



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

VOL 13, ISSUE 12
APRIL
2009

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

The High Price of War Toys

By Fred Hummel

There was an unusual ad on Politico.org last week; it was a pitch to Congress to not reduce or delay the F22 fighter plane project lest manufacturing jobs be lost. While the F22 should be judged on its merits – and demerits – this is a classic example of how the Military Industrial Complex (MIC) works today.

Parts for the F22 are made in 44 states. Not quite as gross and inefficient as the B2 bomber whose parts are made in 48 states, that’s still a lot of congressional districts whose representatives will lend a sympathetic ear to job loss on their turf whether those jobs are making widgets or ultimate air to air killing machines. This is typical of the slickness of the MIC; once a project is started, even Congress members who may initially have opposed it are made vulnerable to the bribe of the dollars and jobs it brings to their district.

In 1986, the F22 was first proposed to be the superior fighter/bomber of the 21st century. As an air to air fighter it fits the bill by default as none of the US’s potential adversaries has bothered to build anything even remotely close to the F22. Perhaps the extraordinary expense of designing, testing and producing such an aircraft, as much as \$381 million for each plane, has discouraged them.

Further, the F22 has serious shortcomings as a battlefield support weapon. Since most wars these days are low volume, small target events, the price tag for such an exotic – and currently unneeded – aircraft is over the top. Maybe its weaknesses can be overcome in the future, and maybe future adversaries will develop planes that exceed the capabilities of our current F15s and F16s but that’s all hypothetical. Yet the MIC has structured its supply system in a way that asks members of Congress to consider economic impacts on his/her district over the cost and effectiveness of its hyperexpensive war toys.

As our war budget increases year after year - roughly equivalent to the total of similar budgets of all other countries on our planet - Active Navy Combat Ships, Army Division Equivalents, and Active Air Force Tactical Wing Equivalents are all at their lowest levels since 1946. So as the military hemorrhages our tax dollars on its super toys - thus denying funds that could be used for nonmilitary solutions to world and domestic problems - our overall defense capability is in meltdown.

It seems obvious that the MIC could care less and is only concerned about the profits to be made while waving the flag. And it’s not afraid to flog the job factor to meet its goals. Our Founding Fathers warned this might happen; centuries later, so did President Eisenhower. Slow learners, aren’t we?

NONVIOLENCE INCLUDES ANIMALS

By Martha Devine

We are in the Season for Nonviolence, a 64-day period extending from January 30th, the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi’s assassination in 1948 through April 4th, anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s death by violence in 1968. During this time, we are called upon to commemorate the example and teachings of these two great human beings, who dedicated their lives to peacemaking.

As peacemakers in our own communities, it is my fervent hope that we can all begin to realize and reduce the immense violence we commit towards the animals used for food (meat, eggs, and dairy) and help raise consciousness in our culture that peace and nonviolence begin on our plates. Gandhi observed that the most violent weapon on earth is the table fork. King said that violence anywhere hurts everyone everywhere. These two teachings show the interconnectedness of us all and the need for an awakening to these truths at our daily life level.

By moving ever closer to a vegan way of being in the world, and spreading the word to others through our efforts and example, we will be contributing directly to world peace. We will truly BE the change we want to see in the world, able to include all sentient beings within the sphere of our compassion.

Will Tuttle, author of *WORLD PEACE DIET: Eating for Spiritual Health and Social Harmony*, defines compassion as “ethical intelligence, the capacity to make connections and the consequent urge to act to relieve the suffering of others.” Check out this important book at www.willtuttle.com.

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worldpeacediet.org or at the Arcata Co-op. So, I hope we all begin to “get the urge” to relieve suffering by eating fewer animals. To paraphrase President Obama, YES WE CAN CHANGE.

Promote Peace on Earth by lowering yourself on the food chain and you’ll save the animals, the planet, and your own health.

Just Do It!

