



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.

To subscribe to this newsletter, please call our office: **612-821-9141**

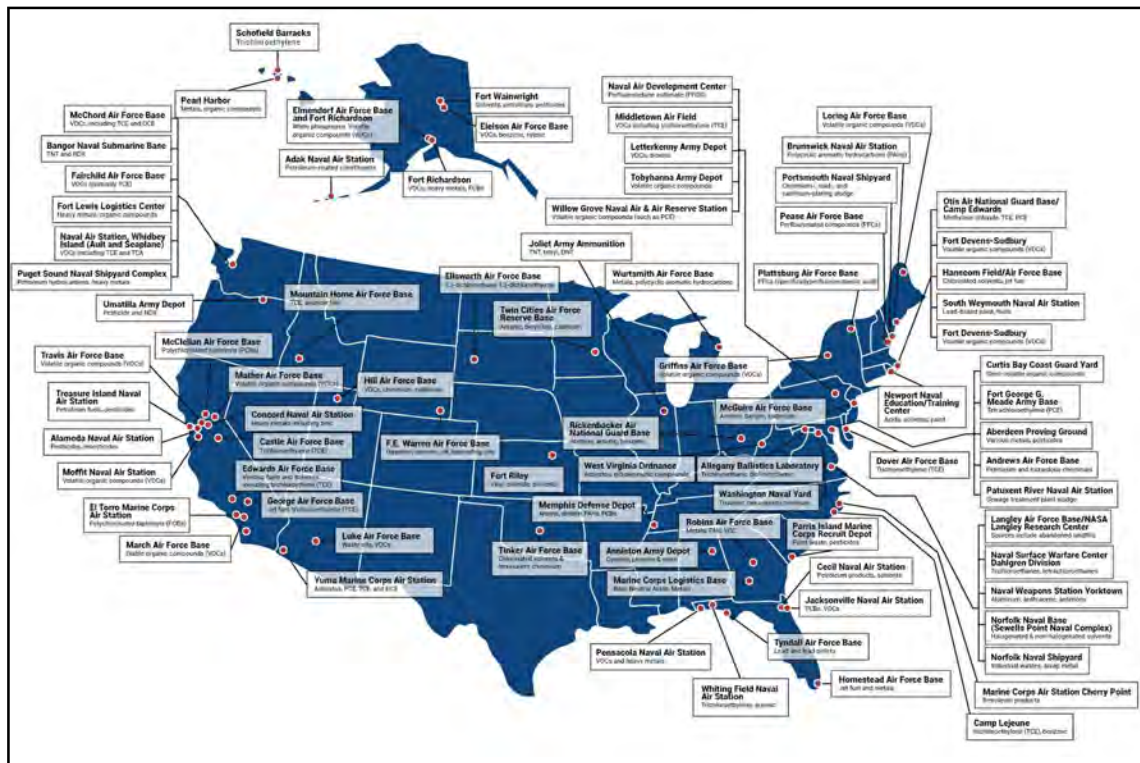
Or write:
Veterans For Peace Ch. 27
4200 Cedar Ave, S. #7
Minneapolis, MN 55407

Or e-mail:
vfpchapter27@gmail.com

Our website is:
www.vfpchapter27.org.

Newsletter committee:
Frank Fuller, editor;
Jennie Downey, Eric
Garcia, Jean Heberle,
Joan Johnson, Dave
Logsdon, Steve
McKeown, Mary
McNellis, Barry Riesch,
Paula Staff, Ron Staff,
Craig Wood

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



There are 129 military sites on the EPA's list of Superfund Sites that are so dangerously contaminated they are on a national priorities list for cleanup. Over 300 military bases have also contaminated local drinking water systems with PFAs, the so-called "forever chemicals." (See page 13 for more on forever chemicals.)

Military Superfund Sites: Wreaking Havoc on the Environment and Peoples' Lives

by Joan Johnson

According to the U.S. Dept. of Defense, there are 600 military sites that are considered "Superfund sites," basically with hazardous waste pollutants requiring clean-up. Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, NC, is one example. Between the 1950's and 1980's, about 900,000 people who lived on or near the base were exposed to carcinogenic industrial chemicals in their drinking water. The result was that residents experienced several different types of cancers, birth defects, miscarriages and other health problems at much higher rates than the general population. According to the U.S.

Dept. of Veterans Affairs website, the Camp Lejeune Families Act of 2012 agreed to cover the healthcare costs for veterans and dependents (who were required to use their private insurance first) who had the following health issues: cancers of the esophagus, breast, bladder, lung, or kidney; multiple myeloma; renal toxicity; female infertility; scleroderma; Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, leukemia, myelodysplastic syndromes, miscarriage and neurobehavioral effects. This did not cover residents in the surrounding areas and was only available to

Superfund sites, Continued on page 7

The Prez says. . .



by Mike McDonald

It's All Interrelated

Our main focus for this issue is U.S. militarism and the environment. Military spending is the elephant and donkey in the room. These resources need to address many other issues, none bigger than the environment.

The carbon footprint created by the U.S. military is enormous. The approximately 800 bases worldwide are using unknown amounts of gas and oil in our insatiable need to control resources.

Forty plus years of conservative money and voices discrediting the environmental movement is enough. What do

we do now?

The Biden administration must kill the filibuster and get to work on the Green New Deal immediately.

CITIZEN MOBILIZATION BRINGS CHANGE!

The peace and climate movements must work together to bring it about. This is truly a transformational time.

Remember: There is no Planet B!

PTSD and Vietnam

Chapter member Michael Orange has written a book called *Embracing the Ghost: PTSD and the Vietnam Quagmire*. Article assignments for this issue were made for our newsletter before we found out about his book, but Andy Berman has written an excellent review on Amazon, where the book is available.

