



Winter 2022, volume XXV, issue 4

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:
vfpcchapter27@gmail.com

Our website is:
www.vfpcchapter27.org.

Newsletter committee:
Frank Fuller, editor;
Jennie Downey, Eric Garcia, Jean Heberle, Joan Johnson, Wade 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)



Protesters at the recent UN Climate Summit in Glasgow protest the military's contribution to greenhouse gases.

U.S. military fuels the Climate Crisis

by Barry Riesch

Most readers of this newsletter probably agree that our climate is in peril. Most are also probably aware that our U.S. military is the world's largest institutional consumer of petroleum products and the single largest institutional emitter of toxic greenhouse gasses in the world.

The detrimental effects of climate change should be obvious to all by now and we know what is causing it. However, what is now widely known is the U.S. military's role in climate change. The U.S. military releases more carbon pollution than many countries. Not only does it release so much carbon into the atmosphere, but it also causes a great deal of environmental degradation from chemical and radioactive pollution.

While each of us can personally do things to help avert the catastrophe, we could accomplish more by getting the military to cut its fossil fuel use and put those funds towards more productive ends. **While addressing the U.S.**

military's role will not solve the crisis, the crisis will not be resolved without it being addressed. Never before has it been clearer that humans must turn away from violence and war if we want to save our species from doom. Climate change, war-making and capitalism keep the human family in peril, and it's up to those of us at Veterans For Peace to make the case that reversing climate change will have to include the abolition of war.

We at the National Veterans For Peace Climate Crisis and Militarism working group have developed a few initiatives where you can help. First we have developed a 20-minute slide presentation focused on the U.S. military's role in the climate crisis. Our goal is to show this to as many groups as possible to help educate others on this issue. For the most part environmental groups do not mention this relationship. During the recent COP26 conference

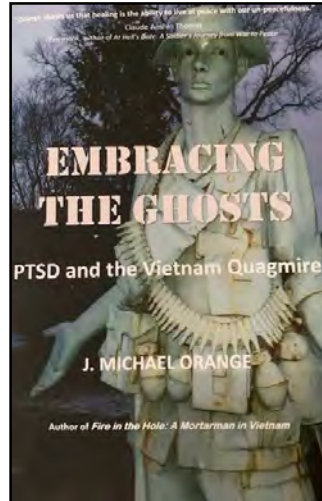
The military and climate change,
Continued on page 2

The Prez says. . .

by Mike McDonald

Michael Orange's book, 'Embracing the Ghosts - PTSD and the Vietnam Quagmire' was published earlier this year.

Michael's openness and honesty about his life experiences make a compelling story of what it means to carry war within one's self. Like so many other combat veterans, he first tried to minimize the effects that war and its atrocities had on him. However, through therapy, he learned that trauma can't be "wished away" or ignored. He also discovered that trauma is cumulative - how growing up in a dysfunctional family plagued by alcohol exacerbated his



combat PTSD.

Fortunately, Michael also found that trauma is a burden that needn't be carried alone if you have the courage to ask for help. He was fortunate to have his compassionate wife, Cynthia, and a supportive family and community that listened without judgment and held him along his path of introspection and healing. I highly recommend this book.

All of us have a bit of Lucy (from Peanuts) in us. On my coffee cup she famously says, "If everybody agreed with me they'd all be right."

In these tribalistic times it is difficult for many of us to agree on anything. But the truth is that with our military industrial complex being given around a trillion dollars every year, we are dooming ourselves.

WAKE UP AMERICA! Let us commit to shrinking our military spending and to dealing with the myriad of other problems we face, none bigger than the climate crisis.

The military and climate change, from page 1

the only mention of U.S. military was when Abby Martin confronted Nancy Pelosi about the Pentagon budget and military emissions in regards to achieving net zero. We ask that our members and friends first view the slide presentation and then contact groups (environmental, church groups, neighborhood groups, legislators, etc) so that we (Climate Crisis working group) can then make arrangements to present it to them.

Second, since 1997 Kyoto protocol, thanks to Dick Cheney, the U.S. military was exempted from reporting emissions. Members of our working group in California have been working with Congresswoman Barbara Lee to

create a resolution to be brought before Congress requiring that the U.S. military report on its emissions. That resolution has been drafted and is now before Congress (<https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-resolution/767>). We ask that you contact your Congress person and ask them to sign on to the resolution for this requirement.

Third, we have bumper stickers (shown at the bottom of this page). We are selling them at cost in lots of 50 for \$30.00 plus postage. Please purchase and distribute them or ask for a good will offering. Post them on bumpers, or other prominent spots to help spread this important message.

**U.S. MILITARISM
FUELS
CLIMATE CRISIS**

www.veteransforpeace.org/take-action/climatecrisis



National Perspective

by Dave Logsdon

*“Logic will get you from A to B.
Imagination will take you everywhere.”
Albert Einstein*

Next September, the Golden Rule hopes to start an epic journey from right here in the Twin Cities. The Golden Rule is an historic sailboat rescued from the bottom of Humboldt Bay by some intrepid Veterans For Peace members who then restored it.

In the 1950s, four Quaker sailors attempted to sail the Golden Rule into the nuclear bomb testing area in the Marshall Islands to act as a shield. They never got there, but their arrest brought world attention to the situation, which ultimately led to the cessation of the testing.

Since its restoration, various crews have sailed up and down the Pacific coast, holding anti-nuke seminars along the way. In 2019 the boat made its way to the Hawaiian Islands and generated a lot of interest and media coverage while island hopping.