Veterans’ Group to Honor Wright

By Terria Smith • The Desert Sun • February 21, 2009

Retired Col. Ann Wright witnessed many conflicts in her career. Her 35 years of United States government work included service as a diplomat in Afghanistan, Granada, Nicaragua and Somalia. She saw many U.S. interventions and invasions during that time.

But the war in Iraq was different. Wright believed it was wrong and resigned on March 19, 2003, from her job with the U.S. Foreign Service in Mongolia.

Since then, Wright has dedicated herself to advocating for peace. She travels abroad as a peace advocate and co-authored “Dissent: Voices of Conscience.”

Wright was recognized in February at Palm Springs with a Silver Helmet Award by the local chapter

of Veterans for Peace at its annual banquet. “We admire her integrity, courage and dedication to the cause of peace,” Veterans for Peace President Tom Swann said in written statement.

The Desert Sun recently spoke with Wright about the recognition and her efforts for peace.

QUESTION: Tell us about your decision to resign prior to the Iraq War.

ANSWER: After being a government employee virtually my entire life, 35 years during eight presidents, I saw the decision to attack Iraq — which did not attack the United States — wasn’t going to help our security. It was going to undercut our security. I resigned so that I could speak.

QUESTION: Have there been any regrets or repercussions for your decision?

ANSWER: There were no repercussions. As a civilian in the government, I had the right to resign. I was one of three government employees that resigned. We didn’t know each other, and we were all diplomats.

I never really got any “You’re a traitor” or “You’re unpatriotic” because I worked for the government for so many years. To call me unpatriotic didn’t make any sense. Very few people approached me in that manner.

QUESTION: When you speak at different events, what is the most important thing you wish to convey to people?

ANSWER: It’s the responsibility of us, as U.S. citizens, to question our government. We have the responsibility to look closely at our government. Sometimes we get hoodwinked on certain things, and that’s hard for a lot of people to take. We elect people thinking they’re going to be honest and forthright. And that’s not always true.

QUESTION: How did you feel when you learned you were being honored by the desert’s chapter of Veterans for Peace?

ANSWER: I was very honored. I met Tom (Swann) a couple of years ago, so he and his group asked me to come and speak and receive an award.

This is the very first time I’ve come to speak in Palm Springs.

Terria Smith covers Palm Springs for The Desert Sun.



Ann Wright, seen here talking with John Schaefer & Nezzie Wade while visiting Humboldt County VFP56 three years ago.

She can be reached at 778-4586 and terria.smith@thedesertsun.com

Submitted By Mashaw McGuinnis

NEXT VFP 56 MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 2, 2009, 7:00 PM AT THE LABOR TEMPLE IN EUREKA, 843 E ST.



Have You Heard the Story About LaVena Johnson?

*The Black Commentator; By David A. Love,
Posted on March 3, 2009, Printed on March 5, 2009
<http://www.alternet.org/story/129646/>*

LaVena Johnson, a high school honor student, decided to enlist in the Army to pay for college. On July 19, 2005, after serving eight weeks in Iraq, she was killed, eight days short of her 20th birthday.

Pvt. Johnson — she was posthumously promoted to private first class — was found dead on a military base in Balad, Iraq, in a tent belonging to military contractor KBR, a spin off and former subsidiary of Halliburton, Dick Cheney's company. She was the first woman from Missouri to be killed in Iraq or Afghanistan.

The U.S. Army officially ruled her death a suicide, saying she shot herself in the head, case closed. But this is where the story begins.

Johnson's family knew something was wrong. They had talked to her on the phone a few days earlier, and she was in a great mood as usual, and was planning to come home for the holidays, earlier than expected.

Questions were raised when Johnson's family viewed her body. There were suspicious bruises, and while the military claimed that this right-handed soldier had shot herself in the head with an M-16 rifle, the gunshot wound was on the left side of her head.

