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# VETERANS FOR PEACE NEWS

MINNEAPOLIS/ST. PAUL VETERANS FOR PEACE, CHAPTER 27

*Veterans For Peace News* is published quarterly by Mpls./St. Paul Veterans For Peace, Chapter 27.

Veterans For Peace works to increase awareness of the costs of war, restrain our government from intervening in the internal affairs of other nations, end the arms race, reduce and eventually eliminate nuclear weapons, seek justice for veterans and victims of war, and abolish war as an instrument of national policy.

We pledge to use democratic and non-violent means to achieve our purpose.

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

(Potter & Lambert)



*Arlys Herem with a co-worker at a hospital in Saigon.*

## Former Vietnam Army Nurse Fights To Stop The Privatization Of VA Healthcare

by Craig Wood

Retired nurse/nurse practitioner Arlys Herem knew she wanted to be a nurse since she was in the sixth grade. What she did not know was that she would spend most of her career in other countries caring for the disenfranchised, educating medical personnel and advocating for peace. And eventually end up working to defend health benefits for veterans from cynical and dishonest attempts to privatize veteran's health care in the U.S.

Arlys joined the service when she was 17 to "get out of Milwaukee" and take advantage of a scholarship offered by the Army Nurse Corp. She trained at Walter Reed National Army Medical Center in Washington DC and received a BSN from the University of

Maryland.

As an Army nurse she flew to Vietnam and worked for 13 months in Phu Bai, Pleiku, Bin Thuoy and Saigon in 1971 and 1972. Most of her patients didn't require combat-related care apart from those who caught diseases or experienced psychological trauma. She did mention a helicopter pilot with a serious chest wound who lost a lot of blood but survived.

From there, she see-sawed across the ocean between Asian Refugee camps and American hospitals for most of her career, with pit stops on a Navajo Indian Reservation near Monument Valley and a Mayan village in Belize, where she landed after joining the Peace Corps in 1978. "I would know what to do next when it would come along," she said

Fighting for the VA, Cont'd on page 4

# The Prez says. . .

by Dave Logsdon

*"I am a leader by default, only because nature does not allow a vacuum."*

*Desmond Tutu*

Let me make one thing perfectly clear: I am truly honored to be leading this amazing collection of individuals. This chapter continues to be extremely dynamic and visionary. We are in a position to become one of the leading voices of the Twin Cities peace and justice community. We are planning for a 2022 that we hope will inspire and educate. Never has there been a more critical time for all of us to increase our involvement, our commitment, to keeping the military industrial complex from starting a nuclear war and reeking havoc on beleaguered Mother Earth. Now is the time to raise your voices, use our imaginations, sign petitions, and get into the streets!

*"Peace is not a distant goal that we seek, but a means by which we arrive at that goal."*

*Martin Luther King*

While we most definitely will continue to raise our collective voices and continue to work in solidarity with other peace and justice organizations, we plan to add to the many events that, hopefully, inspire people to reflect on the high costs of war and to join us in trying to change the paradigm of violence in this country. We've organized events that educate, but also that have connected with people at an emotional level. We ring our bells, play songs, mix in some powerful storytelling to touch hearts as well as minds.

As an all-volunteer group, we are limited in providing services to the community, but by adding our voice in solidarity and helping communicate to inspire action, we hope to make valuable contributions to creating necessary change. On Earth Day, for example, we plan to do tree-planting, partnering with educational institutions. If you know of a school or church group that would want to work with us, we would love to hear from you. I believe that most of you who read this newsletter want to do something to affect change so every effort to get out of your comfort zone is what is needed.



*New President Dave Logsdon*

*A Dynamic Year Awaits*

Veterans For Peace has a plethora of events and actions on our calendar. Other than our ongoing co-sponsorship (with Women Against Military Madness) of the Lake Street Bridge vigil every Wednesday and the "Stop Line Three" vigil on Mondays at the Governor's residence, we have many opportunities for folks to participate.

On April 9th, we will be doing a remembrance of the "Deir Yassein Massacre" at the powerful memorial sculpture on the Greenway bike trail. We hope to partner with various pro Palestinian rights groups to make this a memorable event. Also in April, we will be working with other peace groups in raising our concerns about the continued imprisonment of journalist (Wikileaks) Julian Assange in conditions best described as torture. As previously stated, on Earth Day, April 22nd, we hope to have many tree plantings (get out your shovels).

May will be a busy month as well, with plans being made for our participating in the memorial events around the killing of George Floyd and the service for AIM activist Clyde Bellecourt.

As usual, our powerful Memorial Day commemoration at the Vietnam Memorial on the State Capital grounds, will be a can't miss event with the smudging of the names on the wall, music, poetry, and bell ringing.

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*The Golden Rule arrives in San Diego for the 2015 VFP national convention.*

### *The Golden Rule Project*

A few years ago a group of VFPers rescued a boat from the bottom of Humboldt Bay in Northern California. This was not just any sailboat, but The Golden Rule. In the 1950s, a crew of Quakers tried to sail this boat into the nuclear test zone in the Marshall Islands to act as a shield in an attempt to stop the atomic bomb testing. They never made it. They were hauled back to Hawaii and arrested. However, the resulting publicity added to the growing concerns and the eventual ending of these tests.