Now the big dreamers at the Golden Rule Project want to truck it to the Twin Cities next September! This will be huge for our local chapter. We have already reached out to the area Friends (Quakers) groups for support and, of course, fundraising. We will need “Mother Nature” to give us a nice rainy summer to get the water levels of the Mississippi River up.

The Iowa VFP folks are excited as well. Apparently, Dubuque has a sizable Pacific Islander population, who were directly affected by the nuclear testing. The plans are to motor slowly to the Gulf of Mexico then up the eastern seaboard to the St. Lawrence Seaway to the Great Lakes, ending up in Chicago.

As with any project this big, there is resistance from within the ranks of VFP, but I believe the big dreamers will win the day! Sail on, sail on.

*“The person with a new idea is a crank,
until the idea succeeds.”
Mark Twain*

As many of you are aware, I ran for the National Board of Directors again (third time is a charm?). By the time this newsletter hits the streets, the election results will be known. I have also agreed to put my name in for president of our local chapter. Our chapter is primed for a dynamic year filled with big dreams and big actions. I just want to be the Willie Shoemaker riding Secretariat to the finish line!

*“There is no instance of a nation
benefitting from prolonged war.”
Sun Tzu*

The U.S. military spends millions infiltrating video-gaming sites. Through the shoot-'em-up nature of these games, the recruiting begins. The Army has competitive gaming teams entered in big video tournaments. Guns and glory! That's precisely why our “Gamers for Peace” was developed by the sharp younger vets on our national staff. Invading that video culture with an alternative to the military recruiters. Go to our national website for more information (veteransforpeace.org).

Reclaiming Armistice Day

On November 11th, 1991 our chapter rang the bells to commemorate the Armistice that ended the brutal trench warfare of the Great War on that same month, same day, same hour in 1918. We have rang our bells every year since moving all over the city, inside and out. Several years ago, eleven vets and activists were invited by artist Gita Ghei to make their own bells. Over the years we have expanded our bell ringing to Memorial Day, the passing of vets and anti-war activists, and events such as the dedication of Peace poles.

In the last few years more VFP chapters have begun to use bell ringing at Armistice Day events. Our national VFP has taken up the cause to “Reclaim Armistice Day” with churches all across this country now ringing bells to remember the true meaning of this sacred day. We say “No!” to the 21-gun salutes, the uber-patriotic displays, the glorification of war, and “Yes!” to solemn reflection and remembrance of all the pain war has brought to this world.

VFP 27's co-founder Steve McKeown and I were on a radio program in Fresno CA and locally on Don Olson's show on KFAI. If you go to our national website (veteransforpeace.org), our Gamers for Peace folks put together an all day video of actions around the country. I finished my day at Brit's Pub's annual Armistice Day event by saying “War is a Racket” and ringing our bells for peace.

*“Ring the bells that still can ring,
forget your perfect offering,
there is a crack in everything,
that's how the light gets in,
that's how the light gets in.”
Leonard Cohen*

NationalPerspective, Continued on page 4

VA care equal to or better than private-sector care

by Arlys Herem and Jeff Roy,
Save Our VA National Steering Committee Members

Numerous studies have shown that VA veterans' healthcare is equal to or better than private-sector care. A recent 2020 study by Stanford University went even further to show the difference in medical outcomes.

According to policy analysts with our collaborative partners, Suzanne Gordon and Russell Lemle at the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute (VHPI):

"This groundbreaking study is the first head-to-head comparison of care that matched cohorts of veterans inside and outside the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) [facilities]. Previously, most research contrasted the care of veterans using the VHA with non-veterans using non-VA facilities. Those studies (RAND, Dartmouth, etc.) documented that the VHA provides care that is equal — and very often superior — to that furnished by the private sector. VHA's success was especially noteworthy given that its patients have, on average, worse underlying health conditions and are thus at risk for worse outcomes. The meticulously designed Stanford study categorically demonstrated that veterans who get their care at the VHA live longer during and after a medical emergency, and at lower cost, than those receiving non-VA care."

This study, and this kind of positive VA news, is rarely reported by mainstream media! Instead, the media focuses on VA problems that, unlike the private sector, the VA investigates and shares with the public. Those conservative and corporate forces wanting to move veteran health care to the MISSION Act private-sector Veterans Community Care Program (VCCP), seize every opportunity to paint the VA in a bad light.

Finally, regarding the Stanford study, the VHPI policy analysts conclude:

"The definitive Stanford study, coming on top of many others, should give pause to the idea that VHA concentrate on providing a limited set of core services like mental healthcare, primary care and rehabilitation and farm out remaining services to the private sector. VHA produces better outcomes in its provision of a full set of comprehensive services that are woven together to create a national system of care. **To disrupt and dismantle this tapestry of care through wholesale or piecemeal privatization, the Stanford authors argue, would "lead to both higher spending and worse healthcare outcomes."**

How You Can Help!

To help stop this effort of conservative and corporate forces to disrupt and dismantle VA care through diversion of veterans to the MISSION Act's private-sector VCCP, the VFP SAVE OUR VA National Project encourages you to join our efforts. How? By doing the following:

Join SOVA by going to our website at veteransforpeace.org/sova and signing up to receive our Calls to Action Alerts. You will receive pre-drafted letters supporting or opposing Congressional VA legislation that will be sent to your Members of Congress. You don't need to be a vet to support SOVA.