So search the web for the title and check it out!

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

**Smedley Butler
Four-Star USMC General**

The national perspective

by Dave Logsdon

All politics is local! If this seems like an odd way to start a piece called National Perspective, let me explain. In the last year, we all have spent way too much time Zooming all over the place. However, if you are a glass-is-half-full kind of guy like me, you see opportunity! Visiting with my sisters and brothers in New Jersey, Rochester, New York, Iowa City, Kansas City, Traverse City, Santa Cruz, Colorado, etc., has given me that valuable perspective about what we are doing and can do locally. It also has given me an appreciation of what we do at our own Chapter 27! The gentle sharing of ideas between chapters has reinforced in me the notion of how the creation and nurturing of an idea can produce amazing results.

Making Good Troubles

You are not alone! When I became active in VFP 20 years ago, I slowly realized the strength of being a member of this organization. Our strength lies in amplification and leveraging the singular voice of our members. Most folks who join us do so because they feel powerless in a world that is going to hell in a hand basket and wonder how one person can affect change. After I retired from 26 years of truck driving, with a head exploding with ideas, I was all dressed up with no place to go. With VFP I found a place to let those ideas explode! In Zooming to chapter meetings all over the country, I have seen first hand, and encouraged, emerging voices, planted seeds of possibility, and watched small victories stoke the fires of potential change. All politics is local; it starts with you!

It's not easy being Green

Climate change is a big priority at the National VFP office. The younger, technically nimble staff has developed



VFP members in Highland Village in St. Paul on Earth Day.

a wonderful pamphlet that describes in detail all the climate altering activities that our military contributes mightily to, both domestically and internationally! At the five OPEN STREETS events this year, look for our Peace Bus and pick up a pamphlet!

"Skating away, skating away, on the thin ice of a new day."

Jethro Tull

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/

Veterans For Peace tackles the climate crisis

Writes Kerry to seek end to military's pollution

introduction by Barry Riesch

Veterans For Peace members have been aware for years about the negative impact our military has had on the environment. With our wars for oil and our giant military boot-print implanted around the world, we (the US) have made a significant contribution to the Climate Crisis. The Pentagon is the WORLD's single largest institutional user of fossil fuels AND the single largest institutional emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG). If the Department of Defense were a country, it would rank #47 (out of 170) in the world's ranking of CO2polluting countries,

That's why we, the Climate Crisis and Militarism Working Group, wrote the following letter to John Kerry. There is also an accompanying petition that you can sign at vfpchapter27.org or veteransforpeace.org.

We know and as Kerry states, the Climate Crisis will not be solved by the government, but we know that it will not be solved without addressing US militarism. Be sure to go online and show your support.

The Letter to John Kerry

Dear Honorable John Kerry:

On behalf of Veterans For Peace and other peace and climate champions, we congratulate you on your appointment as Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, thank you for returning us to the Paris Agreement, and applaud your efforts to lead the Biden administration's clean energy revolution.

Let us put militarism at the center of this conversation on climate.

We are pleased that the Biden/Harris Administration has created this position, as a reflection of the seriousness of the climate crisis, and we are pleased that the person with that position is you. It is approaching 50 years since you, as an anti-war veteran, delivered to Congress a lengthy, articulate and devastating critique of the Viet Nam War. Some of us were already anti-war veterans or soldiers, and you spoke truth to power for us. You have had many positions of power since that time; in your present position, we ask that you summon the courage and clarity about war and militarism that you expressed to Congress in April 1971.

You posed the question, "How do we ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?" Now the question we pose is, "How do we ask millions of people to die as a result of a

climate catastrophe fueled by endless war and militarism?"

To thwart climate catastrophe, we present the following requests:

1) Please implement the inclusion of military emissions in all reporting and data on Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. The US shamefully demanded, during the negotiations for the Kyoto Protocol in 1997, that military emissions be excluded from countries' total GHGs, and then did not even sign the Protocol.

2) We ask that you use your public platform to consistently point out the role that US militarism and the Pentagon play in exacerbating the climate crisis, and push to greatly reduce the military's reach around the world, to bring our troops home, end drone warfare, close hundreds of overseas bases, stop endless wars, reject nuclear modernization and defund the Space Force – to end the squandering of financial, material and human resources, and minimize the Pentagon's carbon footprint.

3) We ask that you promote bilateral accords between the US and Russia and the US and China to prohibit financial institutions from funding future fossil fuel investments, cease military exercises in the South China Sea, keep the Arctic safe from extractive exploration and weapons systems, and conduct people-to-people "climate protector" delegations to exchange knowledge, build friendships and undertake joint projects to promote biodiversity and renewable energy

4) We ask that you use your public platform to advocate for the US to pay its fair share into the Green Climate Fund.

5) We ask that you be a strong advocate for a Just Transition so that both workers who have been and will be displaced by the shift from fossil fuel production, and working people who have been marginalized, are able to fully prosper.

6) We ask you to recognize that along with the efforts of many elected and appointed officials including yourself, the efforts of people's movements for climate justice are essential in overcoming the power of those forces that have led us into our present climate disaster. We therefore ask that you work with our groups as allies. We ask these sister groups also, as we are asking you, to challenge war and militarism that so far has been little addressed in the climate movement.

This is in spite of:

a) The Pentagon being the world's largest institutional

Letter, Continued on next page

The Golden Rule sails on

by Steve McKeown

In the Bible, 1 Samuel 17, the giant Goliath is slain by the shepherd boy David with a slingshot. It certainly is a story about an underdog coming out ahead. A story in our day about another underdog taking on an unparalleled giant is Veterans For Peace's sailboat called the Golden Rule. This boat has recently crossed the Pacific Ocean and landed in San Francisco on June 2nd. This boat was originally owned by the Quakers, and sailed in the Pacific to the Marshall Islands in 1958 to interrupt nuclear testing. The boat was seized by the Coast Guard, and for a number of years was dry-docked. In 2010 Veterans For Peace began restoring it, and members have sailed many miles to educate and promote the U N Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons.