The resurrection of this boat has been a story of excitement when it sailed into ports on the west coast and Hawaiian Islands. However, in an organization not overflowing with cash, the boat is viewed as a luxury not worth continuing.

Where do we “land lubbers” in flyover land fit into this picture. After all, we have our “poor man’s” version of the Golden Rule in our portable Nielson Peace Activities Center: our peace bus. We’ve been, literally, all over the state getting anti-nuclear signatures and reaching out with our anti-war messages.

The visionaries of the Golden Rule who plan and fund-raise to keep the boat afloat want to bring this amazing vessel to the folks on the east side of the Mississippi starting in Minneapolis/St. Paul! The plan calls for hauling the boat on a flatbed truck and putting it somewhere on the river deep enough for it. That’s expensive, as are the logistics of a too shallow river, the hull drying out, places to refuel downstream, etc., etc. They plan to work their way down to the

Gulf of Mexico, then up the Atlanta seaboard to the Great Lakes and end up in Chicago.

Sometime in September (and if the “creek” DOES rise), The Golden Rule will be here in the Twin Cities! There will be many wonderful educational opportunities that will come in the wake of its’ arrival as we collaborate with the local Quaker groups, Women Against Military Madness and others. With the two major nuclear powers currently sabre rattling, this journey cannot come soon enough.

*“The Future ain’t what it used to be.”*

*Yogi Berra*

You may have casually picked up this newsletter, maybe intrigued by the whole crazy notion of veterans for peace? Well, you could always join us, eh? We are a veteran-led group, but we welcome folks who support our statement of purpose and who understand that non-violent resistance is a powerful force for peace. Everything from the newly minted “Gamers for Peace” to our solemn bell-ringing remembrance for the victims of war, Veterans For Peace welcomes participants in this struggle. Burnout is a real problem in peace and justice work and having fresh faces, new voices, helps to keep lifting us higher and higher. After all, what choice do we have?

*“Work like you don’t need money, love like you never been hurt, and dance like nobody is watching.”*

*Satchel Paige*



## Fighting for the VA, from page 1

about her decision to join the Peace Corps in the middle of a Scrabble game while talking with her friend Connie.

After working two stints at Cambodian refugee camps during the 80's, she hooked up with the American Refugee Committee (ARC) in 1993 and returned to Asia to work 25 more years in Cambodia. She spent the first six years at a hospital in northwest Cambodia where she said the Pol Pot regime left the area "incredibly devastated — rubble everywhere, no books or curricula, institutions demolished."

In 1995 she participated in the eight-month Peace Walk from Auschwitz to Hiroshima when it passed through Cambodia and began networking more with spiritual leaders, ex-pats, war resisters and inter-religious peace workers from nearby countries. Five years later when the AIDS epidemic reached Cambodia, she founded a local NGO called Dhammayietra Mongkol Borei (peace walks and ease suffering) to expand education/care and raise social awareness through non-violent efforts. The NGO is still operating.

She was beginning to enjoy teaching more, too. "I think people need to see something grow, I really do...it's part of us: gardens, kids, watching people get better at doing something, training volunteers, teaching barefoot doctors." Strong relationships she formed with people while working in Asia including Khmers, prompted her to retire in Minneapolis after many of them moved to Minnesota. When she felt "it was time to come home" in 2017, she flew back to Minnesota to be with her friends.

She joined Veterans For Peace (VFP) in the Twin Cities three years ago "after hearing about the good work they were doing" and soon teamed up with VFP members Jeff Roy and Dave Cooley to help organize a nationwide effort called SOVA (Save Our VA) to bring awareness to a recent trend that seeks to further privatize veteran health care. Cooley had already been working nationally and leading the local chapter 27 SOVA committee.

Jeff Roy wrote, "Arlys is a very talented and detail-oriented activist with a big heart for others in her political work and otherwise. With her many years working in Cambodia and after her time in Vietnam, she seemed to develop a passion for and deep skills in collecting and organizing information and data critical to the effectiveness of nonprofits. As a key member of the VFP SAVE OUR VA National Project and Campaign Steering Committee, she outdoes herself regularly in her ability to help other SC members have easy access to critical SOVA Campaign data that she has helped sort and store in Google Docs. Finally, she is a key organizer here in Minneapolis helping to turn out VFP and other activists (and herself) to attend our monthly



*Bruce Carruthers (left), Arlys Herem, and Jeff Roy meet with Rep. Watkins's staff to advocate for the VA.*

SOVA demonstrations at the VA...sometimes in very crummy weather! We are all fortunate to have her!"

While the VA has always farmed out medical services it couldn't provide, the VA Mission Act signed by President Trump in 2018 called for expanding non-VA care based largely on accessibility and drive times to and from care centers. SOVA, however, argues that the new "Community Care Network" (CCN) may provide more convenience for some, but it diminishes the integrated and specialized care veterans need and are used to receiving at VA facilities.