Donate to support the SOVA National Campaign, also on our website.

Consider adding your energy to one of our many SOVA Subcommittees. Your efforts can be as little or as much as you want.

To email us for other questions, contact us at sova-mail@yahoo.com

We thank you for your concern, activism and support!

National Perspective from page 3

*"I will not play 'tug 'O war.' I'd rather play
'hug 'O war.'" Where everyone hugs, instead of tugs.
Where everyone giggles and rolls on the rug.
Where everyone kisses, and everyone grins,
and everyone cuddles, and everyone wins."*
Shel Silverstein

And finally, I want to thank Mike McDonald for stepping up to be the chapter president these past three years. Governance on any level is difficult, especially with a bunch of outlaws like we have in this chapter. Mike put his stamp on the long legacy (30 years) of Chapter 27. Pushing environmental issues to the front of the discussion was both prescient and visionary!

Mike has agreed to take on the role of chapter secretary, the job Ron Staff has served for damn near a decade. Big thanks to Ron as well. Thanks to all ya'll who have stepped out of you comfort zones during these challenging times. Peace out, I'll see you in the streets!

Peacestock 21

by Bill Habedank

Last October 19th VFP 115 and 27 held their 21st Peacestock event online because of the pandemic. The attendance was less than expected but those who attended saw a jam-packed event, with a great topic, “ Militarism/environment: Is militarism providing the security we seek?” We had great presentations by many speakers as well as the great music that is a Peacestock tradition.

Below is a list of the speakers and events, which I encourage you to view on our website (www.peacestock-vfp.org). The full program is online.

Jameel Haque from the **Kessel Peace Institute** at Minnesota State University with **Megan Schnitker** and **Anisa Omar**, an organization at Minnesota State University for peace and justice.

Strong Buffalo and the Buffalo Weavers with songs including “Stand Tall for Mother Earth.”

Gary Butterfield from VFP, San Diego, and the **Climate Crisis and Militarism Project** and presentation of the VFP Power Point program on militarism and climate.

Adrienne Kinney, VFP national president, on our interpersonal environment as it relates to solving our climate as well as social problems

Barry Reisch as moderator for **Militarism/Climate** and **Gamers for Peace**.

Kris Bellaquist and **Katie “Plantifa”, Gamers for Peace**, on the Gamers use of counter recruitment in the digital spaces as an alternative to military recruitment online. Gamers is an alternative to the military entertainment complex.

Diane Picotte-Habedank from **Military Families Speak Out (MFSO)** on the organization’s mission of supporting military families for the past 20 years.

1.5 Degrees of Peace, a demo on a documentary film to inspire a unified movement for peace and climate justice.

Patchouli and the **Wild Colonial Bhoys** musical performances. The WCB presentation of their new song “Make Your Voices Heard.”

Yes, we packed a lot of great stuff into a two and a half-hour event, and again I encourage you to watch it. We

encouraged attendees to make donations to the cause but unfortunately that did not adequately approach our expenses. If you can donate, please do so on our website. We want to continue Peacestock but must meet expenses in the future. If you contributed, we thank you. We hope to have a live event again next summer. In addition to the amazing speakers and musicians, these events are a lot of fun as well!

Tell Congress: Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions from the U.S. Military

by Barry Reisch

The Climate Crisis & Militarism Project of Veterans For Peace invites you to urge your Member of Congress (MOC) to cosponsor H Res 767: Department of Defense to reduce the overall environmental impact of all military activities and missions, and for other purposes.

To begin changing how the U.S. military contributes to the global climate crisis, this House Resolution declares that it is the duty of the Department of Defense (DoD) to monitor, track, and report greenhouse gas emissions from all its operations. The United States military does not publicly and regularly report its overall fuel consumption or greenhouse gas emissions—despite requirements laid out in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2021. DoD is estimated to emit more CO2 than over 120 separate countries.

DoD must set clear annual greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for both domestic and foreign operations, consistent with the 1.5 degrees Celsius global temperature rise target specified by the 2015 Paris Agreement. The U.S. military is the globe's single largest institutional source of greenhouse gas emissions. This resolution calls for DoD to reduce the overall environmental impact of all military activities and missions in accordance with the science-based emission targets set out in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2022.

For questions or additional information, contact climate@veteransforpeace.org.

Local members remember the Dakota 38 +2



VFP members at Reconciliation Park in Mankato.

by Craig Wood

On October 11, Indigenous Peoples Day, members of VFP Chapter 27 held a silent vigil at Reconciliation Park in Mankato near the site where 38 Dakota Indians were hanged the day after Christmas in 1862 for trying to protect their homeland. Most of the bodies were dug up the next day and used for medical research. Bad as that was, it could have been much worse.

Had Episcopal Bishop Henry Whipple not traveled from Minnesota to Washington, D.C., to talk with President Lincoln about injustices that occurred during the hurried trials, 265 more Indigenous people would have been killed. Two other Native American Chiefs were later kidnapped in Canada and executed by the military. These people are usually referred to as the Dakota 38+2.

On hand was retired Associate Professor of Indigenous Nations & Dakota Studies, activist and author of the book *THE GREAT EVIL* Chris Mato Nunpa Ph.D., who spoke with forthrightness about atrocities committed against Native Americans. About a dozen VFP members participated in a solemn procession that paused at one-minute intervals 38 times to let veterans chime bells and listen to Mato Nunpa read aloud the names of those put to death and comment on the meaning of those names.

