. Imagine if instead we had a cadre of medical professionals, ready to descend on New York, New Orleans and the dozens of other cities and towns overwhelmed with the virus to do home visits for those who might be sick.

Having a President in the U.S. and a good portion of government leadership that is in denial about the virus and cares more about helping corporations than people doesn't help much either. These things coupled with our fierce individualism and inability to come together as a community don't help solve the problem.

While Cuba sends doctors around the world to help out, and the rest of the World comes together to try and find solutions to dealing with the virus, the global spread of COVID-19 has exposed the illegal and immoral practice of imposing unilateral coercive measures (economic sanctions) by the United States government against more than 30 nations. The economic war against those nations had already resulted in unimaginable suffering of the people in the targeted nations even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

With the devastation of the global pandemic, the sanctioned targeted countries, especially Venezuela, Cuba, Iran,

Syria and Zimbabwe, constitute crimes against humanity.

Instead of helping these countries fight the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, the U.S. government is now using the public distraction caused by the pandemic to intensify its military actions against the targeted nations. It is increasing its threats against Iran and Syria by engaging in a silent buildup of its military forces in Iraq again and has dispatched its Naval warships to the shores of Venezuela, demanding the total surrender of the Venezuelan govern-

Exceptionalism, Continued on page 12

We're exceptional!!!!

compiled by Frank Fuller

a few things we are #1 at!

#1: Most lies told by an impeached president in three years. According to the *Washington Post*, our impeached leader has told 17,000 lies from his inauguration through April 3. That's over 15 a day.

#1: per capita spending on health care. We are number 1! We spend \$10,224 per person per year. The number two country is Switzerland, which spends \$8,009. Countries comparable to us spend on average \$5,280.

#1: Defense Department budget. Our defense budget was \$732 billion in 2019, about three times the second highest country's defense budget, China.

moving up to #1

#11: 11th highest covid death rate: 24.66 deaths per 100,000 people as of May 11 out of 140 countries. We will surely be moving up in this category!

probably will never be #1

#38: we're number 38 in life expectancy for those born in 2018. Those born in 2018 can expect to live 78.9 years. Women can expect to live 81.4 years and men 76.3 years.

#56: maternal death rate. We have the 56th best maternal death rate in the world. #1 are Belarus, Poland, Norway and Italy with two deaths per 100,000 live births. We have 19 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

In Memoriam Mike Stone

Burnsville resident Mike Stone passed away of natural causes on March 19, 2020 at the age of 93. Surviving him are his wife Caryl, sons Michael (Gabrielle Winkler), Will (Wendy Stevens) and Jeff (Ann Sather), granddaughters Solana, Lucy and Maren, his sister-in-law Joan Bard (wife of his late half-brother Walker Stone) and their sons Sterling, Greg (Joyce Alejo) and Alex(Maurin).

A native of Pennsylvania, Mike was an Eagle Scout and later a Boy Scout leader. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps, and under the Marshall Plan served on a ship carrying livestock to Germany following World War II. He described experiencing the devastation of war first hand as a defining moment of his life.

After finally enrolling at Penn State to study agriculture, he shifted gears to earn his B.S. in electrical engineering. Mike began his long career with the General Motors aviation division before moving to U.S. Gauge, Ametek and other firms. He was also a lifelong learner and reader and an audiophile who built his own stereo components and appreciated a range of musical genres.

Upon retiring, Mike and Caryl worked with Habitat for Humanity in Minnesota and South Dakota. They traveled widely in the U.S., Canada, Europe, Mexico and Central America, and enjoyed cruising in his antique MG in the warmer months. A member of Veterans for Peace and Pastors for Peace, Mike, sometimes with Caryl, joined con-



Mike Stone and his wife Caryl seated.

voys carrying humanitarian aid to Nicaragua for Project Minnesota Leon. While there, Mike used his engineering background to foster socioeconomic development, including with Habitat for Humanity.

Mike was an avid competitive skier into his late 80s, and enjoyed the camaraderie of his fellow Piste Off team members at Buck Hill. He and Caryl especially loved to ski in Utah and Colorado, but never managed to entice their cherished golden retriever Annie onto the slopes.

Donations in Mike's name may be made to the Minneapolis chapter of Veterans for Peace. A memorial will be held at a later date.

Exceptionalism, from page 11

ment to the U.S.

Fighter jet flyovers are the perfect example of what's broken in our national security: cronyism, wasted resources, misguided priorities, and squandered opportunities to build something better. It is about time we have started recognizing the real heroes in our society: doctors, nurses, emergency response personnel, food growers and distributors, cooks, janitors, store clerks, the post office and delivery people, just to name a few.