But the truth began to make itself known when the family received the autopsy report and photos they had requested under the Freedom of Information Act:

The 5-foot tall, 100-pound woman had been struck in the face with a blunt instrument, probably a weapon. Her nose had been broken, and her teeth knocked back. There were bruises, teeth marks and scratches on the upper part of her body. Her back and right hand had been doused with a flammable liquid and set on fire. Her genital area was bruised and lacerated, and lye had been poured into her vagina. The debris found on her suggested her body had been dragged.

And despite all this mutilation, she was fully clothed when her body was found in the tent, with a blood trail leading to the tent.

Despite the overwhelming evidence, the Army has refused to investigate. Through an online petition, ColorofChange.org demanded an investigation by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

Johnson's story is really several stories in one, and is about more than an individual Black woman who was raped and killed by her fellow soldiers. African Americans have fought in every war since the Revolutionary War, and often their country has been a far more

formidable foe to them than the so-called enemy they were told to fight.

Often, youth of color, lacking opportunities at home and in need of money, look to the military as a career option and a way to pay for school. But in light of all the death and destruction of the unjust and immoral war in Iraq, fewer of them took the bait this time, and opposition to the war among Black youth has posed a challenge for Army recruiters.

Perhaps these young people were channeling war resisters of a prior generation, such as Muhammad Ali, who once said, "I ain't got no quarrel with them Viet Cong. ... They never called me nigger." That war was devastating to poor communities of all races, and the black community in particular, as their young men came home in the thousands in body bags, or maimed, traumatized, as dope fiends or completely insane.

It was this "cruel manipulation of the poor," as the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. called it, one that united people of different races "in brutal solidarity burning the huts of a poor village, but we realize that they would never live on the same block in Detroit."

Forty years later, we find ourselves in another unjust and senseless war. This "home invasion" of Iraq, as Philadelphia veteran journalist Reggie Bryant aptly characterized it. And Johnson is a symbol of this war, as a casualty who risks being swept under the rug.

We may never know how many crimes have been hidden in Iraq. War is good for that sort of thing and little else, concealing the rapes, murders, shooting of children, bombing and pillaging of homes, the money stealing, and other crimes that are committed -- including the crime that is war itself. People are taught to kill like animals, to dehumanize and humiliate others.

But the case of Johnson raises yet another issue: Violence against women is a problem in the U.S. military, and other slayings and suspicious deaths similar to Johnson's are being classified as suicides. And Johnson is not the only woman to die a suspicious death on the Balad military base.

Retired Army Reserve Col. Ann Wright said 1 in 3 women who join the military will be raped or sexually assaulted by servicemen. Of the 94 military women who died in Iraq or during Operation Iraqi Freedom, 36 died from injuries unrelated to combat. While a number of them were ruled as suicides and homicides, 15 deaths remain that smell suspicious. For example, eight women from Fort Hood, Texas, died of "non-combat-related injuries" at Camp Taji, three of whom were raped before their deaths. Camp Taji is an Army base about 10 miles northwest of Baghdad.

Also, a number of female employees of Halliburton/KBR have been sexually harassed, assaulted and gang raped in Iraq. Their employment contract calls for such cases to be decided through

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Story of LaVena Johnson: Continued from page 3

arbitration rather than in a court of law. Halliburton and KBR, these war profiteers awash with money, even wanted one alleged rape victim to pay for their costs to defend themselves in arbitration. Lord have mercy ...

It is clear that under President George W. Bush, no friend of justice, the cases of these brutalized and slain women could not see the light of day. But we are living in a new time, so it seems, and perhaps now is the time that the family of LaVena Johnson, and all those other nameless women killed by the military, will find the justice they deserve.

