



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

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2009

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

REMEMBRANCE OF A REVOLUTIONARY FOR PEACE

By John Mulloy

November 15, 1969, Washington, D.C. late evening, after dark. Ten to fifteen thousand folks pressing against the hastily erected metal fence around the Department of Injustice. U.S. marshals and SWAT boys lurk inside, gas masks at the ready, clubs in sweaty palms.

Suddenly “THE GAS!!” Dozens of canisters blast deep into the crowd. The Blue Meanies wade into the disoriented mass, slashing with their clubs. Lungs on fire, eyes tearing, sweat covered bodies stinging. “Doug’s down, out cold.” “Let’s carry him and get the hell out of here.” Effort to escape is intense, but finally we’re out of the gas cloud. An ambulance takes Doug away.

Doug Huss, my friend, was a severe asthmatic. Taking in too much gas suppressed his breathing. Fell into a coma; never came back. Only 20 years old, a great guy, a natural leader. Six weeks later I stood with his family as the life support was terminated and we said good-bye.

Doug was a victim of the Vietnam War just as the warriors and civilians who died “in country,” in the horror that our nation created in Vietnam. He left the planet while surging with protesters and insurrectionists at the Department of Injustice. A monument to fallen anti-war activists should stand next to the Vietnam Wall in D.C. Forty years have passed and Doug is remembered by those of us in the “future that he didn’t get to live.”

HELL COMES HOME

By Robert C. Koehler

11/19/09

Tribune Media Services

There’s no armor, it turns out, for conscience.

So our men and women are coming home from the killing fields wounded in their heads, used up, greeted only by the military’s own meat grinder of inadequate health care and intolerance for “weakness.”

“Frankly, in my more than 25 years of clinical practice, I’ve never seen such immense emotional suffering and psychological brokenness.” This is what whistle-blower psychiatrist Kernan Manion wrote recently to President Obama about his experience counseling Marines at Camp Lejeune in North Carolina, as reported by Salon.

In September, Manion, having been told to “cease and desist all further correspondence with the government,” was fired by the Navy for his urgent, outspoken communiqués about the mental-health minefield the military has on its hands. Two months later, of course, the issue of PTSD was blown into the national headlines by the massacre at Fort Hood. And a day after that, according to Salon,

the body of a Marine was found at Camp Lejeune and a fellow Marine was arrested for the murder.

The wars we fight keep getting worse, or seem at any rate to back up on us with an ever-intensifying fury. Our war on terror is tightening the psychological vise on our collective insecurity, beginning with the soldiers who are fighting it. Salon, citing official figures, reported that 42 Marines committed suicide in 2008 and 146 attempted to do so.

Even more disturbing in terms of national security, 121 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, in all service branches, had been charged with murder as of 2008, according to a New York Times report. This statistic was cited in a recent Mother Jones article about Republican Sen. Richard Burr’s bill, the “Veterans 2nd Amendment Protection Act,” which would ease mental-health restrictions on vets’ ability to buy guns.

This disturbing bill does not give psychologically wounded vets the help they need, but it certainly reflects the ignorance and arrogance of militarism, which perpetually organizes itself around an “enemy” somewhere out there stalking us. Those trapped in this

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mind set can imagine security only in relation to their power over this enemy, which leads them, and everyone else, into a vicious spiral of armed preparation, violence and counter-violence.

What we fail to notice in our rage and fear is that violence — not the violence we endure but the violence we perpetrate — dehumanizes us. Killing is the ultimate traumatic experience.

“In the military, you’re trained to shoot at a target, but sometimes the humanity of that target intrudes, and people come to question what they’ve done,” said Dr. Shira Maguen (putting it, I would say, mildly). Maguen is a staff psychologist at the San Francisco VA Medical Center and lead author of a recent study of the factors causing PTSD, conducted in conjunction with the University of California, San Francisco. The study, published in the October 2009 issue of the *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, used data from 1,200 veterans of the Vietnam War. It found, much to the researchers’ surprise, that “the negative psychological effects of killing” made all other factors pale in comparison.

Here’s how it looks before the humanity intrudes: “One morning, a few months before leaving, I was manning a machine-gun security post. I saw a Humvee come through the gate towing a blue mini-pickup. As they approached closer, I saw that the truck was riddled with bullets and shrapnel — full of dead insurgents, decapitated corpses. I’ll never forget this. A very young PFC in the back of the truck lifted a decapitated head. ‘We really f---ed these guys up, didn’t we?’ Other soldiers were celebrating on top of the bodies. (The dead were) mostly teenage boys from the local community.”