Our chapter has received inquiries from the Golden Rule Project Manager, Helen Jaccard, and VFP Golden Rule Committee Chair Gerry Condon about the possibility of sailing from Minneapolis down the Mississippi to the Archway of St Louis come October. Whether this happens depends of some variables, but the sailboat is also slated to come to the Great Lakes, up and down the East Coast, and to the Gulf Coast.

The Golden Rule reminds me of the three Cardinal Virtues that I was taught in Catholic School: Faith, Hope, and Charity. To go on this type of journey is absolutely one of Faith and Hope. The third virtue, Charity or as it is sometimes called "Love," is something the Golden Rule's crew, and those that have labored to make it possible have demon-



strated in giving of themselves. I believe that together all of these virtues are best summed up in the words of Dorothy Day: "that Beauty may save the earth."

And so the Giant is being taken on non-violently by raising the sails instead of using the slingshot. My money is on what the Golden Rule represents. This is a holy mission worth supporting.

ACTION TO PLEASE TAKE: Ask your Reps, Senators, and any Government elected official to sign the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons Pledge. One can download it by looking up ICAN Pledge on the web. Thanks to Rep. Omar for being the most recent signer on the ICAN Pledge, and to Rep. McCollum for being one of the first ones.

Letter, from previous page

user of fossil fuels and thus the largest emitter of greenhouse gasses (GHG emissions).

b) The huge additional environmental impacts from manufacturing, shipping and using weapons and equipment, and the intense bombing of infrastructure and natural environments of other countries.

c) The trillions of dollars of our money that have been spent on endless wars, nuclear weapons and some 800 overseas US bases – none of which defend us against climate disruption – which should be redirected to human needs and healing our planet.

d) The deep complicity between the military-industrial complex and the fossil fuel corporations. Our military enforces U.S. corporations' plunder of the planet to steal

resources and the fruits of human labor.

Yet, when we listened to your speech of February 18, on the occasion of the welcome return of the US to the Paris Climate Agreement, **we noted the lack of any reference to the military contribution to the climate crisis.**

Similarly, the House Select Committee on the Climate Crisis Report, "Solving the Climate Crisis" (<https://climate-crisis.house.gov/report>) lays out changes needed in many areas. In the section on National Security, however, it only includes how climate change will affect the military on U.S. bases, **but nothing on how the military affects the climate crisis.**

We cannot afford to ignore the elephant in the room

Letter, Continued on page 11

From mayhem to MayDay

Vietnam Vet finds solidarity in subterranean bookstore

by Craig Wood

"Loneliness does not come from having no people about one, but from being unable to communicate the things that seem important to oneself, or from holding certain views which others find inadmissible." (Carl Jung)

Underground writers have found ways to circulate reading material since the 16th century. In the U.S., many outlets that openly distributed this work are now closed. Mayday Books, located next to the University of Minnesota on the West Bank of Minneapolis, remains open — part time.

For over 30 years, this store has helped keep the neighborhood's Bohemian tradition alive by providing a space where contrarian thinkers can find out-of-the-mainstream books and periodicals. Equipped with tables, comfortable chairs and free coffee, Mayday is an unofficial headquarters for area lefties seeking political/literary events or activists looking for a warm basement to hold meetings and make protest signs. Craig Palmer has volunteered here for 41 years and jokingly refers to it as "my bunker."

Before he became interested in politics, Palmer worked as a Heavy Vehicle Operator for two years in a combat engineer battalion attached to the 101 Airborne Division west of the city of Hue in Vietnam. He was the only person in his company with a high school diploma and was called "the professor" by the company clerk.

His job was to build and maintain roads that connected fire bases and saw many soldiers wearing helmets with "When I die, bury me face down so the world can kiss my ass" written on them. He spent sleepless nights in underground bunkers commenting "the enemy owned the night." Days weren't any better: There were snakes, bugs, lousy weather, along with the dangers of loading and unloading heavy equipment or feeling the ground shake during bombing campaigns. Beer and marijuana seemed to soothe his nerves, but it was the camaraderie he shared with his bud-



dies that pulled him through.

He was discharged and returned to St. Paul in 1970. Making the switch back to civilian life was difficult. He was emotionally mangled from war and things were not good at home. Although he now believed the Vietnam War was wrong, he was drinking a lot, and it wasn't long before his parents told his siblings to stay away from him. Feeling alienated and suicidal at times, he sought solace with other vets or work-a-day guys who were into cars and bought cheap beer by the case. He stopped believing in the 'Buick-by-the-breezeway American dream' and used money from his five-dollar an hour job to buy a house so he and his new friends would have a place to party. He was pleased to have found a new gang that understood him and "I still had enough money left over to eat out all the time" quipped Palmer.

He drifted into the West Bank taverns later in the 70s and began talking with counterculture types and barstool revolutionaries who were also experimenting with alcohol on a regular basis. He enjoyed those conversations and took more of an interest in progressive ideas, recalling influential

chats with long-time activist and former Irish dance instructor Mike Whalen, who he met at Mayday in 1980 when it was located on Lake Street in Minneapolis.

Whalen remembered the old bookstore as a socialistic, diverse organization that was “cold and had rats” and Palmer as a smart, quiet fellow who didn’t say much but when he did, “it was the right thing.” Palmer estimates that over half of the new store customers identify as socialists and believes it’s anyone’s guess who might walk in next.