The event attracted a few dozen activists from various communities and others who stopped by during the ceremony to pay tribute to the fallen. This was the fourth year Chapter 27 sponsored the event. Once again, the Mankato Press covered our event on their front page.

Armistice Day Commemoration, Chapter 27 style

by Joan Johnson

In the early morning hours of November 11th, members and friends of Veterans for Peace Chap. 27 held their annual Armistice Day remembrance by first gathering at the World War I Memorial that borders Robbinsdale and North Minneapolis. (At 4500 Xerxes Ave N.)

Lucia Wilkes, who is also a member of WAMM, gave the group a history of how this memorial came to be, and she encouraged everyone to read the names aloud as they walked in a procession along Victory Memorial Drive, which is configured in an “L” shape, with plaques by each tree in both directions bearing the names of each of the 568 Hennepin County residents who died in that awful war. My own great-uncle Clarence, a WWI veteran, thankfully had returned from war and subsequently built many of the homes which flank the north to south stretch of the drive (on the Mpls. side). Sitting with him in one of those houses that he shared with his sister Hildur, I remember him relaying to us kids the horrors of being in the trenches. My mom explained to us that the war had traumatized him so much, he had developed a severe stutter by the time he returned home and “never was the same after that experience.” I think Uncle Clare had what they called “shell shock,” now known as PTSD. I wish I knew then what I know now, and could have had more in-depth conversations with both my grandpa and Clare about their opinions on that war. I maybe could’ve been more sympathetic and possibly helpful to them in their depression over their haunting memories. I just know that being in WWI had a huge impact on both of their lives.

Holding banners and signs, participants spoke each fallen soldier’s name aloud at regular intervals as they walked the five-mile trek to Sheridan Memorial Park (1300 Water Street NE), where they were joined by dozens more for a program. This location had been recommended by VFP member Bruce Berry, who also attended high school with the designer of its memorial, Mark Odegard, also a Vietnam veteran.

Mike McDonald, president of Chapter 27 began by thanking us all for attending on such a cold, windy morning—especially the walkers—and then introduced Strong



Steve McKeown explains the meaning of the Armistice bells; other VFP bell-ringers await to ring their bells; Robert Smart’s “world” sculpture behind them.

Buffalo, who opened our ceremony with a Dakota peace prayer. Mike introduced us to the person responsible for designing Sheridan Veterans Memorial, who explained the meaning of each piece, plaque and sculpture, and how it’s meant to serve not just as a memorial, but also as a vision for world peace. On each of the plaques describing each war, they each ended with a quote from a soldier who had fought in it. Though I didn’t always concur with the overall assessment engraved upon each plaque, for WHY our government decided it was important to involve us in each war, I found myself often resonating with statements/opinions of the veterans.

After Mark’s talk, we sang “Last Night I Had the Strangest Dream” and “Down by the Riverside,” accompanied by the swish and flow of the great Mississippi River nearby. Roger Cuthbertson and Jo Schubert graciously agreed to join me in leading the singing, and came prepared with mandolin, harmonica and vocal cords, despite having made the cold 5-mile walk with the others.

After our singing, Mike encouraged all who had brought groceries to walk them over to the homeless encampment nearby. After doing this, I focused my atten-

Armistice Day, Continued on page 11

Taking the long way home

Poet and activist retraces steps from Vietnam to today

by Craig Wood

Below is the second half of a feature story about poet, Vietnam Vet and global activist Tom LaBlanc. If you didn't read the first part in our last newsletter, you can find the full article published here, Taking the Long Way Home at dissentvoice.org.

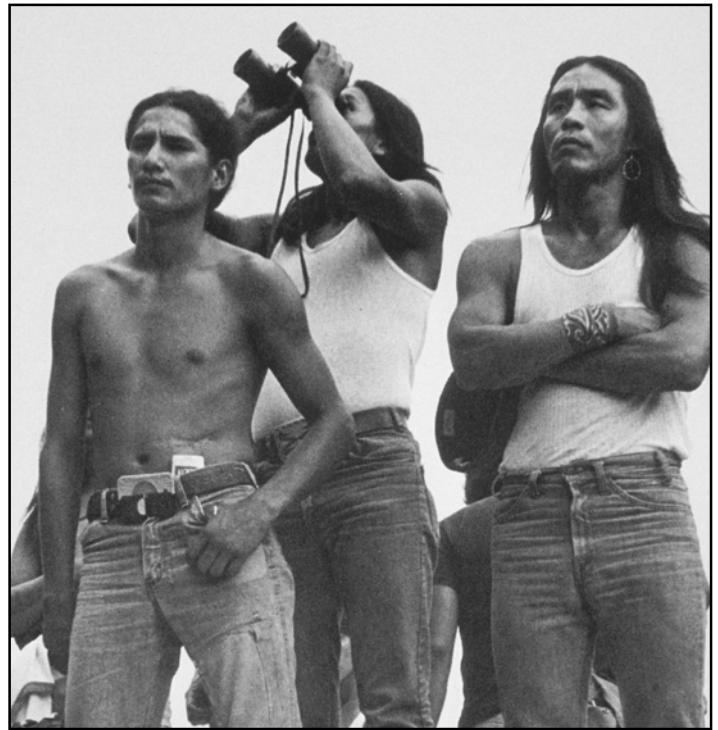
When Tom LaBlanc got off the bus in Minneapolis he was 24 and still in uniform when a Native-American woman near the Leamington Hotel downtown said, "Hey Jarhead, are you an Indian? If you are, you should be in here."

