

A note of honor and love to Rob Hepburn who recently lost his beloved mother Margaret. Her presence blessed the earth, as does Rob's. Our hearts enfold you, Rob.



TURTLE NEWS

Hola amigos precioso. We are safely tucked into our rural village of San Pancho, just north of Puerto Vallarta. Already the hatchery has been rebuilt and nine nests have been relocated into its safety. The heat and humidity are merciless; the sea like bathwater. Here chickens, dogs and cats seem to have an unspoken agreement to "live and let live." The chickens scratch and flapdoodle, the dogs only chase the dune buggy at 3:00 AM on turtle patrol, and the cats lie about washing their whiskers unless caught up in frenzied mating. A lesson for the human species methinks. A Mexican gentleman noticed Jim's VFP shirt and working out the words, his face lit up exclaiming peace, peace, Si, Si!

—Jim & Linda Sorter

Dear Activists:

As you probably already know, Army Sgt. Kevin Benderman is being tried by a general Court-Martial on July 28, in Fort Stewart, Georgia, and he is facing up to seven years in prison. Upon returning from the war in Iraq, Sgt. Kevin Benderman applied for Conscientious Objection status. While in Iraq, Sgt. Benderman saw "...war destroy civilians, innocent men, women and children. He saw war destroy homes, relationships and a country. He saw this not only in the country that was invaded, but he saw this happening to the invading country as well—and he knew that the only way to save those soldiers was for people to no longer participate in war" (see www.bendermandefense.org).

The Army has decided to charge Sgt. Benderman with desertion and missing movement, even though he has never missed a day of duty in more than ten years. The charge of larceny was also added because Kevin received combat pay without having deployed. But it was demonstrated during an Army investigation that the pay had been an error by the finance department, and that seven other soldiers in Sgt. Benderman's unit had received the same pay by mistake. The Army decided to proceed with the bogus charge.

Iraq Veterans Against the War would like to join forces with other organizations to support Sgt. Benderman during his Court Martial. Peace and Justice Coalition groups should be activated in response to the military's relentless persecution of Conscientious Objectors. The best way to show your support is by attending the trial and participating in any rallies and or activities in support of the Bendermans. But also by announcing the trial and requesting support through your websites and publications.

Start making up signs and banners for vigils, demonstrations, and other possible activities. They may include the name of your organization, plus, "Support Kevin Benderman" Or simply "Free Kevin Benderman," or any other ideas you may have along those lines. Thank you in advance for your continuous support and for your dedication to Peace and Justice. Let us come together in support of this Conscientious Objector, and to show our opposition to this crime against humanity, that is the occupation of Iraq.

In Solidarity and Sincerely,
Camilo E. Mejia
IVAW member
Former Prisoner of Conscience
Black65d@aol.com

P.S. More information will be added in the near future about direct action. Please check VFP's and IVAW's websites for updates. Thank you.

— MEETING REMINDER —

VFP Chapter 56's next meeting is Thursday, August 4, 2005 at the Marsh Commons, 101 H Street, Arcata. At 6:00 pm, Mark Dubrow will screen his video of Camilo Mejia's talk at the April 2005 teach-in in Arcata. Regular meeting begins promptly at 7 pm.

Propaganda and Coercion

by S. Brian Willson

One hot sunny morning in April 1969 I found myself in a small Vietnamese village that had just been bombed. I was looking at more than a hundred strewn bodies of mostly young women and children, many dead, others dying. What on earth was going on here? These people were 10,000 miles from my farming community in upstate New York. They probably never traveled more than 20 miles from this village.

In one startling, shocking moment I realized I had been shamefully brainwashed. I was overcome by what seemed a simple truth, a truth that soon became irreversible knowledge, that a huge lie had been perpetrated upon me. No, not just upon me, but on my entire nation, at least the vast majority of whom believed in

the war and were paying taxes to finance this incredible effort, allegedly protecting our national security by destroying another people's aspirations for independence. I staggered at how preposterous and racist this war was. I gagged, then vomited, as I witnessed the horrible scene of carnage while understanding that these people had been savagely murdered and maimed for a nearly incomprehensible lie that I had so easily believed in.

How was it that I had so easily followed orders given by other men to travel across the Pacific Ocean in a military uniform to oversee other young men in uniforms with guns, all of us participating in ravaging

continued on page 5

Agent Orange, Leukemia, and You

Thirty-plus years after the fact, the US has finally admitted that Agent Orange—the defoliant widely sprayed over Vietnam in the '60s and '70s—can cause leukemia. This is important to all surviving Vietnam vets: if you have been diagnosed with leukemia—or *if you are diagnosed in the future*—government help may be available.