He chuckled while recalling a former Chilean palace guard for Augusto Pinochet who stopped in five years ago and delivered a long-winded polemic about communism and American culpability. And he was surprised recently by two national guardsmen in full combat gear who claimed they were socialists and bought an armload of books this spring during the murder trial of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin.

While the store remains a nonprofit, volunteer-run cooperative, Palmer who shows up for work almost every day, is usually the go-to information source for customers. On any day he might field questions that go back-and-forth between Marxism, political actions and the whereabouts of area potluck fundraisers to connecting the dots for customers that mark and measure subversive ideas.

And he knows books too. Few know content differences between old and new copies of *The Anarchist Cookbook*, but he does. “That was a rotten book written by a right-winger with unreliable recipes,” said Palmer emphatically, adding that the core of Mayday revolves around anti-war and anti-capitalism, not mad bombers. Those with an interest in a book entitled *How to Blow Up a Pipeline*, released earlier this year, might be referred to military surplus stores to browse through old government manuals. Community outreach can work in mysterious ways.

Palmer, with his characteristic ethos, let me know before the end of the interview that this story wasn’t just about him and rattled off a long list of names, including deceased activist Tom Dooley, before pointing to a photograph of Earl Balfour who was also a store volunteer and dedicated union advocate.

Having lived as a simple-lifer who hasn’t driven since 1991, he figures his worldly possessions will fill up about half a dumpster after he’s gone. Until then, he plans on holding down the fort with like-minded buddies in the cozy sanctuary that still boasts “NOT MAKING A PROFIT SINCE 1975.”

Superfund sites, from page 1

veterans who could document their exposure during specific dates: “at least 30 days of active duty at Camp Lejeune from Aug. 1, 1953 to Dec. 31, 1987.”

The former U.S. base in Vieques, Puerto Rico is another example of a large-scale environmental disaster, where its residents regularly opposed and protested against the largescale weapons testing, target practice, massive bombings and other training exercises.

“Although records are incomplete, it’s been estimated that almost three million pounds of ordnance were dropped on the island every year between 1980 and 2000, exposing the 9,000 people still living on the island to contaminants like napalm, Agent Orange, and depleted uranium,” according to Grist.org.

The Dept. of Defense (DOD) is connected to approximately 80 percent of the biggest Superfund site polluters, with 128 of these having been placed on the National Priorities List, which receive first-priority for clean-up.

In 2003, the Government Office of Accountability found that there are at least 15 million acres of land in the U. S. contaminated by military munitions, contamination resulting from daily operations of bases, training exercises and experiments; the storage of unexploded ordinances and radioactive waste; soil saturation of flame retardants and the resulting PFA’s in drinking water; the highly toxic chemical perchloroethylene used for dry-cleaning uniforms; and the huge amount of waste left behind by weapons.

While the DOD acknowledged that two-thirds of all military bases are vulnerable to the effects of climate change, their 2019 report failed to address the precariousness of military Superfund sites and how they (and surrounding areas) would be impacted by the ever-increasing number of extreme weather events and sea-levels rising. Remember news of the “toxic stew” after Hurricanes Harvey and Maria hit Harris County, TX in Aug. 2017? Seven Superfund sites in one county had been hit by the flooding!

“People do underestimate what a massive problem our military sites are in terms of their contribution to pollution in the United States,” said Jennifer Liss Ohayon, a U of CA/Santa Cruz postdoctoral research fellow who has extensively studied the sites. There are approximately 4 million personnel and dependents who live at military installations across the U.S., most often not given the choice of where they are stationed, but following orders, including living in and near hazardous waste dumps.

Mothers day reflections

by Amber Mathwig

Iraq veteran and member of About Face organization

Every year in late April, I think to myself, “I should put a call out for a peace action Mother’s Day this year,” and then time rushes by and suddenly that day has passed with regret. This year was no different. As I reflected throughout the day, how the year of the pandemic and increased state violence around the world has so many more mothers without their children, and so many children without their mothers, it feels more pressing than ever to reach back into the annals of history to recognize and honor the intention behind Mother’s Day that Ann and Anna Jarvis had intended for us.

Ann Jarvis was an Appalachian woman, and mother of 11, who organized mother’s to advocate for improved sanitation in their impoverished community. As the Civil War changed the social landscape of the United States, Ann Jarvis sought to hold reconciliations between warring communities and care for the sick and injured. While Ann Jarvis died in 1905, her legacy was continued by her daughter, Anna, who sought to honor her mother and all mother’s working for peace and healthy communities, by organizing a memorial ceremony in 1908, in which 500 white carnations were given away to mothers as a symbol of a love that never dies and drops away, but stays close even after death, and then advocating for the first official Mother’s Day by Presidential Proclamation in 1914.

Sadly, it only took a few years for commercialization of the holiday to hijack its radical beginnings. While confectioners, florists, and greeting card companies did very well each Mother’s Day by pushing commodities that became public status symbols of access and wealth around mothering, Jarvis fought against them in an attempt to retain the original intentions around the recognition of mother’s working hard for their communities to prosper, but to no avail.

As someone who works in the service industry, I see firsthand the role privilege plays in creating the experience of togetherness for a few hours. It is made possible by the labor of the marginalized and oppressed, who also are denied the opportunity to celebrate their mothers (or to be celebrated). I think often about how the flower industry relies heavily on chemicals and dangerous labor in Global South countries to ship us these symbols that only retain their beauty for a short period of time. It never escapes me how greeting cards rarely touch upon the complicated sentiments that many experience as mothers and children of mothers, whether biological, adopted, or fostered.

Chocolate is all too often obtained through child labor and the destruction of environments. It’s hard to say these are symbols of honor and appreciation, when they are really thinly veiled exploitations of motherhood, their children, and the efforts to survive.