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View this story online at: <http://www.alternet.org/story/129646/>

Submitted By *Becky Luening*

“Local VFP Members Charged With Concealing Exciting Stories”

By Mashaw McGuinnis

A VFP member recently expressed dissatisfaction to me about the lack of local material in the Foghorn. Tired of reading stuff they had already seen on “Democracy Now!” and commondreams.org, they asked if I had read “The Shock Doctrine” by Naomi Klein or Seymour Hirsch’s latest best-seller. Both of these books I was told, were “fascinating, nail-biters”, real page-turners that “revealed shocking truths about our messed up political system”! I’m not really directly quoting the book reader (I’m paraphrasing for effect) but after the conversation my enthusiasm for cranking out another Foghorn article withered up and I found myself wondering if Northtown Books was still open at that hour...

Being a student living on a student’s budget combined with little free time pretty much guarantees I won’t be reading any of those nail-biters before summer comes. But I did enjoy that conversation, because the person who recommended them is well-informed and offered me some perspective. I like hearing highlights from things like that because I don’t have time to read them myself.

So I posed a challenge to the book lover. “Why don’t you choose one of those books and write a few paragraphs about the best parts”? I asked. “We can print it in the Foghorn and it could lead to some stimulating discussions among the members”. The words had escaped from my mouth before I had a chance to really think about the idea. But why not? While Hirsch and Klein have yet to expose our Reggae on the River chili sales conflict the subjects they do write about are just as pertinent to issues our chapter addresses. And if my interest was piqued just by hearing about these books, then surely other members would also be.

And what about movies? I know at least a handful of members who go see, and rent, movies regularly. There’s always at least one current movie with political or social commentary that could warrant a short piece in the Foghorn. Did any of you go see “Stop

Loss” last year? I missed it, but I would enjoy reading about it. How about Clint Eastwood’s latest film “Gran Torino”. A leathery-faced Korean war vet who wants to isolate himself from society and comes to grip with his racism when a Hmong family next door embraces him as a hero and mentor to their eldest son. Anyone see that?

Lets say you’re not a movie buff and you don’t read much. Maybe you just sit on the couch every day with a bag of Kettle chips watching Amy Goodman on Free Speech T.V. I’ll bet you still have at least one friend in our community of activists who once told you a story that held you captivated. An elder who marched in the civil rights movement, a veteran who returned from the war with a life changing epiphany, or someone got arrested for protesting nuclear weapons and it made the front page in their home town.

The point I’m trying to make is this: You don’t have to be Seymour Hirsch or Naomi Klein to validate your experience or opinion in the Foghorn. I’m no Pulitzer prize winner, I’m still working on a Bachelor’s degree for cryin’ out loud! This newsletter is for us to share and communicate with each other every month. Not just when the local chapter has a fundraiser or participates in a peace rally. The Foghorn cannot really exist without input from you. If our membership is dissatisfied reading old stuff we’ve already seen on the internet, maybe we should look inside ourselves for a personal story worth sharing.

Have I Served My Country Well Enough?

By Michael Carlo

Letter sent to Nadia McCaffery

How can we save this young veteran from his daily living nightmare? Please, read this moving letter and help me help this young man back on his feet...

Hello Mrs. McCaffrey,

My name is Michael J. Carlo I served in the US Army from Aug. 03 till Sept. 06 and was over in Iraq from Nov. 04 till Nov. 05 based out of Camp Victory Baghdad for 1 yr. and 15 days. I have been diagnosed with PTSD, severe depression and many other things. I just had my ACL replaced at the VAMC of Martinsburg WV from an injury while on active duty. I was also an in patient from June 08 till Dec. 08 when I was benign treated for PTSD, substance abuse and an attempt on my own life. This is a letter about some of the things that have happened to me since I came home from war.

First, a little about me before, I am the oldest of three children one brother and one sister. I am also the oldest on both sides of my family, grandchild. I played hockey, lacrosse, soccer and baseball for as long as I can remember. I am adopted as well as my brother and sister. Am Native American and was adopted by Irish Catholic (Mom) and Italian Catholic (Dad), my brother was raised by Mother Teresa in India for three years before coming to us and sister was born in Buffalo. I was raised very well by my family and went

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to a Catholic school for many years. Even though we moved around allot, cause of Dad's work, it was a good childhood. My parents were divorced when I was eight and I had to help my mom raise my brother and sister. She was an RN nurse and was working allot my Dad moved from Buffalo NY to Washington DC for his business and we didn't get a whole allot of help or see him much but our family up there was very tight nit and pulled us through it.