In 2003, the VA added one form of adult leukemia, Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia, (CLL) as a presumptive disease with a 100% service-connected disability rating for Vietnam veterans who had been exposed to Agent Orange. The determination also classified the rating as a presumptive decision that does not require veterans to prove that they were specifically exposed, only that they served in the affected geo-

graphic areas and have been diagnosed with CLL.

CLL is the most common adult leukemia with about 10,000 new cases in this country each year. It often manifests itself initially with only a slightly high white cell count and no other symptoms. For this reason an annual blood test (CBC) should be mandatory for all Viet vets. This need is emphasized by the fact that Vietnam veterans are being diagnosed with CLL at a much higher rate than the general population; over 800 such cases have been reported this past year alone and the rate appears to be increasing.

A few lucky people who develop CLL will go through life symptom-free. For others, CLL can cause death in a relatively short time as it transforms into more deadly diseases. For the

majority of patients, however, CLL becomes an indolent disease that slowly, and expensively, takes control of one's life before ending it. Without VA assistance or Medicare, the cost of treating the disease is prohibitive. There is no cure.

Any Viet vet diagnosed with CLL should submit their claim to the VA with all related medical records attached; this will expedite the claims process which ordinarily takes up to a full year. Including your medical records with the original claim can reduce the time frame to as little as three months. Please pass this information on to all Viet vets. Just about anyone who served in Vietnam is vulnerable.

— Submitted by **Fred Hummel**
USNR, WWII



Patriotism or Stewardship

by David Tschoepe

After the passage of another Fourth of July, the term “patriotism” seems increasingly vague over time. Of those who think of themselves as “patriotic,” few think of the signing of the Declaration of Independence as they fly flags, set off fireworks, barbecue meat, and consume alcohol. Fourth of July celebrations keep fire departments busy with the annual rash of fireworks-related mishaps. The noise from fireworks scares millions of dogs and unnerves many veterans with PTSD. Perhaps these problems are “collateral damage” of patriotic celebration.

The term “patriotism” has been so over-used and abused over the last couple of decades that it has lost its meaning. My 36-year-old Random House, college dictionary defines “patriotism” as: “devoted love, support, and defense of one’s country; national loyalty.” One clear sign of the erosion of the term “patriotism” was in the naming of the “Patriot Missile.” Somehow a lethal and destructive weapon is patriotic. Locally we have red, white, and blue gas stations that sell “Patriot Gas.” It seems to be patriotic to pollute the planet with foreign oil and go to war over it. The final nail on the coffin for “patriotism” is in the name, “Patriot Act.” The freedoms that Americans hold dear became restricted under the Patriot Act.

Once again, it is illegal to burn

the American flag out of protest. We often see tattered American flags flying on vehicles, because they have been shredded in the wind. If federal law makes the flag sacred, then the law should be evenly applied. Flag-shredding patriots should be prosecuted along with flag-burning protesters. The law should be applied to all flag abusers regardless of political views.

Another example of empty patriotism is seen in “Support our Troops” magnets and decals on cars. All it means is “Support the War.” These people will support the troops if they survive the war, and as long as they don’t become homeless. They will support them as long as they don’t join Veterans For Peace or Iraq Veterans Against the War. Right after Vietnam, even the most patriotic people showed little or no interest in returning veterans. On occasion (when I wear a Veterans For Peace t-shirt in public) somebody will come up to me and say, “Thank you for serving our country.” The first thought in my mind is, “Where in the hell were you 36 years ago?” My second thought is that I was serving Lyndon Johnson’s agenda rather than my country. I say little to these people though. Our role as mature veterans is to give young veterans of today a sincere welcome without meaningless gibberish about “serving our country.”

As we know, the general pub-

lic is becoming increasingly misled and duped by the government with the help of the corporate media. The dictionary definition of “patriotism” did not mention “blind faith.” Many Americans today feel that they are “patriotic” if they respect the flag and if they don’t question their government’s actions and motives. We who spoke up against the war in Iraq (in the beginning) were labeled as “unpatriotic” by the Bush Administration. We were condemned because we cared enough to step out of our former comfort zones, and we stood up for what we believed. Since the term “patriotism” has become extinct along with the Dodo Bird, we should replace it with a word like “stewardship.” We all share in the responsibility for our country’s role in the world, and how it affects the rest of the world’s population. When we challenge the acts of our government, we are assuming a role of stewardship. We don’t challenge governmental policies out of hatred of America, but we do it because we care what our country does and we deeply care about what happens to the troops.

We in Veterans For Peace were fortunate enough to learn from our experience. When we were young and naive, we went into the military and into war zones with the idea that we were “serving our country.” That was considered to

continued on page 4



Our Own Raging Grannies on Terrorist Watch

SAN FRANCISCO—Following revelations that an intelligence unit recently spied on a peace rally organized by families of slain American soldiers, the American Civil Liberties Union today called on Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to take immediate steps to stop the California National Guard from spying on people who engage in peaceful protest. The ACLU also filed a California Public Records Act request with both the governor and the California National Guard seeking documents relating to the peace rally and the Intelligence Unit.