Then of course we have the issue of our profit-making health care system, which we gloat about even with millions of uninsured or underinsured and talk of Universal Health care dismissed. The U.S. leads the world in money-making biotech innovation, but does it also lead the world in the development of COVID-19 diagnostics, vaccines and thera-

peutics? Obviously not.

If we really wanted to be a better neighbor to the world, wouldn't stopping our punishing and inhumane sanctions and helping with supplies to fight the pandemic be a good place to start?

Let us use this time to seriously reevaluate U.S. priorities and put the money and resources where they will do us some real good. Let us reconsider the slogan "Healthcare not Warfare" during this world wide crisis which holds such great opportunity to bring the world together in a loving, healing kind of way.

In confronting COVID-19, we are inspired by the recent plea from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres for a global ceasefire. "The fury of the virus illustrates the folly of war," Guterres said. "It is time to put armed conflict on lockdown and focus together on the true fight of our lives."

SOVA, the VHA and COVID-19

by Arlys Herem and Jeff Roy

We are all being impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. And SOVA (Save Our VA) activists and the VHA (Veterans' Health Administration) are not exempt. Somehow, luck favored SOVA activists and we were able to come together in Washington, D.C., in early February before it struck. Twenty nine of us spent five days together sharing ideas, getting to know one another and lobbying 33 Congressmen including nearly all members of the Veterans Affairs Committee. Since then, we have come together to re-energize the VFP National SOVA Working Group, creating five subcommittees connecting activists from around the country who have been working on SOVA issues for years. The authors chair two of the Group's committees; Jeff Roy chairs the Outreach Committee and Arlys Herem the Lobbying and Legislation Committee. We've discovered Zoom meetings and meet regularly with committee members from around the country.

The VHA system itself is being impacted by COVID-19. In

caring for veterans with the disease, the VHA, as of May 23rd, had 1,698 active COVID-19 cases including 1,443 veterans, 162 staff, three VA staff who are veterans and 90 others. There have been 1,116 deaths including 729 who died in the hospital. There are 8,267 veterans convalescing from COVID disease along with 1,259 staff and 45 veteran staffers.

Less apparent to the public is the effort the VHA has made to protect veterans from COVID-19. Early in the pan-

demie we got an email telling us about the visiting and screening policies implemented at the Minneapolis VA. As the pandemic progressed, a VFP Chapter 27 member concerned about an upcoming 3 hour treatment session for his leukemia was relieved to get a call asking if he would rather have it done at home. Another vet wrote a letter to the editor describing how the VA had him come to a drive-up location where staff drew his blood.

Concern for VA staff has also been observed. The Milwaukee VA hospital turned its library into a quiet space for staff to retreat to when (or if) they got a break. Another staff member used 3-D printing to produce extenders to make wearing masks more comfortable.

VA Hospitals have made staff changes to respond to the crisis. In San Francisco, staff from closed units were moved to ICUs, to screening health staff and to other areas as needed. This is possible there and in all VA facilities because the VA is not profit driven. It's not dependent on elective surgeries for income and is nimble in its ability to adapt when crisis calls! The VA's globally recognized Telehealth system increased mental health visits more than 200 percent in March. Other patients are also

seen by virtual health services which allow follow-up of patients without risking exposure during travel or during a visit.

The pandemic has also made known to the public the VA's "fourth mission," which is to "[develop] plans and [take] actions to ensure continued service to veterans, as well as to support national, state, and local emergency man-



Our return to the Minneapolis VA welcoming workers and patients after two months was welcomed by many.

Blue Angels, from page 10

payer funded) entertainment. The answer the Feds came up with in May was to send in the Blue Angels Air Show to “thank” health care workers for their service.

When I first heard about this show coming to the Twin Cities, I asked a group of “Nextdoor” (online neighbor chat group), “What’s wrong with this picture?” Some of them were very excited about the prospect of seeing these planes do quick-movement/sudden drops/upside-down daredevil stunts at 6-700 mph, with wing tips just 18” apart, as they flew LOW over OUR houses. I told them “I sure don’t feel safe below that kind of activity!” And I also think of all of the other peoples’ lives they are endangering across our city and nation. I did some research and shared with my neighbors that “Eight So. Carolina audience members were hurt in a 2007 Blue Angel crash, in which the pilot died too,” adding that, “Through 2017, they had 27 pilot deaths out of 261 total pilots, which is a 10% fatality rate.”

I also posed the question to my neighbors, “Why, in the first place, are our tax dollars supporting a purely entertainment air show operation to the tune of \$37 million per year?” Each plane uses an average of \$1,300 gallons of jet fuel in one air show; at 6 planes per show, this means we’re paying \$7, 800 for just the gas (not including other expenses, like training and pilot salaries) at one show. Think of the extreme environmental damage, too. I think that healthcare workers would simply prefer that we use this money to fund

their safety and survival, not dangerous, polluting air shows.