For 2022, I am planning ahead. I will continue to labor daily in honor of my own mother, an incredible community servant who was my first example of selflessness and dedication to those around me. I will fight for the mothers experiencing immeasurable grief by the excess violence in our communities, whether through environmental damage, forced poverty, or state and interpersonal violence. I will plant white carnations around my home as a daily reminder of Jarvis’ original intentions of the truth, purity, and broad charity of motherly love. I will write and say daily sentiments of love and appreciation for all the mothers in my life, to know that they are honored and respected every day, not just one day. I will continue to call out and advocate for change around the gendered divide of mothering, household labor, and the workforce that has reared yet another ugly head in the year of a painful pandemic.

I will never let the appreciation of mother’s be segregated to one day, and I will never give up the ideals of that first Mother’s day for peace and safety.

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.**

Memorial Day 2021



This year's Memorial Day Commemoration featured blue skies and a variety of speakers, including poet Tom Lablanc/Strong Buffalo (pictured above), Bill McGrath, and native singers. It was organized and led by Barry Riesch.

Letter to Trump, from "Birds Without Sky"

a book of poems by Malka al-Haddad who is living in exile from Iraq

*Write down
I'm Muslim.
I'm from Sumerians who taught
your ancestors to write.
Who taught me the pride of the sun
Long before I could read.*

*Write down
I'm Muslim.
I'm from Hammurabi
Who taught America what is law
and urban civilization.
You, who were neither well-bred,
nor well-born!*

*Write down
I'm Muslim.
My roots were entrenched before*

*the birth of time.
I'm from the Land of Oil:
Black gold, which is your dream to
steal.*

*Write down
I'm Muslim.
You left nothing for us
But these rocks.
So will your state take them
As it has been foretold?*

*Therefore;
Write down
I'm Muslim.
Nor do I encroach.*

*But if I become angry,
The usurper's flesh will be my
food.*

*Beware.
Beware
Of my anger.*

*Write down
I'm Muslim.
I'm the hot sun in a desert of magic
you cannot get
In your palaces of gold.*

*Write down
I'm Muslim
From the chocolate brown of my
skin.
From my Mesopotamium civiliza-
tion your armies invaded
And left empty handed*

*Write down
I'm Muslim.*

Legislation in Congress would make it easier to receive VA benefits for exposure to burn pits

by Sue Ann Martinson
Associate member VFP
and WAMM member

A burn pit refers to an area in military sites devoted to open-air combustion of trash. The phrase was first used to refer to the common way of getting rid of waste at U.S. military sites in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, the practice was used well before these conflicts and has caused a variety of illnesses, including asthma, bronchitis, chronic cough, and cancers.

Potentially millions of veterans have been exposed to burn pits and the chemicals they release, according to a report released by the VA. The VA is currently collecting data in a registry, which enables veterans and current service members to voluntarily share information about their exposures and report health issues. More information about the registry can be found at tinyurl.com/yutprvy4.

This registry method, however, puts the burden on the veterans themselves to prove a service connection, and it is not considered to be an adequate solution to the problem of treatment at the VA for airborne diseases that have plagued so many veterans.

Veterans are eligible to participate in the registry if deployed to the Southwest Asia theater of operations any time after August 2, 1990 or to Afghanistan or Djibouti on or after September 11, 2001. Vietnam veterans are therefore not included, although Sen. Rubio's website has a statement from the VVA national president:

"As Vietnam veterans, we know firsthand the toll of toxic exposure on our health and the high costs associated with our toxic wounds. Time is of the essence, and we call for swift passage of this crucial legislation with the hopes that our younger veterans will not face the decades-long fight for healthcare and benefits that continues to plague Vietnam veterans," said Vietnam Veterans of America



Burn pit in Balad Air Base in Iraq.

National President John Rowan.

After years of legislative work by various veterans groups, the Senate is considering a bill that will make it easier for veterans and soldiers to be treated for health problems caused by burn pits.

The Presumptive Benefits for War Fighters Exposed to Burn Pits and Other Toxins Act is a bipartisan bill that would remove the burden of proof that requires a veteran to provide enough evidence to establish a direct service connection between their health condition and exposure. Rather, the veteran would only need to submit documentation that they received a campaign medal associated with the Global War on Terror or the Gulf War, and they suffer from a qualifying health condition.

Campaign medals are awarded to members of the armed forces who deploy for military operations in a designated combat zone or geographical theater. Presumptive conditions include a wide range of cancers and respiratory illnesses, including asthma that was diagnosed after service; a variety of cancers; chronic bronchitis; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease; constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative

Burn Pits, Continued on page 15

Help influence the future of the VA

by Jeff Roy

The Asset and Infrastructure Review (A.I.R.) Commission established by the VA Mission Act of 2018 is now being implemented. This Commission will evaluate utilization patterns and infrastructure needs of all VA facilities and then recommend whether to close, replace, consolidate, expand or repurpose these facilities.

The Commission's work is largely insulated from Congress, which must vote "up or down" on its final recommendations, without making any changes. This means there is much work to be done to influence both the process of the Commission's work and educate Members of Congress on how their vote will affect the VA.

Work by the Commission begins this year and concludes in 2023. This year, an important aspect is selecting the Commissioners and the Chair of the Commission. These people determine what assessments are done (what questions are asked and what is considered) and interpret the results. Both these can be skewed by the individual interests of each member of the Commission. SOVA works closely with the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute (VHPI) and will follow their lead in asking you to help support or oppose both Commission appointments and actions.