"I feel respected and the staff seems more personal" said Arlys about the care she gets at the VA. Adding that the VA has become more holistic and community oriented in their public health approach by offering alternatives to conventional care and helping veterans with homelessness, legal problems or readjusting to civilian life. She also likes the idea of having so many medical specialties and social services in one place with VA representatives on hand to

Fighting for the VA, Cont'd on page 6

## SAVE OUR VA National Campaign Training Successfully Prepared Veterans!



*Instructors Suzanne Gordon and Marilyn Park ham it up - Stetson and all - playing a Congressional Senator and Staff in mock "visit" to Congress by role-playing participants*

written by VFP SAVE OUR VA Chapter 27 Committee

On February 19th, the SOVA National Campaign brought together 20 veterans from across the nation via Zoom to successfully develop their skills in Congressional "advocacy", which they will be using in the weeks ahead with their Congressional Representatives and staff. The aim is to build support for protecting VA healthcare.

The SOVA Campaign Steering Committee had planned this virtual training since 2021 with the assistance of the Veterans Health Policy Institute in San Francisco, a former longtime Congressional union advocate and the excellent technical support of VFP National Communications and Graphic Design Coordinator Samantha (Sam) Ferguson. It was a monumental but necessary undertaking by the SOVA planners, since the Covid pandemic would not allow SOVA

leaders and veteran attendees to travel to Washington D.C., as was done in 2020. To sign up to get regular SOVA updates, go to the SOVA page on the national VFP website. To view the recorded virtual training session, go to this link: <https://youtu.be/es3dyFhZ-qs>

*Conservative writers, together with Trump's former VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, call for reducing and even withdrawing disability benefits from most veterans currently receiving them.*

***Right Wing Attacks – Now They're Attacking Disabled Veteran Benefits!***

Though Donald Trump is out of office and we now have a new Secretary of the VA in Denis McDonough who is more supportive of the VA healthcare system, the right wing in American politics is moving full steam ahead, creating more false narratives and amping-up past inaccurate asser-

VA Committee, Cont'd on page 6



## Fighting for the VA, from page 4

investigate patient complaints about medical care.

Arlys mentioned that a number of studies have shown that VA medical care is just as good or better than care in the private sector. A 2020 Stanford University study confirms this noting that veterans receiving care at the VA (even though vets generally have worse underlying health problems than non-veterans) usually survive medical emergencies better than those receiving private care — and at a lower cost.

Plus, the VA has a longstanding reputation of being a teaching and research center for healthcare professionals. At least 70 per cent of American physicians have received some training at a VA facility. She pointed out that the VA's Million Veteran Program has the world's largest genomic database. Some of the VA's contributions to medical care include implantable cardiac pacemakers, a shingles vaccine and the nicotine patch, to name a few.

Her other concerns raise questions about the competency of non-VA medical personnel who are inexperienced in spotting symptoms from military-related traumas, chemical exposures or burn pits. Attacks on VA care from right-wingers, including the Koch Brothers, and keep groups like SOVA and the Veterans Healthcare Policy Institute busy doing research so spurious accusations can be refuted. Not up for debate is a massive increase in fraudulent billing since the push for privatization began a few years ago.

Her efforts with lobbying are starting to pay off. Some representatives have already signed onto legislation that would automatically enroll veterans in the VA health care



system after being discharged from the service. Sometimes a congressional staffer will call her to keep apprised on veterans issues. "It's good to get to know the staff" she said.

Her latest accomplishment as of February 18, 2022 — she's crocheted 300 hats for the poor. It seems even in her spare time, former army nurse Arlys practices the four-word mantra printed on her front doormat: BE KIND DO GOOD.

## VA Committee, from page 4

tions around VA benefits.

Daniel Gade, a retired US Army lieutenant colonel and former Trump administration official, together with an ex-Wall Street Journal reporter, Daniel Huang, call for reforming Veterans Benefits Administration entitlements for veterans. These conservative writers call attention to what they call the "disability-industrial complex" that they assert is creating a costly and unhealthy culture of dependence with the monthly disability payments. They, together with Trump's former VA Secretary Robert Wilkie, call for reducing and even withdrawing disability benefits from

most veterans currently receiving them.

Gade and Huang assert, in their book *Wounding Warriors: How Bad Policy is Making Veterans Sicker and Poorer*, that "only veterans for whom employment is not a reasonable option, are those few whose brain injuries are truly devastating and impossible to overcome." And that "we pay veterans to be sick and then we wonder why we have so many sick veterans."

Well, now we know the truth about disabled veterans in this country. Just dependent slouchers! **These are just some of the attacks and lies promoted by the right wing!**