A few minutes later he was inside a bar listening to the principle founders of the American Indian Movement (AIM) and others making plans to interrupt a huge meeting organized by the National Indian Education Association (NIEA) at the hotel.

Which they did by walking on stage en masse and taking away microphones from other speakers and telling the audience things they felt they should know. There was some applause at the end of their talk with the NIEA finally agreeing to give AIM speakers a platform at the conference. LaBlanc would later become the Minneapolis AIM Executive Director for two years.

Meanwhile, he was getting to know his relatives after meeting them for the first time at a notorious dive-bar downtown that used to be called Mousey's. Soon he was playing basketball with his many relations and feeling proud to be an Indian. He was also partying hard in the Franklin Avenue bars between advocating for Native-American rights, Sun Dancing and visits to his mother's reservation to learn tribal traditions. In South Minneapolis he'd become an outspoken luminary to Native Americans and a perceived trouble-maker to local law enforcement. The Dick Bancroft photograph in this article became a familiar poster in south Minneapolis and other parts of the world.

He recalled being worked-over by the police occasionally and said a cop in south Minneapolis told him "You're not going to look so pretty when we get done with you" and was brutally beaten by policemen. He also spent some nights in jail for misdemeanors and served 18 months in a Sioux Falls, South Dakota prison after he was implicated in a huge fight outside of a bar. The prosecution had asked for



"The Warriors" — photo by Dick Bancroft in July 1978 at the Longest Walk in Washington DC. Standing in front of the FBI building, left to right: Stacy LaBlanc, John Blue Bird, Tom LaBlanc

325 years contending that LaBlanc and others were guilty of a long list of crimes including attempted murder, which he was later cleared of. Native-Americans who were incarcerated with him appreciated reading the stories he was writing (which guards failed to censor) and his dedication to Indian solidarity. He said he was given a rabbit skin hat with eagle feathers when he was released in 1976.

After giving up bourbon he started writing more and involved himself further with First Nation and environmental causes that put him on a path that zig-zagged around the world.

In the words of Gerry Condon, former national president of VFP: "In 1983 we organized the first U.S. veteran's delegation to revolutionary Nicaragua which was besieged by the CIA's Contra terrorists. The CIA was also pushing Indigenous groups on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast to fight

Continued on next page

against the Sandinista government, and there had already been several deadly clashes. Tony Gonzales and Tom LaBlanc both associated with AIM, were invited to join peacemaking talks between Miskito Indians and the Sandinistas. Their participation was reported to be very helpful. I remember Tom being strong, centered, peaceful and friendly.” Gerry Condon ~ activist and former National President of Veterans For Peace

His book DAKOTA, which was published in Norwegian, provided an additional incentive for him to revisit Norway about 20 times for peace conferences, spoken-word events and to establish the One People Trust Foundation. He flew to Japan a whopping 30-some times to raise awareness about the dangers of nuclear power by running marathons between nuclear reactor sites where he stopped to pray alongside Buddhist monks. He also went to Libya in 1986, joining with Black Panthers and Brown Berets to try and normalize U.S. relations with Muammar Gaddafi after Gaddafi’s daughter was killed during a U.S. airstrike.

His interrelated interests with art and social justice led him to accept humanitarian invitations and participate in poetry readings across the U.S. as well. Once, he crossed paths unexpectedly with AIM friend Russell Means at a poetry recital in Davis, California who he said yelled from the other side of the room, “Hey Tom, I didn’t know you could write” and him retorting, “Hey Russ, I didn’t know you could read.”

And he could be hard to track sometimes. One never knew if his stint with a San Francisco social service outfit would last five years, how long he’d remain Executive Director of the Indigenous Uranium Forum or if he’d impulsively leave Minneapolis for two years to work with a band in New Orleans. Among other notable missions, he went to Los Angeles in the early 80’s and lived in a trailer that belonged to Mama Cass while helping to stop the production of the adult video game “Custer’s Revenge” that used an image of a Native American woman as a rape target.

In the Twin Cities, he remains involved with AIM and a number of other organizations that focus on Native American issues and art projects, including Oyate Hotanin,

which are Dakota words for the Voice of the People. He was part of a committee that persuaded the city of St. Paul last summer to recognize Indian Mounds Park as a burial ground and is a regular emcee/promoter for the monthly Buffalo Show at Bryant Lake Bowl in south Minneapolis.

Agent Orange, White and Blue

by Tom LaBlanc

*While the enemy was digging caves
to hide underground from the chemical war
to force out the guerrilla
the smart men of war
forgot or intentionally allowed
their own sons to stand naked above
breathing the agent Bother’s stench,
I am, now, the son of Dioxin
and you shall see me groping out
of hidden underground caves
looking for you,
Uncle Sam!*

Singer-songwriter and community organizer Larry Long remembered writing a song with LaBlanc and letting him stay at his house in South Minneapolis before ever meeting him. He said he believes LaBlanc is “hitting his stride” and there’s talk about him having a one-man show at a local theater.

While continuing to write, perform or occasionally release a CD or chapbook, he remains seriously committed to Indian traditional

ways and to his children and wife Laura. “As long as I have known Tom, I have known his first love is for his children. He prays for each of them and their children every day, he prays for their health and happiness. He prays for all of us,” wrote Laura LaBlanc.