In making recommendations on closing, replacing, consolidating, expanding or repurposing VA facilities, the Commission will decide which services are available and where. For example, they could decide that military related care (such as PTSD or prostheses and other specialized care)

will be provided at the VA but other services will be shifted to the private sector. **This destroys the integrated health-care the VA offers where patients can get all their care in a coordinated system that uses a complete medical record seen by any provider in any VA facility anywhere in the country when the veteran seeks care. Losing this introduces dangerous and expensive fragmentation into veterans' care.**

Private sector providers have no experience identifying and treating military related problems such as those linked to Agent Orange or burn pits. Private sector providers will not help veterans get compensation for these injuries, nor will they refer veterans to registries that collect data on these injuries. Similarly, they will not recognize emerging patterns about new service-related injuries or conditions. Recognizing that diabetes is related to Agent Orange exposure would never have been determined if veterans were treated for non-military problems outside of the VA system.

These are only a few of the problems that illustrate the importance of this Commission and explain why we're asking you to be aware of it, to follow it and to help us by sending our Call To Action (CTA) letters.

Go to the SOVA page on the national VFP website (Google 'save our VA VFP') and sign up to get CTAs. Join us here in Minnesota to rally at the VA or to reach out to others or consider joining a committee on the SOVA National Campaign. Contact Arlys Herem or Jeff Roy for more information or to volunteer.

Letter, from page 5

or remain in denial.

As we witness extreme weather events, from flash floods to wildfires to freezing temperatures, we are reminded of the urgency of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions. To ensure a carbon-free future in a sustainable world, we must redefine global security as climate security and recognize that war and war preparations will only make us less secure. Otherwise, we face an increasingly militarized and dystopian world, in which industrialized countries lock out climate refugees from the Global South, and in which indigenous peoples disproportionately suffer as a result of our addiction to fossil fuels and militarism.

We recognize that ending this existential threat to our survival requires transforming the organizing principle of

our society from greed to sustainability, equity, community and regeneration. This will require the collaboration of many groups: frontline communities, racial and climate justice advocates, youth, labor, environmentalists, and religious groups, along with the crucial role that you and other concerned officials can play.

Working together to end war and militarism must be a central part of this effort.

We would like to schedule a showing of our slides on "Climate Disruption and US Militarism" and plan to be in touch with you on how best we can work together. Thank you for your time, consideration and leadership as Climate Envoy. Sincerely, Climate Crisis and Militarism Working Group, Veterans For Peace

There was elephant grass there

by Sarah Garton

Teacher Great River Montessori School

In April 2021, my History of the Americas 10th grade social studies class at Great River Montessori School in St Paul studied The War in Vietnam and Collective Memory.

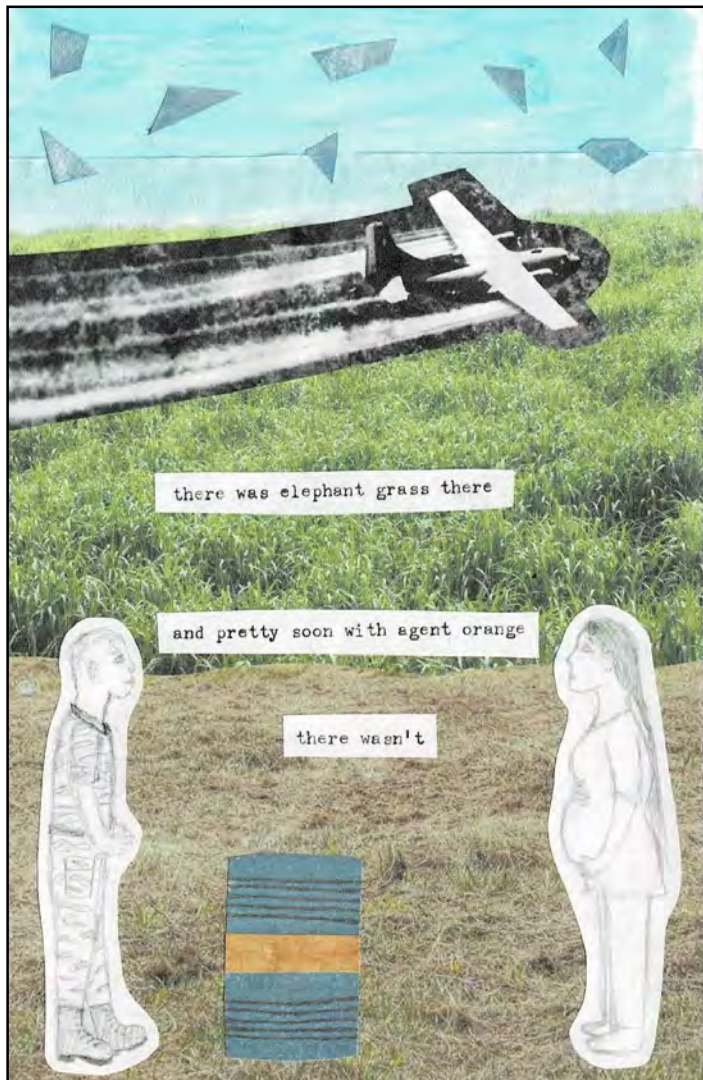
This was my second year teaching this unit and having the opportunity to collaborate with Veterans For Peace. Even in pandemic, Vets For Peace members have graciously offered their time and stories for my students to further understand the historical significance, perspectives and moral dimension of this important history. This is the story of their grandparents' generation, and many students have family members who were living in Southeast Asia at the time, or were sent to Vietnam from the United States. Their closeness to this history makes it particularly impactful because many of them have never been able to formally

study it or consider multiple perspectives.

They were able to explore: What is the role of oral history for healing and collective memory making? What impacts a person's point of view? What is the impact of individual and collective memory on historical narrative? The present moment? How can historians support multiplicities within oral history to tell a more complex and complete history?