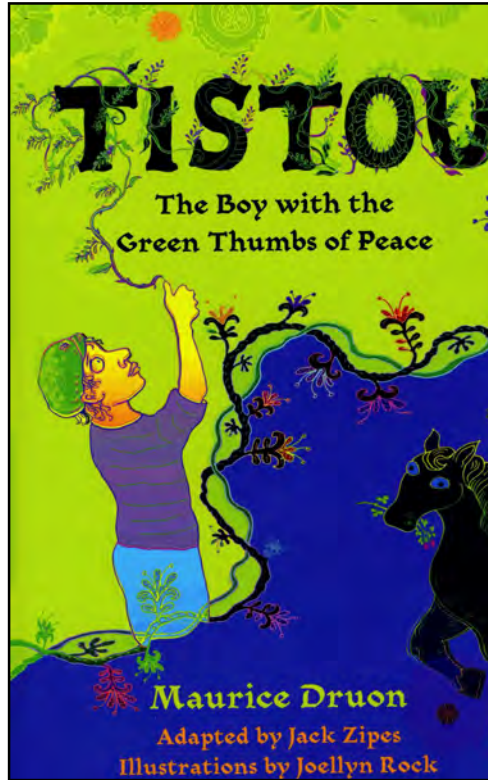
# Tistou's *Green Thumbs for Peace*

by Larry Johnson

In the summer 2020 newsletter I highlighted JOHNNY IBREADLESS, a children's book written in 1921 by Paul Vaillant-Couturier, a French soldier who participated in the 1914 Christmas Truce. JOHNNY was brought back from the land of "Out of Print" by Jack Zipes' LITTLE MOLE AND HONEY BEAR PRESS, and Jack's latest is TISTOU: THE BOY WITH THE GREEN THUMBS OF PEACE. Originally published in 1957, this book was written by another Veteran, Maurice Druon, who interrupted his writing career to join the World War II French army as part of the Nazi resistance. TISTOU has the gift of making things grow, "innocently" using it to correct multiple issues like poverty and environmental degradation, even when the adults around him insist such problems are "Just the way it is". When he learns his father's weapons factory is aggravating those problems, selling to both sides in a military conflict, Tistou goes after "war profiteering". In 2022 the adult companion to Tistou is the War Industry Resisters Network, [www.veteransforpeace.org/war-industry-resisters-network](http://www.veteransforpeace.org/war-industry-resisters-network), focusing nationwide tax week efforts on Eisenhower's Military-Industrial Complex warning.

After David Swanson published WHEN THE WORLD OUTLAWED WAR in 2011, Veterans for Peace organized an event at the St. Paul Frank Kellogg house. Even the organizers of the Minnesota Nobel Peace Prize Forum did not know Kellogg Blvd. was named for Kellogg, and that his work on the Kellogg-Briand Pact made him the only Minnesotan to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2015 we asked the Nobel Director if they had ever dealt directly with the "let's not talk about it" issue of war profiteering. She said no and invited a session, SHOULD IT BE LEGAL TO PROFIT SELLING WEAPONS OF WAR? Few know that while everyone, even small business, was devastated by World War I, weapons makers increased profits, some as much as 800%. That discovery in the 20s coalesced a massive movement that drove Kellogg and France's Aristide Briand toward enacting the International Peace Treaty bear-

ing their names. Fewer still know the American Legion was formed in 1919 to fight for promised Veterans' benefits, too often squeezed out by war costs. When Congress attempted in the 30s to ban war profits, the Legion's national liaison was there to support the effort. Ultimately the legislation was killed by defense contractor Lobbyists, even as those Corporations were already secretly selling weapons to the Nazis. This is a history and practice the culture tends to want hidden, and we wondered if the workshop would be attended, as the Nobel forum had many excellent, simultaneous sessions. When it was time, the room filled up with mostly college students who didn't know they weren't supposed to know.



TISTOU: THE BOY WITH GREEN THUMBS OF PEACE is a fun to read chapter book telling that story for children. Tistou's father, a kind man, is a wealthy manufacturer of weapons of all kinds. Tistou does not do well with formal education because "he asks too many questions", so he is assigned to Whiskers, the gardener, for hands on learning. Whiskers helps Tistou foster his inherent ability to make things grow everywhere, and then to use his gift to improve the lives of those struggling in their town of Sandstone. When war breaks out, Whiskers tells Tistou he's against it because war destroys gardens, and sometimes even countries. This one started because oil was discovered under a "useless" piece of desert land, and suddenly the GROPERs and the GRABBERS are fighting over it. Tistou finds people at his father's factory gleeful because "you can't stop war", but it's always good for business. They favored one side, but each army was a good customer so they sold to both. I recommend reading or telling the story to the children in your life so you and they can find out exactly what happens. Children deserve to hear the truth, in a form manageable to them because they will grow up and be asked to serve. Too often the patriotism of many is driven by the extreme and questionable profits of a few, and that truth is in TISTOU, because he's a boy who cares and who asks too many questions. The book is available at Amazon, [abebooks.com](http://abebooks.com) and Magers and Quinn.



## The Priority of Nuclear Disarmament



by Steve McKeown

On December 19, 2021, the Archbishop of the Santa Fe Archdiocese in New Mexico, John Wester unveiled a sign outside of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Santa Fe depicting Pope Francis, and a quote the Pope offered during a visit to Hiroshima in November, 2019: “The possession of nuclear weapons is immoral.”

The sign is across the street from an office building where the Los Alamos National Laboratory opened a small office. The Laboratory is the birthplace of nuclear weapons, including the atomic bombs that destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki. This was no small act since the Lab receives billions of dollars, especially for moving full speed ahead with the plans for industrial scale plutonium pit production. Additionally, the nation's largest repository of nuclear weapons is located at Kirkland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, just down the freeway from Santa Fe.