At the end of the interview, this father of 10 and grandfather and great-grandfather of over 60, recollected watching his two-year old grandson Warrior Tommy LaBlanc dance at a pow-wow last August. Judging by the beatific expression on his face — this too, must have felt powerfully good.

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

**Smedley Butler
Four-Star USMC General**

Barracks Night For the Women in the Dorms

by Chante Wolf

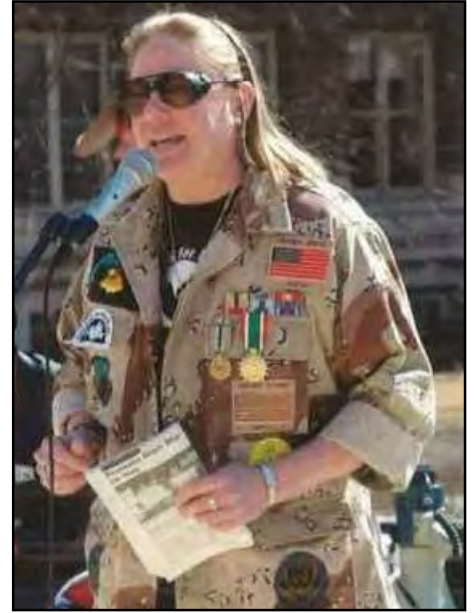
Jackie's dresser kisses
the injured door
dented the night before

as stoned young stallions
strut the carpeted hall
like a fashion show runway

they pound the walls
beg shout and
sing Van Halen's

*everybody want some
everybody want some
I want some too*

through the night they
wait in the latrine
and the ladies piss in a jar



Chante Wolf

Most women know what a wink, a whistle, or a lean-into at a bar means. My experience in the U.S. military in the 1980s was that little flirts carried more powerful innuendos. It was not like a subordinate could slap a pilot in uniform who grabbed their ass like a market melon as he

walked along the bar. And surely her husband sitting next to her was not going to punch the officer out either. If he did, the husband would be the one in trouble, not the strutting captain. Plus, there is the game of unspoken payback.

Military-style video games intentionally touch emotional buttons in young people, especially males, and sell warfare. Players go into a fantasy world of saving the day, falling in love with the damsel in distress, and obtaining sexual rewards – booty. That is the essence of “Barracks Night.” The drunk airmen expect the insinuated messaging from other men and society, and believe women in the military are there to “service” and “reward” them for saving the world.

Chante Wolf served 12 years active duty and two years inactive reserves in the U.S. Air Force. Her war journal was published in The Veterans Book Project: Objects for Deployment. This poem and article originally appeared in Minnesota Women's Press in October, 2021.

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.

Armistice Day outreach stories

by Steve McKeown

In our last newsletter issue, VFP chapter member Larry Johnson wrote about the history of Armistice Day, and why it is important to us. Larry's writing did some traveling and was put to good use. Here are some examples:

Dear Larry,

Following worship yesterday, Community Church, Rochester, had a brief commemoration of Armistice/Veterans Day. Our final hymn was "This is My Song" (a song of peace for lands afar and mine.) We had a video of the Royal Scots Dragon bagpipe band playing Amazing Grace as postlude. Then veterans stood and gave their branches of service, and many widows and children of deceased vets did the same. I used your material to talk about the origin of the day, the War to End All Wars, and the real goal being peace, not more wars. I stressed that it was VFP reviving this practice. Then one of our vets rang a deep voiced handbell 11 times.

People were very moved, and many told me so specifically. Thank you for the invitation, and for sharing the background. This is a tradition worth keeping!

Jan, Community Presbyterian Church, Rochester, Mn.

162 COPIES OF LARRY'S ARTICLE

This is what was mailed out by long time VFP supporter and Catholic priest Tony Kroll from Sauk Rapids, MN,

announcing an Armistice Walk for Justice and Mercy on the Lake Wobegon Trail. This was a seven-mile walk from Freeport to Albany. Tony said it was inspiring to hear church bells ring at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Freeport 11 times at 11 a.m. as the 13 walkers began. They rang bells each mile themselves, and they raised over \$3,600 for the Homeless Helping Homeless organization in St Cloud. Our VFP chapter also donated to this cause.

FROM THEIR BULLETIN AND PULPIT

Thanks to Margo Casey for announcing at Saint Frances Cabrini Catholic Church during their Masses a detailed explanation of the Armistice, and about our chapter's event. They also rang some beautiful hand chimes which I had the privilege of witnessing. Their Church has done this Remembrance for several years now.

Well over 50 churches (that we know of) in Minnesota rang bells in dedication for Armistice/Veterans Day. We thank the City of Bells organization that had a hand in bringing this about. No doubt there were many more we don't know about. Additionally this has taken hold nationally by Veterans for Peace, and it is something that our late dear friend and chapter member Bob Heberle passed a resolution for years ago at one of our national conventions. You can see that his work is certainly bearing fruit. By recognizing what war has done, we continue the call for peace

Armistice Day, from page 7

tion on their tent camp, reminding myself how I need to regularly remember the homeless among us in both prayerful, practical and in prevention ways; they are having to LIVE in these challenging MN weather conditions, while we get to return to our warm homes.