Steve McKeown, Bruce Berry and Larry Johnson joined us one day for a special panel so that students could hear their stories, perspectives and ask questions. Afterwards, many students were very moved by the connections to political consciousness, peace building today, and what they as students could think about as young people about their role in the world and social change.

Several students based their final projects on some of the oral history shared by Steve, Bruce and Larry. We are so grateful for this continued relationship, and hope to do more of this sharing story and perspectives in the coming years!



Student explains her art

by Phoebe K.,

Student, Great River Montessori School

This collage focuses in on the American military's use of Agent Orange during the war in Vietnam. It depicts a plane spraying the chemical over a field of elephant grass as two spectators look on from an already barren piece of ground. One of the spectators is a pregnant Vietnamese civilian, while the other is an American soldier. A drum of Agent Orange rests on the ground near the soldier.

This work was directly inspired by an oral history shared by Steve McKeown. In the midst of telling his story and describing his arrival in Vietnam, Steve said as an aside, "There was elephant grass there, and pretty soon with Agent Orange, there wasn't."

This line struck me the moment he said it and has been on my mind ever since. He said it nonchalantly, it was another fact of war to him, but it shocked me that the grass would just disappear. I read a little bit more, and learned that the chemical had severe health implications for those who interacted with it, both Vietnamese and American, both soldier and civilian.

When you look up "Agent Orange" on the web, pictures

Continued on next page

DOD contaminated drinking water with “forever chemicals”

by Frank Fuller

The Department of Defense contaminated hundreds of drinking water systems with so-called “forever chemicals” because of its use of fire retardant foams. They are called forever chemicals because they remain in the environment for hundreds of years without breaking down.

The chemicals are perfluoroalkyl and polufluoroalkyl substances, which are found in the foams that have been used for decades to fight fires. PFAs are also in many consumer goods, and again have been sold in household products for decades. They have been linked to a number of diseases including a variety of cancers.

DOD has said that 564 water systems nationwide have been contaminated with its PFAs and suspects that 693 military installations across the country have used foams with PFAs in the past. The National Defense Authorization Act of 2020 required DOD to find and use a replacement foam that does not contain PFAs.

Seven states have passed laws regulating the amount of PFAs in drinking water, and two have sued the Federal gov-

ernment to get it to pay for the cleanup and to monitor and test residents effected by the PSAs.

Nobody is certain how much the cleanup will cost, but estimates range from \$2 billion to tens of billions of dollars. If the history of the costs of these cleanups is any indication, the costs will probably be even more.

So how can we get money from the military to pay for the pollution the military has caused and will continue to cause for hundreds of years?

Let’s look at Bien’s 2020 DOD budget for a start.

First, there’s the F-35 jet fighter program. Twenty years into this project, this jet still cannot do what it was supposed to do and with all the cost overruns has drained taxpayers of about a trillion dollars.

It was conceived as a lightweight fighter but is now one of the heaviest jets around. It can’t fly everyday because of maintenance problems. It is also one of the most expensive jets to operate.

At a cost of \$100 million per plane, there are now discussions to upgrade older F-35s to bring them up to current standards. **This would cost \$12.1 billion.**

And DOD now says it wants to develop a new lightweight fighter jet, which is an admission of the failure of this plane.

Biden’s budget asks for **\$12 billion for an additional 85 f-35s.**

Biden’s budget also seeks **\$20.4 billion for missile defense programs**, even though they have never been proven effective.

Biden’s budget also increases the budget of the space agency, so it can dominate in space, whatever that means. It seeks **\$20.6 for this agency, an increase of \$2 billion** over Trump’s last budget.

Biden is also seeking to increase the budget for nuclear capabilities. It seeks **\$2.6 billion for “ground-based nuclear deterrents”** like Minuteman III missiles. And it seeks a total of \$15.7 billion for nuclear weapons programs.

So apparently there is money that could be used to clean up PFAs in drinking water. It’s not a high priority, however.

cont’d from previous page

show up of people who have disabilities caused by the effects of Agent Orange on development in the womb. While looking for images of the iconic barrels the chemical came in, I found an article about how the U.S. government denied the effects of Agent Orange on veterans who were struggling with health issues caused by it, essentially gaslighting them and refusing to compensate them for the harm caused. In my work, I wanted to allude to these ramifications of the use of Agent Orange, as well as directly displaying the eradication of the elephant grass whose image originally grabbed me.

The two people in my collage are both looking up at the plane with a similar expression on their faces, and it is meant to be one of confusion and worry. I want the audience to my piece to wonder about how the chemical will affect each of them. I placed a barrel of Agent Orange near the soldier, because I also want the audience to consider at least a little bit to what extent he may be complicit or responsible. This does not contradict the fact that I want the audience to see both of them as human, both of them as impacted by the decisions of far more powerful people and a chemical that has a very real chance of causing them harm.

Peacestock tentatively set for September

by Bill Habedink, Ex. Dir. VFP Ch. 115

Peace stock is alive and well And will continue.

For the last two years, Peacestock has been a virtual event. The next Peacestock will be a combination live and online event. Our tech expert, Tom Feehan, owner of PromoVideoMedia, has the knowledge to do webinar events and promotion. Tom, myself, Jameel Haque, Bill McGrath, Penny Gardiner and I have been having weekly meetings for planning a September 2021 Peacestock. September was chosen because we thought that live gatherings would be commonplace by then.

Since we lost the use of the Hobgoblin Barn (a long story but not because of our past use) we have been exploring other venues. Jameel, who teaches at Mankato State University, found a place, the Mankato Ballroom, which holds 1,600 people. We dream big and we can socially distance there!

The reason Mankato is a great option is because on September 25th (tentative), Mankato State students will be there and given the right topic and music we may draw them in. We have always tried to attract young people.