Archbishop Wester also wrote a 57-page Pastoral Letter on the subject of nuclear weapons. He titled it “Living in the Light of God's Peace.” He contrasted that with what the school children told him about victims of the bombs (when he visited Hiroshima) who looked up at the sky or out their windows at the atomic flash of light.

What touched me in his Letter was the following: “God

has given us such a beautiful creation, and such wonderful brains, and the ability to do so much, but we are not God, and sadly we've created a solution where we could destroy God's creation, and that is in my mind blasphemous, and that requires us to really face this challenge.”

Facing this challenge indeed is in order. Although there have been some very strong actions on nuclear issues by some Catholics and other denominations, for the most part the majority has not and usually have their heads in the sand to avoid facing it. Wester makes it clear that this has to change. In his words, “not to dally.”

Wester was encouraged by the January signing of a Statement on Nuclear Weapons and the Arms Race by the nations of Russia, United States, China, France, and the UK affirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. This statement closes with the following: “We underline our desire to work with all states to create a security environment more conducive to progress on disarmament with the ultimate goal of a world without nuclear weapons with undiminished security for all. We intend to continue seeking bilateral and multilateral diplomatic approaches to avoid military confrontations, strengthen stability and predictability, increase mutual understanding and

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## Campaign to Abolish Nukes condemns Russian invasion of Ukraine

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate strongly condemns the Russian invasion of Ukraine and Putin's threat to use nuclear weapons. War is never acceptable and Russian attacks on Ukraine, particularly using nuclear weapons, will have catastrophic consequences for civilians.

The international community must stand united in ensuring that we protect and support civilians, and strongly reject the violations of international law by Russia.

While all wars are unacceptable, ICAN warns that the recent Russian behaviour risks escalating the conflict to one involving nuclear weapons. Last week, Putin conducted a strategic nuclear weapons exercise, practising dropping weapons of mass destruction on civilians with intercontinental ballistic missiles, submarine launched missiles and bombers. Even more concerning, this morning Putin stated that: "No matter who tries to stand in our way... Russia will respond immediately, and the consequences will be such as you have never seen in your entire history." This was a thinly-veiled threat to use nuclear weapons. This amounts to threats to use nuclear weapons, as prohibited under the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. It

is clear from his words and actions that the use of nuclear weapons is always on the table and the risk of nuclear weapons use is increasing.

This conflict is already harming the civilian population. Adding threats to mass murder civilians with nuclear weapons does nothing to protect people. The only thing nuclear weapons do in this situation is elevate the risk of a massive humanitarian catastrophe.

We urge Russia, Belarus and all other states to not engage in any military activities involving nuclear weapons, such as nuclear weapons exercises and other possible deployments of nuclear weapons. Belarus' referendum on Sunday to revoke its nuclear-weapon-free pledge in its constitution adds fuel to the fire in an already tense time.

We urge the international community to strongly pressure Russia to engage in dialogue and diplomacy, to return to compliance with the UN Charter, respect international humanitarian and human rights law and join relevant treaties to reduce nuclear weapons risks, including the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

*(Since this was written, Putin has bombed nuclear energy facilities.)*

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confidence, and prevent an arms race that would benefit none and endanger all. We are resolved to pursue constructive dialogue with mutual respect, and acknowledgement of each other's security interests and concerns." NOTE: the source of the Statement quoted is from WIKISOURCE.

As this is written, Putin has invaded Ukraine, and people are dying. The ink on the above Statement has dried, but not from putting into use. Nevertheless it is this kind of composite that needs to be put forth again and again until it is implemented. In the case of nuclear weapons, this kind of Statement cannot be left on lofty branches, but needs to embrace the UN Treaty to Ban Nuclear Weapons, and to water that tree very well.

If our world comes out of this mess, one of the monkey

wrenches in the path to nuclear disarmament in particular will be the desire for other countries to have these weapons, believing they will protect them from being invaded. I don't think many people know that after the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine had the world's third largest stockpile of nuclear weapons: 1,700 of them. With assurances from both Russia and the United States that Ukraine would be protected, they gave all of them up for disarmament. So it looks like it could be "everyone for themselves."

Or we act on what the Pope has said: that it is immoral to possess them and for all to act accordingly. There is no gray area here.

# Daniel Berrigan, Yesterday and Today

by Joan Johnson

Father Daniel Berrigan, a pacifist, poet, educator, social activist priest, playwright and life-long resister to what he described as “American military imperialism” would have been 101 years old this May. Sadly, we lost him in 2016, but the enormous impact that his life has had on the world and the undeniable inspiration of his teachings, writings and life example continues.

In the early 1990’s, I went through a spiritual and social awakening, with help from friends who were Mennonite and/or involved in the Catholic Worker movement. Becoming involved in worship services, small groups, book groups, and service opportunities within both of these traditions, I became very enlightened and started to really connect with the teachings of Dorothy Day and members of the Berrigan family. Little did I know that later in the 90s, I would be protesting side-by-side with Dan Berrigan and Howard Zinn (historian and author of *A People’s History of the U.S.*) at Alliant Tech Systems in Hopkins, where they both were guest speakers at a well-attended event (ATK produced anti-personnel land mines at the time). Later on I would hear Dan speak at a weekend peace conference held in St. Paul, and I remember his passion for peace work, his deep love expressed for all of humankind, his undeterred passion to protect our precious planet, and his admonition for us all to go forth and DO SOMETHING!!