“We were shocked to read that a small group of mothers, grandmothers and their supporters were the target of a National Guard terrorist unit,” said Mark Schlosberg, Police Practices Policy Director of the ACLU of Northern California. “We fear that the surveillance of the Mother’s Day peace rally is just the tip of the iceberg and urge the governor to take immediate action to prevent this from happening again.”

The Mother’s Day incident was revealed in the San Jose Mercury News, which disclosed that a handful of peaceful, anti-war protesters at the Sacramento Capitol were spied on by a special intelligence unit of the National Guard. The May 8 rally was organized by Gold Star Families for Peace, Raging Grannies, and Code Pink.

California affiliates of the

ACLU, representing more than 90,000 members, are calling on the governor to immediately take the following steps: Disband the National Guard’s Intelligence Unit or impose strict regulations on the unit. Strict regulations include prohibiting the monitoring and collection of information on individuals and organizations engaged in First Amendment protected activity; prohibiting dissemination of information already collected by other government agencies; creating clear guidelines and definitions that protest activity—including civil disobedience—is not terrorism; and regulation of file storage and data retention to ensure regular purging of any databases and storage systems. Under the California Public Records Act, release all information related to the May 8 incident and other incidents in which the National Guard has been used to monitor protected First Amendment activities. This includes all documents related to the protest held at the Capitol on Mother’s Day and any other anti-war demonstrations in the past year, as well as all correspondence from members of the Intelligence Unit related to Code Pink, Gold Star Families for Peace or Raging Grannies.

“We have seen a disturbing increase of government spying on First Amendment activity over the last few years,” said Dorothy Ehrlich, Executive Director of the ACLU of Northern California.

“We call on the governor to take immediate action and put a stop to this illegal activity. The National Guard should not be spying on the families of slain American soldiers who fought and died to protect our First Amendment rights.”

—Submitted by **Jim Sorter**

Patriotism or Stewardship

(cont’d from page 3)

be “patriotic.” When we got beyond our blind faith in our government, we awakened. When stark reality shows us that we go into foreign wars for causes other than national defense, we have the responsibility to speak up and educate others. If that is “unpatriotic,” it is okay because we must respond to our conscience rather than empty rhetoric. If we would support our government in the abuse of our military and troops, then we would be codependent in an abusive relationship. If we are to be enablers, our goal is to enable integrity rather than be caught in the web of spin. Most of us are not morally superior, nor are we heroes, and most of us are not Rhodes Scholars. We want our government to be honest and held accountable. Ultimately we want those who serve in our government to be good stewards of our country and world.



Propaganda and Coercion *(cont'd from page 2)*

another culture I knew little about? Of course, the simple answer is that our culture has a history of going to war for what are represented as just causes, and conscripting its young men to battle as a patriotic duty. Virtually everyone I knew had similar beliefs. I had never had one thought that my government might be sending me to another country without damn good reason.

I came to understand the historical importance of massive propaganda and the science of coercion in mobilizing support for oligarchic interests that dominate state and private activity. In fact for some 5,000 years since urban civilizations evolved, if suppression—the total restraint and subjection of the individual—did not work, various forms of persuasion usually did. So, the theme of what I would call brainwashing is not new.

The fact that our political and media systems are corrupt is not new to our era. U.S. socialist and reformer Upton Sinclair, in 1908, stated: "...we are just like Rome. Our legislatures are corrupt; our politicians are unprincipled; our rich men are ambitious and unscrupulous. Our newspapers have been purchased and gagged; our colleges have been bribed; our churches have been cowed. Our masses are sinking into degradation and misery; our ruling classes are becoming wanton and cynical."

As violent suppression of labor organizers and political dissenters became increasingly unacceptable during the emerging "progressive" era in the early 20th Century, manag-

ing the "public" mind became essential to assure mass, "democratic" compliance with the oligarchic economic and political interests. Edward L. Bernays, the premier pioneer of U.S. public relations, argued that the ability to shape and direct public opinion had become indispensable to the maintenance of order. Strong-arm tactics simply were too unpopular.