I loved people and had allot of friends some times to many and was always out side doing something. I started work at 13 doing papers and got a real job at 14 as dish washer and have worked ever since, mom needed the help. I went to collage at 18 in Buffalo and then moved to DC with my dad to go to culinary school down there. Where I graduated with an Associates Degree from La' Cademy da Cuisine. I was in DC when 9/11 happened; working as a sous chef, and my brother was going to GW. I remember that day well.

I moved back up to be with my soon to be wife and my son. But cause of my passion for my country, 9/11 and my grandparents serving in our country's military I joined the Army at 23 years old. Along with help from my good childhood friend/brother in law Erik, he was stationed at Ft. Drum NY. I loved it and always wanted to serve my country and were that uniform proudly, defending what I believe. I was married on New Years Eve, on leave from AIT training.

My time in was everything I could have hoped for one big family and a bond that seemed to be unbroken. But that was all about to change fast. I found out that my unit was about to be sent to Iraq and I wanted to go bad, it was what I wanted and almost what I joined for too. My wife moved back up to Buffalo from Ft. Bragg in NC for the help of family during my deployment with the intent of coming back when I returned home.

My marriage to my wife, who I have been with since I was 17 and have a 8 year old son with, was not going good over there. Things feel apart fast when she heard me falling apart. It didn't take her long to know that I was going down the same path of her father who was a completely disabled (PTSD) Vietnam vet. She came down with my son and family when I returned home... We made plans for our home there and she came back but I was not the same and from our phone calls and the things that were happening to me she changed things. Our marriage ended soon and she kept my son up in Buffalo NY.

My drinking was bad just with the morning of our fellow soldiers, at least that was the excuse at the time but it soon became much worse as the nightmares and all the loss of my family and friends started to happen to me. I slowly began isolating myself from every one that cared and pushed them all away with my constant fighting in bars and anger to the world. I couldn't see what was happening to me and sure didn't understand it so I did what I only know what to do, I reenlisted for 6 more years.

That soon fell apart to. The day I reenlisted I went out to celebrate and while walking from a bar I was hit by a car that drove of the road and left me for dead. I was told I would not walk for a year but

I fought it hard and stopped drinking cause of my meds and 20 to push myself, to get better. My back and my legs killed me along with my whole body but I was out of my wheel chair soon and on crouches. I was always in pain and still am but I was a soldier. We could not show pain and where looked down on for complaining and going to sick call. Legit or not.

That summer I went to try to go to school cause I could do nothing else, my job, PT or anything I was always in pain. My chain of command felt it was my best option and they wanted me out of their hair, they knew of the problems I was having. Out of sight out of mind. But this lead me down further isolation. Now basically out of the system and no real reason to hold anything together the drinking and fighting all came back. The night mares and my thoughts never went away but were just pushed aside from the pain. I moved three times since I came home and could not even stay in one place for to long.

I found a piece of safety in a woman I believed loved me and understood me. Her family was all military and she tried to help me with the nightmares and that crazy things that I would do like walk my perimeter around my house, keep all the doors locked, my flash back were I thought I was still over there and seeing dead friends that needed my help and sleeping with my gun under my pillow. The drinking and fighting continued and I was slowly consumed with hate and fear. I believed that every one was my enemy and posed a treat to me and her along with her daughter. I soon got into more trouble than I could talk my way out of or get away from and was put out of the Army with an under Honorable conditions discharge. This almost killed me, I wanted to die and I tried to drink myself to it.