This new version of Christianity with Jesus at the center of things was in direct conflict with what I had learned growing up. We were taught not to question (ANY) authority, and were fed violent, war-like imagery — even singing songs like “I’m in the Lord’s Army” — which promoted “God-sanctioned” militarism and war as solutions to problems. This new nonviolent Jesus-teachings-based theology felt REAL to me, was radical and truly life-changing. I

wanted to learn more about how Dan and his brother Phil, moved by their own faith journeys, played such a huge part in helping to inspire the anti-draft/anti-war movement of the 60’s, as well as working to abolish nuclear weapons. In 1967, they were getting arrested for protesting against Vietnam at the Pentagon.

In 1968, Dan traveled with Howard Zinn to North Vietnam, and during their stay there, they spent time in a bomb shelter. Afterwards Dan penned these words: “So we were in this shelter and very unexpectedly came on three children, who were crouching in there, too, against all expectations, and one of the elder children feeding rice to one of the younger ones. And I wrote this little verse within a couple days and tried to read it later at our trial.” (See boxed poem at left.)

## Children in the Shelter

by Dan Berrigan

Imagine; three of them.  
As though survival  
were a rat’s word.  
and a rat’s death  
waited there at the end  
and I must have  
in the century’s boneyard  
heft of flesh and bone in my arms

I picked up the littlest  
a boy, his face  
breaded with rice (his sister calmly  
feeding him as we climbed down)  
In my arms fathered  
in a moment’s grace, the messiah  
of all my tears. I bore, reborn  
a Hiroshima child from hell.

Upon leaving Vietnam, Dan ended up bringing home with him three U.S. prisoners of war so that they might eventually be reunited with their families. That same year, he, his brother Phil, and our own George Mische, along with six other activists, took 378 draft files from the draft board in Catonsville, MD and burned them with napalm, a highly flammable jelly-like substance being used to torture/burn individuals and whole villages in Vietnam. This group was known as “The Catonsville Nine” and inspired over 100 other similar actions around the country. Dan was found guilty, as were the others, and he was sentenced to three years, of which he served two at a federal prison in Danbury, CT. In response to his arrest Dan wrote, **“Our apologies, good friends, for the fracture of good order, the burning of paper instead of children.”** Based on this event and his very poignant words, poet Adrienne Rich wrote “The Burning of Paper Instead of Children.” Also of note, “The Trial of the Catonsville Nine” is a film produced by Gregory Peck and is also the title of a free-verse play written by Dan Berrigan.

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I remember what a shock it was to my former “U.S. is ALWAYS Good” mindset when I first learned the truths about the Vietnam war. Once again, reality completely contradicted the lies I had been fed. I was astounded to find that Dan, like so many other resisters who were now my friends, had put their own lives on the line to try and stop the killings, the mass murder of innocents, but in doing so, often ended up serving

time in jail and sometimes prison. I found it extremely difficult “living in the belly of the beast,” but I received such amazing inspiration and encouragement from my new circle of friends and new role models like Dan, Phil, Howard, Dorothy, and the incredible sisters of St. Joseph/Corondelet, who also took turns doing civil disobedience and getting arrested. Actor Martin Sheen, who got hauled off with Dan several times, is quoted as saying, “Dorothy Day got me back to church, and Berrigan is keeping me there.” I could totally relate!

My husband Steve was also being influenced by Dan’s writings through the years. Until it morphed into ATK, Honeywell Corp. in the 80’s was where you could find him, his own family members, and many other dedicated folks regularly protesting cluster-mine production. He said he recalled one time in particular when Dan Berrigan had come to town and joined their protest. “I let him know that every time I read one of his books, that I ended up getting arrested shortly afterwards!” He said Dan grinned, pleased by the news. An award-winning poet, Dan has published more than 50 books of social criticism, plays, poetry, and religious and biblical commentaries. In those “formative” years, I also recall reading about how Dan had helped



*The Catonsville Nine who burned draft records on May 17, 1968. In back row (L to R) are George Mische, Phil Berrigan, Dan Berrigan and Tom Lewis. Seated (L to R) are David Darst, Mary Moylan, Tom Hogan, Marjorie Melville, Tom Melville.*

start the Plowshares Movement in the 80’s. He and seven others entered a General Electric plant in King of Prussia, PA, where nuclear nosecones were stored. They hammered the weapons and poured vials of blood on secret documents as a protest against nuclear arms and warfare. Alongside Martin Sheen, Dan later acted in a documentary film, “In the King of Prussia,” which was produced by Emile d’Antonio. It tells the story of this group”The Plowshares 8,” including the very powerful courtroom drama that followed.