President Woodrow Wilson was re-elected in 1916 on the claim that he would keep the U.S. neutral and promised to not send "American" boys to war in Europe. Once elected, however, ongoing pressure from U.S. banking and other economic interests to enter the war on the side of England required Wilson to develop a strategy to convince a public overwhelmingly against the war to change their minds. With Bernays' coaching, Wilson created the first modern de facto cabinet minister for propaganda, The Committee for Public Information (CPI) under the direction of "liberal" newspaperman, George Creel. Creel launched an intense advertising campaign using catch phrases and fear language with thousands of speakers, ads, and essays that reached every nook and cranny of the United States. By April 1917, Wilson declared war against Germany, in favor of England, despite his previous promises of remaining neutral. To learn more about a century of sophisticated manipulation of the public mind to support dubious and increasingly oligarchic values, see: Christopher Simpson, *Science of Coercion* (Oxford University Press, 1994);

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); Herbert I. Schiller, *The Mind Managers* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973); Anthony Pratkanis and Elliot Aronson, *Age of Propaganda: The Everyday Use and Abuse of Persuasion* (New York: W.H. Freeman and Co., 1992); and Stuart Ewen, *PR! A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

One more intense step is required to convert an already manipulated public to assure that their sons (and daughters) become frontline killers. It has been shown over and over again that humans have a general aversion to murder. Thus special military basic training converts an already propagandized young, often teen-age, citizen through intense brainwashing techniques to overcome this stubborn aversion to killing. Lt. Col. Dave Grossman describes this process in his classic 1996 book, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning To Kill in War and Society* (Boston: Little Brown and Co.). The brilliant Brazilian educator Paulo Freire wrote in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971) that manipulation of public thinking "is an instrument of conquest" and an indispensable means by which the "dominant elites try to conform the masses to their objectives" (p. 144). When I visited Freire in Brazil in 1992, he stressed the antidote to such manipulation: "With deeply held dreams and hopes" virtually all propaganda systems will fail. *continued on page 6*





Veterans For Peace Chapter 56

Phone: 707-826-2992
Email: VFP56@aol.com

We're on
the Web!



<http://www.vfp56.org>

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Steve Stamnes Brian Willson
Kathie Kelly Linda Sorter
Jim Sorter Rob Hepburn

STANDING COMMITTEES

Peter Aronson: WMD/DU
Doug Smith: General Store
Becky Luening: Media
Laura Simpson: VEOP

LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read that might interest the members of VFP-56, please email it to turtldncr@aol.com in Word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.

Propaganda and Coercion

(cont'd from page 5)

In April 1969, as I realized my own shameful brainwashing (the result of comprehensive cultural conditioning to think in a particular, self-serving way), an ancient human theme of connection to all life through conscience was given birth in my being. This epiphany offered me hope for the human condition—that a more ancient, sacred understanding of the need for mutual respect and cooperation will re-emerge in time to save us

from the coming of the Fifth Horseman of the Apocalypse.

British anthropologist Ashley Montagu concluded in *The Dehumanization of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1983; written with Floyd Matson), “The possible attainment of full humanness—the transformation of the species from *Homo sapiens* to *Homo humanus*—rests upon our recovery of the lost world of fellow feeling, the source of all human connection.”

The Long-term Cost of War

“The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have already cost taxpayers \$314 billion, and the Congressional Budget Office projects additional expenses of perhaps \$450 billion over the next 10 years... The Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, a nonpartisan Washington think tank, has estimated that the Korean War cost about \$430 billion and the Vietnam War cost about \$600 billion, in current dollars. According to the latest estimates, the cost of the war in Iraq could exceed \$700 billion... Since the shooting war in Iraq began in March, 2003, 1,763 U.S. soldiers have been killed in Iraq, and at least 13,336 have been wounded, according to data collected by the Iraq Index, which is assembled by the Brookings Institution in Washington... In September 2002, the Congressional Budget Office, a nonpartisan research arm of Congress, estimated that the war would cost \$1.5 billion to \$4 billion per month. In fact, it costs between \$5 billion and \$8 billion per month...”

[James Sterngold, *San Francisco Chronicle*, Sunday, July 17, 2005]

— IN AFGHANISTAN —

8,587 AFGHAN Troops Killed and 25,761 Seriously Injured	July 2004
3,485 AFGHAN Civilians Killed and 6,273 Seriously Injured	July 2004
215 U.S. Troops Killed and 645 Seriously Injured	July 2005
101 Other Coalition Troops Killed and 303 Seriously Injured	July 2005

— IN IRAQ —

30,000 IRAQI Troops Killed and 90,000 Seriously Injured	Aug. 2003
22,850 IRAQI Civilians Killed and 41,130 Seriously Injured	June 2005
1,769 U.S. Troops Killed and 6,534 Seriously Injured	June 2005

194 Other Coalition Troops Killed and 582 Seriously Injured	July 2005
91 U.S. Civilians Killed and 164 Seriously Injured	July 2005
161 Other Coalition Civilians Killed and 290 Seriously Injured	July 2005

— GRAND TOTALS —

67,453 Killed
+ 171,682 Seriously Injured
= 239,135 Total Casualties

[Most recent update: July 19, 2005. All numbers are actual counts or lowest credible estimates. For info. on sources and methodology go to <http://www.unknownnews.net/casualties.html>. Other reports citing at least 100,000 civilian Iraqi deaths are not included here.]

Veterans For Peace Chapter 56
P.O. Box 532
Bayside, CA 95524