I moved to Gore Virginia were her family lived. I didn't want to go back home in fear of what would happen and what I would put my son and family though, they would not understand. I had allot of Doctors at Ft. Bragg tell me that some thing was wrong with me and I needed to get help for PTSD among allot of others but I didn't believe it was me, it was every one else that was my enemy. This is when I started my claim at Ft. Bragg but never herd any at all back from the VA at all. I tossed my ditty move paper work to the side and said F- the Army and I wanted nothing to due with any of it. If they didn't care about me enough to help then forget them.

It was hard to find work cause I needed a job that did not require allot of me physically cause of my pain. My injuries stopped me from doing allot of things and dealing with others is something I learned I no longer could do easily or had any desire to do. So I found a job at a sand mind where I only worked with one or two people during a shift. It was easy there and it aloud for some off my problems not to get in my way of my job but it was all short lived.

Rosie's family soon got tiered of us there and the way that she and I were. My problems from the Army and war followed me and soon became my problems here again. First at home then at work
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and then on the few times I would leave the house in the world as well. We started moving again but stayed in the area just from house to house but I started to loose it and fighting started at home. We didn't go out for the fear I would do something or something would freak me out and people would get hurt, including me. Many nights that I would wake up and she told me of the things that I would do in my sleep even start choking her and never remembered doing any of it. Soon I was falling apart again and at work as well. I could not sleep and was showing all the signs of so many problems but tried to hide them in fear of losing my job. So I quite before they fired me and moved up to NY where I thought it would get better. I was wrong.

I listened to my family and went in for help at the VA in Buffalo NY but there only focused on my problems down in VA plus I was not ready to admit some thing was wrong with me even though I new there was. The meds seemed to help but did not stop anything. I found a job but I only lasted three weeks due to me not sleeping, missing work and falling apart again. I got into a lot of trouble in Buffalo and even ended up in a psyche ward for a night and was arrested a few times. Things where not good. I found another job and thoug there was hope till I was kicked out of my mom's neighborhood for haveing my problems face them too. I moved into my sister's basement but soon sort lived that one when I lost my job again for the third time and was causing many problems at her house and with the neighbor. So with no were to turn I moved back into my old problems down in VA with Rosie thinking that in the country I could hide myself much better than a big city and have less problems.

At first it was OK and maybe things where going to be better this time but it all stared again. The fighting with her got real bad.. She didn't want me to go out at all cause we lived in the city of Winchester and not in the country anymore, her family didn't want me there again, don't blame them. Things got physical back at Ft. Bragg when she started to hit me out of anger and not understanding what was wrong completely. She came from a very hard childhood with a lot of violence and me having the love for fighting now and all my anger was only held in for so long. It soon went both ways when we first lived in Gore and now she went back to it and so did I. My father was paying my rent and bills since all I had financially was gone. I got another job were I worked with one person and things stopped for some time but it all ended when I was put in jail. I lost my home and every thing that was in it, that was all that I had. I lost my things and now my family and another child, she was my daughter and called me dad, all cause of this thing that was wrong and burning under the surface again.

When I was in jail I tried to get my meds from the VA in Buffalo by signing a release of records for the jail. I knew I needed my meds very badly. I complained just about every day. My mom even tried to mail them to me only for the jail to send them back. There refused to give them to me even though they got all the paper work for it. I gave up and got real depressed and some other inmates tried to help me and talked to me about a drug and alcohol program they had in their, that helped you through all your problems plus gave you some thing to do all day long. I applied and was admitted just in time. I

stopped showering and shaving and eating by that time and hardly ever left my cell anymore. It all was killing me inside and had to face it all with no were to go or hide from it all. The nightmares only worsened and it all just came crashing down on me.

In the program I found some help and stared to clean up again and come back to life it was a open dorm in there so I really could not hide. As the classes dived into my dark side I started to relive allot of things and started to hurt. The nightmares came like never before. I had no way out and started to freak out in their. I had no way out of my head or skin I could not stop all the voice and cries for help in my head from soldiers and enemy's alike. Everything thing came down on me but could not talk to anyone in there no one understood me, this all was about drugs and drinking and their childhoods not death and war they were civilians not soldiers they knew nothing. No one understood what was happening to me. I realized what I have become was every thing I hated in people and in a husband, lover, father, friend, brother, a son and a soldier. I hated me, I hated what I have done.