Recently, I read in a feature article in the May 2021 issue of “Sojourners” about Dan Berrigan’s works of mercy. Author Patrick Henry describes in great detail Dan’s volunteer work at St. Rose’s Home in Manhattan with terminally ill cancer patients who couldn’t afford hospital or hospice care. I immediately pictured Fr. Berrigan administering last rites or reading scripture, because that’s what priests do, right? Nope. In his book *We Die Before We Live; Talking with the Very Ill*, Dan describes his work there as mainly “washing bodies, emptying bed pans, feeding the dying, and listening to and praying with and for them.” He

Berrigan, continued on page 13

# Shifting Sands

by Barry Riesch

This is a brief update on the work of VFP's Climate Crisis and Militarism working group. We have made significant progress over the past year especially in Congress by opening up the discussion about the U.S. military's contribution to the climate crisis. We know this because of the work of Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who pushed the military to start reporting its CO2 emissions. The military was exempted from reporting this since the 1997 Kyoto protocol. Senator Elizabeth Warren has been working towards creating a similar Resolution to go before the Senate.

As it turns out, there was actually a paragraph in the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act that became law last December, which requires the military to start reporting emissions.

But the Army has now come up with a new strategy. It will switch to renewable energy, reduce Green House Gasses, and build their version of resilience. A good plan indeed from one branch of the world's largest institutional polluter. In the opening statements of this report it states, "Climate change endangers national and economic security..... The Army's core purpose remains unchanged: to deploy, fight and win the nation's wars by providing ready, prompt, and sustained land dominance as part of the Joint Force."

(View the full report at [https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/about/2022\\_army\\_climate\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.army.mil/e2/downloads/rv7/about/2022_army_climate_strategy.pdf).)

## *The Army's GOALS*

The Army will be a resilient and sustainable land force able to operate in all domains with effective mitigation and adaptation measures against the key effects of climate change, consistent with Army modernization efforts.

- Achieve 50% reduction in Army net GHG pollution by 2030, compared to 2005 levels
- Attain net-zero Army GHG emissions by 2050

- Proactively consider the security implications of climate change in strategy, planning, acquisition, supply chain, and programming documents and processes

The U.S. military has actually been talking about climate change for a long time with strategists and planners routinely studying how a changing climate will impact the military's mission.

What hasn't been discussed much is the prospect of actually reducing the Department of Defense's own substantial carbon footprint. Still in recent months, emissions moves from this department have at least come as a long-overdue acknowledgment that the military's climate footprint is a serious issue—even if they don't seem to be quite getting to the root of the matter.

"I liken it to Alcoholics Anonymous," says Doug Weir, research and policy director at the U.K.-based Conflict and Environmental Observatory, "The first step is admitting that you have a problem."

Military aviation accounts for about 70 percent of the DOD's energy use, and to some researchers, the implications are obvious. "The only way to reduce [fuel use] is to reduce how often jets are flying," says Heidi Peltier, director of programs at Brown University's Costs of War project. She says that the military cannot maintain its globe spanning presence and become carbon neutral at the same time. "A sustainable military will have to be smaller, with fewer bases, fewer troops to feed and clothe, and fewer ships and airplanes ferrying supplies to personnel from Guam to Germany."

The U.S. can choose one of two courses: to completely recast its military mindset for the sake of emissions cuts, or else just slot some greener tech into its massive war machine—like a \$700 billion Bradley tank with a new hybrid engine.

So when you hear the military is greening up, don't buy it. They are still up to the same madness with all our precious tax dollars and resources. One can only hope and dream for a day when the military becomes extinct rather than trying to be more green.

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

[www.veteransforpeace.org/take-action/climatecrisis](http://www.veteransforpeace.org/take-action/climatecrisis)





## Berrigan, from page 11

was definitely in the trenches carrying out the important work of Christ in the world. Henry writes that, for 12 years starting in the 80's, Dan also volunteered whenever he was able to, at St. Vincent's Hospital in Greenwich Village. He mainly assisted dying HIV/AIDS patients, at a time when society and most churches were either ignoring their plight or being hyper-critical and condemning of people with AIDS and their lifestyles. He lambasted these hateful responses, calling them "a very whiff of brimstone." He recorded these experiences in his book *Sorrow Built a Bridge: Friendship and AIDS*.

Dan was small in physical stature but a GIANT in his work and influence. We have much to learn from him today as we navigate through the mire of this ongoing unjust, war-ravaged and politically-divided, hate-filled country and world. He and his cohorts have given us a clear picture of what we need to be bringing to the table this very minute—keeping on with our work for peace and justice, bringing compassion and hope to the down-trodden, defending and protecting the persecuted, speaking up for those without a voice and doing everything in our power to oppose the war machine, especially nuclear war. "We cannot afford ourselves the luxury of despair," I recall him saying at the conference, which honestly, for me, is a temptation right now as I watch the horrific attack on Ukraine, and all of the death, destruction and suffering that it brings. It hurts to think of the immense suffering of so many thousands of others too --immigrants at our southern border and elsewhere in the world. It's gut-wrenching to know that people are waking up every day with the goal of just staying alive in so many places of the world, that are gang-controlled, drought stricken, war-ravaged or controlled by ruthless dictators. Dan's road map for the journey is clear, and I intend to read more of his books, old magazines, letters to his brother and his poetry. I need that fire lit under me to DO MORE TOO!! Thank you, Dan Berrigan.