These words of Iraq War vet Jeffrey Smith were just a small shard of the four days of horrific testimony about this war — about the racism and cultural ignorance of our occupation, about the inhumanity of military culture, about America’s official disregard for human life — given by vets at the Winter Soldier gathering a year and a half ago in Silver Spring, Md.

The authors of the PTSD study emphasized, according to a University of California news release, that their results had a harrowing relevance for the troops currently serving in Iraq and Afghanistan. Previous research, they noted, indicates that “up to 65 percent of service members returning from the war in Iraq report killing an enemy combatant, and up to 28 percent report being responsible for the death of a noncombatant.”

I fear that the war on terror is just starting to come home, just starting to haunt us. What we’ve done to the Iraqis and Afghans, we’ve also done to ourselves. Every vet with serious PTSD is trapped in his or her personal Abu Ghraib, and a few — getting no help from their own chain of command, except maybe redeployment — will try to shoot their way out.

Of far more worry to the militarized sector are those who decide

to join Jeffrey Smith and the other Winter Solider truth-tellers. He concluded his testimony: “I apologize to the Iraqi people for what we did.”

Robert Koehler is an award-winning, Chicago-based journalist and nationally syndicated writer. You can respond to this column at koehlercw@gmail.com or visit his Web site at commonwonders.com.

Submitted by Peter Aronson

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Equine Therapy Helps Withdrawn Vets Re-Connect Instructor: Horses Don’t Judge Like People

By Lance Hernandez, 7NEWS Reporter

POSTED: 10:19 pm MST November 11, 2009

UPDATED: 9:41 am MST November 12, 2009

DENVER -- When war follows soldiers home, they can suddenly find themselves struggling with post traumatic stress disorder.

“They become isolated socially and financially,” said therapist Robert Froug, of the Aurora Mental Health Center.

Froug and Sarah Avrin, the center’s director for the developmentally disabled program, are working with some vets who have ended up homeless.

They’re trying to help the men, who have withdrawn from society, reconnect using equine transitional therapy.

“We use horses as a tool because they are such majestic creatures,” said Paula Quillen, an instructor at Coventry Farms.

(Continued on page 3)

**NEXT VFP 56
MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR DECEMBER 3,
2009, 7:00 PM AT THE
LABOR TEMPLE IN
EUREKA, 843 E. ST.**



In order to understand how horses can help vets, you have to understand what the vets are going through.

“They come back horribly, horribly scarred from what they’ve seen, and rather than talk about it, which is re-traumatizing, it’s easier to just shut down emotionally,” Froug said.

“It was the best time of my life and the worst time of my life,” said Iraq war veteran Robert Burge. “The best times were building schools and hospitals. The worst times were going to Arlington (National Cemetery) to say goodbye to friends.”

For Iraq war vet Andrew Lubbers, the worst times were the roadside bombs.

“It did affect me but it took awhile to realize. It was a little rough,” said Lubbers.

Froug said one of the vets was so traumatized by improvised explosive devices that he couldn’t bear to look outside the van windows on the way to Coventry Farms, because his experience was re-triggered seeing all the trash bags alongside the roadway.

“They turn inward and start to avoid people,” Froug said.

“Their experiences are so intense and sometimes so traumatic, that it’s hard to relate to other people, their values and priorities,” Avrin added.

That’s where the horses come in.

The vets are assigned a horse and are instructed how to take care of it.

They wipe down its coat, clean its hooves and walk it around.

“Horses are great therapeutic tools because they are neutral,” Avrin said. “A relationship with an animal is a lot easier than with a person, because the animal won’t judge them.”

Quillen told 7NEWS that the vets get to be themselves around the horses.

“They don’t have to look over their shoulder to see who’s watching them,” Quillen added.

The vets eventually learn how to ride the horses.

The therapists say the men also learn to let the horses do the reacting to loud noises and other distractions, which helps relieve the vets own hyper-vigilance.

“Coming out here is like an escape from everything else,” said Don Greever, a Vietnam-era vet. “When I first started here, I had major depression. I’ve gone from wanting to die to this is fun.”