I thought about this allot in my head but never wanted it so bad. I wrote two letters, one to Rosie and one to my mom. I put a different name on the return so they would not be taking out of the mail. I took a razor we got at night for shaving and brook it apart. No guards were in the room and would not return for some time to get them back. I found a corner where no one would find me and holding a picture of me, Rosie, my son and daughter I cut my left wrist wide open and watched the blood pure out. I must have passed out because I woke up in a hospital. Some other inmate herd me fall to the ground and others rushed over to stop the bleeding. I would not be here today if it was not for them. I had to go get surgery on my wrist twice to repair what I did. I looked at allot of things different now and coursed God for not letting me go but knew there must be a purpose for me. Over time my thoughts changed and I wanted to get better and was ready for help. The jail gave me my meds and let me finally talk to some one at the VA. He helped me out at the end.

When I got out I went up to the VAMC in Martinsburg WV, and was treated for alcohol abuse and PTSD. I even got my knee done while I was in there but they did nothing for my back, knee or other things wrong. You have to complain all the time for things to get done and that's not me. I live with some one I met while I was in there that wanted to help me out. But this is only temp, and is not my home. I have to pay her but have no way how to, or even pay for myself to live at all. I can't take care of my son or my self financially. I go to the VA here at least once a week for out patient care for PTSD and mental health with my Doctor. I take like 15 pills a day and some things are starting to look better but it has been a very hard long road and I have a long way to on it. It never stops none of it does. You can't make it go away there is no magic pill. Some days are very hard and some not so bad but I don't go out much only twice a week if that and one off those is to the VA. Right now I just want to get through the day as best as I can and not hurt any more.

Submitted By Marc Knipper



Chapter 56 Financials: No Bailout Needed

By John Schaefer

All the world's institutions are evaluating their finances in the wake of the past year's disasters. We're no exception, but we're better off even than some banks; at least we haven't lost anything. Chapter 56 is solvent, but last year's income statement shows that as of the end of October, we spent \$9700 but collected only \$7900, a net decline of \$1800. Our net worth, with unrestricted assets of \$11,000 is still healthy, but we can't continue this trend forever. We may choose to address it in 2009.

At our meeting on November 6, we decided to change when dues are assessed from the anniversary of the original dues payment, to January first each year. That's why some have received letters with peculiar prorated amounts like \$4.17.

Our previous policy was to collect \$35 on the anniversary date, and then forward \$25 of that to VFP National.

In addition, we decided to discontinue our payment to National as we have done in the past, and let members contribute \$25 in dues to VFP National whenever National sends members a statement (probably on the anniversary date).

The proposal to raise chapter dues from \$10 to \$20 per year may be discussed later in the year.

Veterans Spirit Update to the Foghorn

By Marc Knipper

We are off to a good start in 2009. Under the umbrella of the Patrick McCaffrey Foundation, we are now "Veterans Spirit at Incopah," (soon to be) creating retreat and wellness programs for the community by and for veterans.

Thanks to the dozens of folks who have pitched in at our monthly clean-up days, since late January, we have removed nearly 12 to 13 tons of trash. There is roughly an equal amount of recycling, e-waste, appliances and trailers left to remove, so please watch for notices of our clean up party in May. Before that, though, you are invited to join us for lunch and tour the grounds at a Garden Party on April 25. Incopah is located on Hwy. 299, at the 36.25 mile marker, 2.5 miles west of Willow Creek.

As we become part of the community, we are making many great contacts, such as Tom O'Gorman of Trinity River Farms. He is excited to help with starts for the April Garden Party. We will be prepping beds, planting, fencing our gardens, and inviting the community to share in creating the vision and bringing veterans on board this year.