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

**Smedley Butler  
Four-Star USMC General**

## Speakers Bureau

by Steve McKeown

On March 9, VFP members Larry Johnson, Bruce Berry and I will have the honor of speaking at the Great River Montessori School in St Paul to Sarah Gorton's class of 35 sophomores.

Because of Covid, these visits have been done virtually or by interview the last two years. This year we will be in person in the larger gym area. Sarah has asked us again to speak on Vietnam, but also on what is happening now in Ukraine.

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

## Putin' it right.

by Ron Staff

The troops were formed up and on February 24, 2022, the Russian leader Putin leader pulled the trigger. He initiated the killing.

If we are not gone, something happened to untrigger nuclear weapons.

On this day [2-24-2022] sadness pervades me. I have opposed wars and warring since before bearding the lion in its den with United States Marines, who seem to think that humans can still do war in the presence of the big buddy; nuclear hammers. Anyone toying with that hammer over them and all of us is a top danger to all of humanity. It might take a while, but eventually all living things beyond bacteria would likely be gone.

Getting a handle on the most dangerous leaders and defusing their poisonous toys becomes more important

every day. Just because the weapons are illegal only means they are operated "outside" of law, which I believe is the very definition of war.

War was also illegal before the last German mad man began increasing his country's "living-room" [land on which his citizens might freely live]. The "great leader" becomes an ancient dream which is mostly a day time nightmare.

Empire has finally taken on its current nakedly cruel demeanor. This may be the costume numerous individuals may prefer but not any human who might desire to continue to live with the same opportunity of choosing their own path across the years of their individual life.

How to provide kindness and respect for all people remains the trick to loveable leadership.

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### ONGOING EVENTS

**5-6 pm Mondays (starting Apr. 1).** Stop Line Three vigil. In front of Governor's Mansion on Summit Ave., St. Paul.

**5-6 pm Mondays.** White Bear Lake Peace Vigil, Hwy. 61. and 4th Ave.

**4-5 pm Wed.** (5-6 pm starting Apr. 1.) Lake Street/Marshall Ave. Peace Bridge vigil.

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

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

### OTHER EVENTS

**Apr. 9, 4 pm.** Commemoration of Deir Yassin Massacre, 29th and Nicollet, Minneapolis.

**Apr. 22,** Earth Day tree plantings. Details TBA.

**May 30, 9:30 am.** Memorial Day Remembrance. Vietnam Memorial, State Capitol Grounds

**"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**



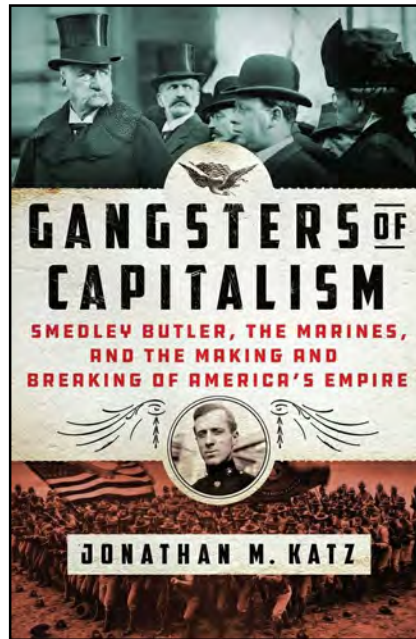
# When the military backs gangsters: a review of *Gangsters of Capitalism* by Jonathan M. Katz

reviewed by Paula Staff

Mr. Katz presents a discouraging image of Smedley Butler, a Marine with bloodied hands. He also wrote about the imperial efforts of the United States to interfere in the economy, government and social well-being of other countries. Little regard was given to the damage to the people, environment and governing bodies. Toward the end of the book, a brief nod was given to Smedley Butler's opposition to war and the aggressive interventions in other countries. More was written about his efforts to establish corporate interests that were uninvited and unwanted by the countries, which were bullied by the Marines and other branches of the military.

Butler was stationed in several countries plagued with military offenses that limited opportunities for democracy to take root. It seems that democracy was only for the United States and perhaps its allies.

The occupied countries shouldered the burden of disruption of the economy, governing bodies, and society. The leaders backed by the Marines and the United States government gave little support to the efforts of the people, such as the Philippines and Nicaragua among others, to choose



their own leaders.

The Marines and United States did all they could to direct the course of the occupation; making sure that corporate interest came before the people's choice. The directive was to insure imperial dictates ruled through force when necessary. Many lives were sacrificed to ensure corporate interests were upheld. What the corporation wanted they got with the support of the Military and United States government.

To quote Katz, "So, why did no one, not the committee or the press corp writ large, look deeper at the time? Why was the idea that a president could be overthrown by a conspiracy of well-connected businessmen and a few armed divisions lead by a rabbleroxing general-

considered so ridiculous that the mere suggestion was met with peals of laughter across America?" Why indeed.

The laughter came with the knowledge that not only was it possible, but probable. As long as it didn't happen in the United States, it was a moot point. But elsewhere, the gloves were off and there was little to protect the "game."

Countries such as Nicaragua, Panama and the Phillipines suffered deeply the excesses of our corporations, government and military.

## 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  
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[www.worldbeyondwar.org/speakers/](http://www.worldbeyondwar.org/speakers/)



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