I ended my discussion talking about how the B.A. planners and promoters do not ever consider the PTSD and stress they cause with their ridiculously loud roaring bombing-campaign-like noises, and the people who suffer down below: war veterans, immigrants from war-torn countries, folks with disabilities, babies and children, and our animal friends. One neighbor retorted with, “Well, these planes need to be flown to stay in shape for their military missions.” Like horses that need to be exercised, I wondered? I didn’t respond to her comment, because I didn’t have the data at the time. Since then, I’ve found that the purpose of the Blue Angels is this: “to showcase the pride and professionalism of the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps by inspiring a culture of excellence and service to country through flight demonstrations and community outreach.” And I found this: “While on the team, pilots and other team members do not deploy in a combat role.” I also discovered that the purchase price for just one of these F/A-18 Hornet jets, owned by the Navy, is \$21 million per plane. After all of the bells and whistles are added, each plane costs \$56 million. “There is something seriously wrong with this picture, when we can fund these extravagant shows, but frontline workers in a pandemic do not get the PPE they need!” And that’s how I ended my little “good neighbor ditty.” Call me “Debbie Downer,” but I did have a flurry of “likes” within hours, outnumbering the three or four neighbors who had been excited to watch the air shows.

SOVAand COVID-19, from page 13

agement, public health, safety, and homeland security efforts.” In late March, the VA stood ready to deploy 16,500 acute-care beds, including 1,000 isolation units and at least 3,000 ventilators to areas in need across the country. Staff has been deployed in some high COVID-19 outbreak areas.

VA facilities and staff have been responding with continued high-quality care for their patients and to serve the wider community as mandated in the “fourth mission.” There have been major problems at the top of the VA system. The agency did not release a comprehensive plan for addressing the crisis when the coming pandemic became apparent in late February. VA Secretary Wilkie told Congressional leaders that the VA did not need additional resources to fight the pandemic. Initial guidelines stopping transfer of veterans to the private sector for care were reversed. To this day, staff do not have all the personal protective equipment (PPE) they need. This remains an issue even with South Korea donating 500,000 masks to the VA.

Guidelines for reopening have been released, though technically they are to be implemented as appropriate by each facility.

The SOVA Action Committee resumed its monthly bridge action in May after two months on hold because of the pandemic. There are always honks and waves from VA employees and veterans, but they were far more numerous and enthusiastic this month. On June 5th the SOVA Action Committee joined two VA unions (AFGE and NNU) in a demonstration outside the VA. We’ve been networking with the unions, VSOs (Veteran Service Organizations) and health care for all groups to expand support for our cause.

The National SOVA Working Group is following developments and may be asking for calls or emails to be made to Members of Congress. We’ll look for your support then.

Contact us a SOVAMINN@GMAIL.COM if interested in getting involved with the local Committee.

Get Military Spending Cards from WAMM

US military spending now accounts for 35% of the world's military spending. 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 with 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, Tom White, VFP member and WAMM member, has made these cards annually.

EVENTS CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

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

Monthly VFP chapter meeting, 2nd Sun., 6 pm. They are now virtual meetings. Contact VFP at 612-821-9141 for information on how to connect.

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

UPCOMING EVENTS

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 18th, 1-3 pm. See article on page 2. For further information contact whabedank@yahoo.com or peace-stockvfp.org or call Bill at 651-746-1866.

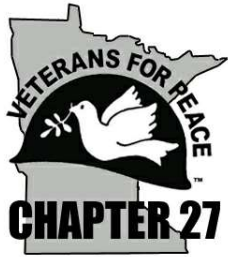
Sept 18-27. DAYS OF NONVIOLENCE, Go to www.twincitiesnonviolent.org and plan to be a part of this effort, led by MAVERICK PRIEST, Father Harry Bury, aiming to become a massive peace and justice coalition, like the one after World War I, leading to the outlawry of war and the Kellogg-Briand Pact.

Aug 5-9, 2020, VFP National Convention, The convention will be held online. For more information, see Dave Logsdon's column on page 4.

Aug 27, Kellogg Briand Pact anniversary, details TBA.

Call your Senators

Who knows what will take place at the scheduled meeting in Vienna between the U.S. and Russia to curb nuclear stockpiles, but phone calls are needed to our U. S. Senators, Amy Klobuchar (612-727-5220) and Tina Smith (651-221-1016) to support the UN Treaty to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, but also to sign on and support the 14 Senators who are co sponsoring a bill to cut off funding for Nuclear Testing, which is something the Pentagon and Trump are considering to resume.



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

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Summer 2020 Newsletter

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SUPPORT THE TROOPS! BRING THEM HOME ALIVE NOW!

As of June 7, 2020:

At least 7,031 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.