We reconvened at 11 a.m. on the other side of the giant "world" sculpture, near the "child" sculpture, all sculptures having been created by Robert Smart (see photos), and this is where we had our traditional bell-ringing ceremony. Steve McKeown first described the meaning behind ringing the bells 11 times, and how in 1918 bells rang out all over

the world, in both joy over the war's end, as well as in sorrow, because of all of the destruction, the lives lost and the lives forever altered. That day again the bells rang out in brilliant chorus, across parkland and river valley, reminding us of the true meaning of Armistice Day, the end of "the war to end wars," which took place 103 years ago. In other parts of the city, others would be celebrating a completely different thing called Veterans Day in a totally different way.

I was honored and very much moved to again be a part of this sacred event with this amazing group of people.

The Peace Index

When \$2.6 trillion is much more than \$8 trillion

by Frank Fuller

Two figures in the news are an indication of one of the major problems in the U.S. today: \$2.6 trillion and \$8 trillion.

One led to months of discussions, analyses, controversy and political attacks while the other didn't. One was attacked by pundits of all political persuasions and ultimately cut, while the other was ignored and actually increased — increased not only this year, but with promises of increases in years to come. Our leaders were falling over each other to come up with new ways to increase it.

And it's probably no surprise to learn that one is the cost of 10 years of Biden's infrastructure package, while the other is the Pentagon budget over 10 years. \$2.6 trillion for domestic problems and \$8 trillion for war. In this day and age, trying to lift children out of poverty is a lot more controversial than dropping bombs on them.

For months, the news reported on the costs of Biden's infrastructure bill, and many Republicans, and even a few Democrats, said they couldn't support it because it would cost too much. It was inflationary, they said. It would lead to communism or socialism or something like that. Americans would lose their work ethic and become lazy. It had things in it that they didn't think were real infrastructure, things like high speed internet, child care, health care and minimum wage requirements.

Ultimately, as we now know, the amount was cut to \$1.2 trillion over 10 years.

And what was cut out? Things like \$80 billion for Amtrak. Amtrak today is basically a third-world railroad, and I write that as a train lover. Amtrak trains don't run on time, seats in the cars are often loose and broken, bathrooms get plugged and closed, and the tracks are bumpy and rough. The bill that passed has \$66 billion for Amtrak.

High speed internet is a necessity in the 21st century, and it should be as cheap here in the U.S. as it is elsewhere.

But it isn't. Biden wanted \$100 billion for this, and got \$65 billion.

Then there is long term care under Medicaid, cut out of the bill. It had many good provisions, but one was to increase the wages of home health workers, who average about \$12 an hour. One in six live in poverty, and Biden's proposal would put in place an infrastructure to give caregivers the opportunity to join a union. The fact that the U.S. in the 21st century only pays them \$12 an hour is criminal.

The bill that passed also left out \$18 billion to modernize VA hospitals, which some reports say are on average 47 years older than private hospitals.

And it left out \$100 billion for workforce development, which would help displaced workers and those entering the workforce for the first time develop skills for modern careers. Nothing, even though businesses today are looking for just those kind of skilled workers.

Meanwhile, Biden's Pentagon budget request was \$753 billion, an increase of over \$12 billion from the previous year. And the House increased that by another \$25 billion. This in spite of the fact that we are supposedly no longer fighting in Afghanistan and have a military budget equal to the defense budgets of China, India, Russia, United Kingdom, Saudi Arabia, Germany, France, Japan, South Korea, Italy, and Australia — combined. Defense spending accounts for more than 10 percent of all federal spending and nearly half of discretionary spending.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention budget, by the way, is about \$12 billion. Given that we are in the second year of a pandemic and another variant, possibly more aggressive than the Delta variant, is threatening the world, shouldn't the CDC budget be going up, too?

On top of that, our leaders want to increase the Pentagon budget every year. And remarkably, there was very little debate on that. And these possible increases are totally ignored in the media.

In this day and age, trying to lift children out of poverty is a lot more controversial than dropping bombs on them.

In memoriam Jerry Rau's story

by Ron Germundson

Jerry and I go back more than 30 years. We met initially on the street where he was playing in Dinkytown, and we formally became friends through our Vietnam experiences. He was one of the founding members of what is now called Vets For Peace, Chapter 27. Jerry, John Fields, Steve Sherlock, and myself were brought together by four courageous women from WAMM who told us, "Use your experiences as veterans to tell your stories and to speak up about the real costs of war." That we did.

Jerry became a warrior for the struggle to bring wars to an end. He found meaning by speaking in schools, sharing his experiences of the pain and the cost of war. He shared his songs, which brought tears to some and the stark reality of what it costs to be a soldier in times of war.

Jerry went with Vets for Peace to Washington, D.C. on the Fourth of July, 1987, to protest U.S. involvement in Central America. That afternoon, on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, we smoked the peace pipe with Larry Cloud-Morgan and Charlie Liteky as a symbol of peace. For those who may not know, Charlie was a chaplain in Vietnam and received the Congressional Medal of Honor for saving the lives of several soldiers. Jerry sang and helped some of us heal. We stood at the wall as brothers on that Fourth of July night, watched the fireworks, and remembered our friends taken by war.

Along the way, Jerry wrote a song, not just any song, but a song that would touch and heal the pain of many veterans. His song "American Boys" touched people who believe in justice and peace. It could be considered by many to be his best song.