The hard part is choosing a topic that will attract these young people and at the same time target current issues important to Veterans For Peace.

My thoughts are on militarism and the environment but we are open to your ideas. We value any ideas you may have and your active participation, especially since Peacestock is combined effort between VFP 27 and 115. Call me at 651-764-1866 or email me at whabedank@yahoo.com

Poisoning the Pacific by Jon Mitchell

reviewed by Paula Staff

Jon Mitchell writes in excruciating detail in his recent book about the disregard the military, pentagon, and U.S. government have for the people, land, water and air. Lies were told, and promises of environmental remediation never happened. Any accountability was ignored and complaints were attributed to leftist propaganda. Children, adolescents, and adults sickened and died from chemicals used in warfare and stored improperly and carelessly. Military officials denied environmental issues and requests to their benefit and financial gain. No thought was given to future consequences to all living beings and nature. The freedom to do as the military wished to do with no consequences is preeminent. To read the book was to cultivate an iron stomach because much of the content is disgusting and outrageous.

Questions arise. How did military leaders let the degradation of the environment occur? It's as if all eyes were closed to their actions and instead focused on the easy and profitable path over the humane one. That is the truth that will never be admitted. Responsibility for actions and a lack thereof will never be requested. Military and government behavior will continue indiscriminately to run roughshod over the voices of people asking for environmental justice and reparations. More lies will be told and no actions will be taken to repair the biological, chemical and nuclear damage. It is hard believe that such treachery could survive and flourish. The truth is, it does.

The Noble Science of Trauma

by Stefan Lovasik

I shower in the canopied jungle with wires of light
and rain; dry with strings of ears and scalps,
I step into your body, a mirror. My faces
sweat liquid only the dead can give up,
yet the mirror rips into a thousand scars,
the age of my eyes. I lie down in thin night,

in white phosphorous, until you remind me
that the light is from stars, and the moon, over St. Paul,

breaking. I want to tell you how I try
to forgive this boy, but here beside you
this old man pulls the trigger as I hold
and cannot hold your beautiful hand. Turn
toward a burning face in the night's window, blossom.

from The Latitude of a Mercy (New York Quarterly Books, 2021) by Stefan Lovasik

Printed by permission of the author & NYQ Books

Drift, The Unmooring of American Military Power

by Rachel Maddow

reviewed by Ron Staff

This two year old meditation on the condition of our militarism begins with a quote from founding father, James Madison. In part he writes, “No nation could reserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.”

As a country of laws, the founders did not want the country going to war at any one person’s say so. The result was handing that “ability” over to the House of Representatives. That ball has been tossed back to the Executive. Then sought to be gotten back; and so on, and on.

Maddow takes the reader to our current location, which

is that it is “contracted out;” [to the lowest bidder?]. At first our corporate citizens merely stepped in for laundry or food services; typing, that sort of thing. Why stop there when other higher paying contracts were in the offing?

Want to take on another army, navy or air force; send out an RFP (request for proposal) and see how inexpensive it might be! Warring on the cheap.

Mercenaries have been around throughout history. Democratic governments have not. Since “we, the people” are the source of governmental power in either our democracy or republic, we get to decide if that is the manner in which we want to be protected. If so, we need to foot the bill. [I’m not sure that anyone has noticed the our “corporate citizens” have recently gotten a big reduction in their taxes; yet most foreign wars are in defense of their interests.]

Odd how is that?

Maybe Rachel or some other bright person could explain that one.

EVENTS CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

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

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

3-4 pm Mondays. White Bear Lake peace vigil. Corner of 4th Street and Hwy 61.

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.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Aug 27 Kellogg Briand Pact 93rd anniv. TBA

Hiroshima, Nagasaki Commemorations

Aug. 5, 6 pm, Tea Ceremony at Lyndale Park Peace Garden

Aug. 6, 7:30 am, Hiroshima Commemoration at Lyndale Park Peace Garden. Meditation by Nancy Hyvarinen

Aug. 8 at 7 pm, Nagasaki Commemoration at the Global Harmony Labyrinth at Como Park

Bring your own lawn chairs. Sponsored by the Minneapolis St. Paul Hiroshima Nagasaki Commemoration Committee, Women Against Military Madness, Veterans for Peace Chapter 27, and the Saint Paul Nagasaki Sister City Committee.

Open Streets dates set

Open Streets is a non-motorized event that takes place in Minneapolis seven times during the year. We park our Peace Bus, hand out buttons and stickers! Complete details have not been formed yet, but here are the dates and streets:

- 1) Aug. 1st Northeast (Sunday);
- 2) Sept. 11th West Broadway (Saturday);
- 3) Sept 17th Nicollet (Sunday);
- 4) Oct. 10th Lyndale (Sunday);
- 5) Oct. 24th Minnehaha (Sunday).

Burn pits, from page 10

bronchiolitis; emphysema; granulomatous disease; interstitial lung disease; pleuritis; pulmonary fibrosis; and sarcoidosis. The following organizations support the Senate bill: Vietnam Veterans of America, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, The American Legion, Burn Pits 360, Vote Vets, Military Veterans Advocacy, Stronghold Freedom Foundation, Dixon Center, Veterans for Common Sense, Sergeant Sullivan Circle, National Veterans Legal Services Program, Warriors Project, Grunt Style, and FealGood Foundation.

The House of Representatives is also considering two bipartisan bills directly related to burn pits. Both are currently in the House Veterans Affairs Committee.



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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
Summer 2021 Newsletter

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
TWIN CITIES, MN
PERMIT NO. 7675

SUPPORT THE TROOPS! BRING THEM HOME ALIVE NOW!

As of June 3, 2021:

At least 7,038 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.