There is a lot to do in the near future and we are eager to get volunteers matched up with areas where we need help. Maybe the most impactful thing you could do is help us prepare a grant application for federal stimulus funding. We are about as shovel ready a project as there could be! Who do we know with that kind of experience?

Other important ways to contribute: orchard and garden fencing materials; trucks and trailers to haul trash and recycling to the coast (ongoing, by arrangement, dump fee is covered); farming experience; wilderness and alternative therapy providers; fire suppression experts; attorneys and engineers familiar with local green building and TPZ codes; fund raising.

To get involved, contact Marc Knipper at (707) 498-6937 or mknipper@veteransvillage.org.

Mike Ferner, VFP Board President, Statement at Washington D.C. March on the Pentagon

March 21, 2009 - Marking the 6th Commemoration of the Invasion of Iraq.

There is a haunting Australian folk song called "And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda," a recounting of the disastrous Gallipoli campaign in WWI where over 40,000 Allied troops were slaughtered.

One verse describes hundreds of wounded being carried down the gangway of a hospital ship back in Australia, calling them "the armless, the legless, the blind, the insane" of Suvla Bay.

When I think of those words, I recall the hundreds of ambulatory wounded waiting in line for meals at the Navy hospital where I was stationed during the Vietnam War. They were all there -- the armless, the legless, the blind. The insane were locked on the psychiatric ward where I worked.

That, brothers and sisters, was merely a portion of the true cost of that war. Once again we are paying that price with our loved ones, families and communities. And here's a piece of advice for the Obama administration: don't tell us about new programs to treat the soldier suicide epidemic. You send people to war, you get suicides, PTSD and violence back home. It's an unavoidable equation. If you want a prescription for these problems there's only one: abolish war!

And yet, no matter how high the cost to us it is always much more for the people under our bombs in Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine.

To give an illustration, here's what our costs would be if the casualties suffered by the Iraqi people hit us proportionately in

....*Continued on page 8*





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Mike Ferner's Statement: Continued from page 7

the U.S. Comparable casualties in our country would mean that every person in Atlanta, Denver, Boston, Seattle, Milwaukee, Ft. Worth, Baltimore, San Francisco, Dallas and Philadelphia would be killed. Every...single...person. In addition, every person in Vermont, Delaware, Hawaii, Idaho, Nebraska, Nevada, Kansas, Mississippi, Iowa, Oregon, South Carolina and Colorado would be wounded. Every...single...person.

So if this administration won't prescribe the abolishment of war, we have a prescription of our own from Howard Zinn: "Civil disobedience is not our problem. Our problem is civil obedience. Our problem is that people all over the world have obeyed the dictates of leaders...and millions have been killed because of this obedience...Our problem is that people are obedient all over the world in the face of poverty and starvation and stupidity and war...our problem is that people are obedient while the jails are full of petty thieves...and the grand thieves are running the country. That's our problem."

Submitted By Jim Sorter

Arcata Libation Wine Store and Wine Bar Shop Helps VFP Vigil

By Richard Gilchrist

Each Friday, the Arcata VFP vigil group stands on the southwest corner of the plaza – across from the Post Office. Veterans and supporters stand in a silent peace vigil starting at 5 and ending with a circle at 6 P.M.

An important part of the vigil is a display showing the photos of the first 1,000 troops who died in Iraq. The display demonstrates the terrible cost of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. Plaza visitors often stop to gaze at the photo display and the accompanying signs. While the veterans stand in silence on the grass, the visitors stand in silence on the sidewalk ... the signs communicating between them...

During the week, we need a convenient place in which to store our signs. For several years now, the signs have been stored at the Arcata Libation Wine Store and Wine Bar. Each Friday, Bill Thompson picks up the signs from the store that is located across the street from the vigil site and post vigil. We would like to extend a special thanks to proprietor Dan Casbary who graciously stores our display for us.