Known as the Minnesota Minstrel, Jerry sang on the corner of 14th Ave. and 4th St. in Dinkytown for longer than I can remember. His music came from deep in his heart and soul. Every day that he sang on the street, Jerry's music touched someone who happened to pass by. Jerry was also touched by those who stopped to drop a bit of change or a few dollars, and to talk. My favorite story from Jerry about his days on the street was the one that led to Jerry travelling across France on a pilgrimage to follow the path walked by Joan of Arc. Someone stopped by to listen to his song about Joan of Arc, had a discussion during which Jerry was asked if he had ever been to France, which he had not. A week later, a woman mysteriously handed him an envelope. Inside was a round trip ticket to Paris and \$500 cash. Jerry



Jerry Rau at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial with other members of VFP on July 4, 1987. Bottom row: Ron Germundson and Dick Campbell. Top row: Steve McKeown, John Fields, Jerry Rau and Jed Garthune.

used the opportunity to have a ring made that duplicated Joan's ring, flew to France, walked from Joan's birthplace to where she was burned at the stake, and dropped that ring in the Siene River. As he told the story, the sky suddenly dropped "tears" of rain when that ring hit the river.

All of us who knew Jerry or heard him perform have had many memorable experiences listening to his soulful performances. Many of the songs he sang were his own creations, including two songs about the holocaust which were accepted into the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. He recorded two vinyl albums and numerous CD's, all of which capture only part of what we treasure about Jerry. He had a gift for telling stories and crystalizing the relevance of the story by crafting it into a song. He shared that gift with the world by freely giving his music away, literally, on the street.

I had the honor of being Jerry's healthcare agent, so on the night he died I was called by the facility. Just before the phone rang my wife Becky and I were both woken up by very long and loud howling of coyotes. Jerry's lyrics to the song "Another Road" seem so appropriate now: "Listened to the coyote's story, saw the lonely eagle soaring, had my share of all the glory, and never found a moment boring. And time travels on like the singer of this song, and soon he'll be gone. He's all set to go down another road."

The other thing that happened the night he died was that, as Becky and I entered his room, the CD of his song "How About You" was playing. The first thing we heard was Jerry's voice, on CD, singing "I heard a rumor he found heaven." We trust he has. I miss that troubadour.

Armistice Day Blizzard

by Ron Staff

Language persists, sometimes beyond political efforts to redirect public notice.

Armistice Day's renaming as Veterans Day was not able to erase the public recall of the Armistice Day Blizzard of 1940, especially in Minnesota. Quite a number of people died that day here in the third coldest state in the union.

In Virginia, Minn., it was reported early that morning the local high school science club left town for a camp-out to cap the holiday weekend. While tents were being set up, the teacher helped students put together a barometer.

The reading was so low that the teacher instructed all present to immediately begin striking their tents, because they were headed right back into town. When they were coming back into Virginia, it began to snow as the temperature dropped and wind picked up. Science had blunted what could have been a tragedy.

In August 2018 at the National Convention of VFP in

St. Paul the chosen theme was Reclaiming Armistice Day. No one ever attempted to rename the blizzard the Veteran's Day blizzard. One doubts it would have stuck. Reclaiming the original intent goes against the prevailing interests of all security organizations funded with taxpayer dollars. VFP members seek peace by calling out any efforts to obscure the benefits of peaceful resolution of differences.

One result of WWII was atomic weapons. To make them is to create poisonous waste which will last many times longer than any known human organization has ever lasted.

Let that sink in.

How could "our leaders" take us down such a deep hole? It was done with our tax dollars.

Perhaps we should have different leaders; going in the opposite direction.

The "big bang" is here. Any nuclear war is the last, since our "first use."

"One cannot level one's moral lance at every evil in the universe. There are just too many of them. But you can do something; and the difference between doing something and doing nothing is everything." Daniel Berrigan, SJ

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/

“Leaving World War II Behind” by David Swanson

reviewed by Paula Staff

Myths about World War II are shattered in his profound book.

No longer can World War II be held up as a just war. It was a horrendous slaughter of human beings, animals, and the destruction of the natural environment from poisons of the tools of war.

Swanson argues for the effectiveness and humanity of nonviolent action. He writes, “Alternatives to violence are rarely discussed when faced with possible armed conflict. Successes of nonviolent actions are rarely studied. Death and suffering in the commission of violence is often justified and even glorified. In contrast, death and suffering, even on a smaller scale and achieving a greater success, in the commission of nonviolent action is often lamented as horrific and inexcusable.”

He adds, “But our schools teach war, war, war--so many wars that the years between them fade and war seems normal to the reader of history texts. And they don’t teach



peace, they don’t inform students of the skills and successes of nonviolent action. It’s a reality denied. We might call it nonviolence denial denial. In so far as it makes violence seem inevitable, it may be as dangerous as climate denial or other avoidance of critical information. ‘Would you do nothing?’ is the tendentious shorthand in common discourse for ‘Would you use diplomacy and negotiation and disarmament and aid and economic pressure and the rule of law and criminal prosecution and treaty creation and international organization and creative civil disobedience and grand public gestures and private discussions and hundreds of tools of nonviolence as opposed to mass slaughter or, as it’s commonly called, ‘doing something?’”

Swanson takes the reader on a journey that leads to the conclusion that there is nothing

just about any war, and the effectiveness of nonviolent actions invite our deepest consideration.

EVENTS CALENDAR

ONGOING EVENTS

3:30-4:30 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 hybrid meetings (subject to change because of future pandemic situations). Contact VFP at 612-821-9141 for information on how to connect.



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

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED
Winter 2022 Newsletter

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

SUPPORT THE TROOPS! BRING THEM HOME ALIVE NOW!

As of Dec. 1, 2021:

At least 8,492 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.