Teddy Julien, another Iraq war vet, said working with a 1,000 pound animal is not easy, but to him it’s important.

“I have to get out of my comfort zone in order to move on with my life, and I have to move on with my life,” Julien said.

When asked if the therapy works, Froug said, “We can’t measure this by psychological tests. We can’t measure this in statistical outcome measures, but we know. All we have to do is look at the smiles on their faces. That’s how we know it works.”

These four vets have become so comfortable working with horses and encouraging each other that they now volunteer at Coventry Farms to help young children learn how to ride.

“I love seeing the smiles on their faces,” Greever said.

Submitted By David Berman

Award Winning Poet/Activist John Ross in Arcata Promoting “Iraqi Girl” *By Mashaw McGuinnis*

John Ross, poet, author and life-long activist visited Arcata last week to promote his new book “El Monstruo: Dread and redemption in Mexico City”. He made an appearance at North Town books and spent a couple of hours talking about politics, social issues and his unglamorous life in Mexico with a roomful of Humboldt County activists and fans. He talked candidly about being a white American transplant in Mexico City, where he has made his home for the last 25 years and explained that he feels at home in the contaminated, polluted city full of crime and constant conflict.

The fascinating, quirky writer and rabble-rouser was the recipient of the “Uppie”, an award named for Upton Sinclair which is bestowed upon writers by the American Civil Liberties Union. The award for his autobiography “Murdered By Capitalism - 150 Years of Life & Death On The American Left”. Ross has not slowed down in his later years, (he is 71) in fact he seems just now to be hitting his stride. During the evening he also promoted a touching and revealing memoir of a young Iraqi teenager, which he edited and helped get published. “Iraqigirl” is a heart wrenching and poignant diary of a girl who is coming of age in Iraq while her family experiences the U.S. occupation.

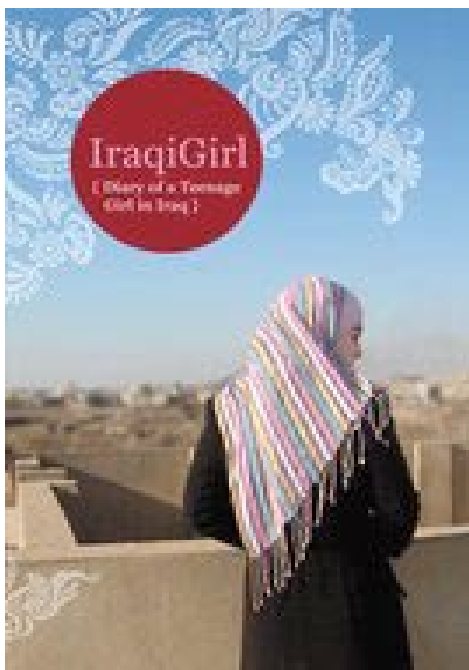
As Ross read a few excerpts from the book, a chill went through me. “I forgot what peace looks like. What the street looks like. What the sky in the night look like. What my relatives look like. Sometimes I just think that if you could see what my eyes see, if you could hear what my ears hear, you would be able to understand what I mean.” Ross had a way of presenting the girl’s simple words as one might expect a seasoned poet would, and as he looked around the room he seemed to connect with every person individually. I glanced around the other faces in the audience, and I could see they were as moved as I was.

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The anonymous teenaged author, (whose identity of course must be concealed for her safety and her family's safety), began blogging when she was fifteen years old from somewhere in Mosul, Iraq. The book contains entries about her day-to-day life through 2007. Ross tells us that Iraqi Girl is now attending college and continues to struggle, wondering what her future brings. Passages like "For the sake of the smile that was given to no one but me, for the sake of my grandpa and for the sake of my country and for the sake of my religion and for the sake of my God... I want to know my destination" made the audience feel as if they were listening to the words of a much older person.

Although his writing and passion for this young Iraqi impressed me, the thing which sold me on John Ross and turned me into his newest fan was his reaction to receiving an award recently. Some of you may remember reading about him recently in the news, when the San Francisco Board of



Supervisors recently declared May 12th "John Ross Day". An honor that would flatter most writers, the city wanted to publicly recognize his achievements as an artist and social activist. But Ross publicly declined to accept the title, because he explained "San Francisco has become a sanctuary city for the rich." And the act itself went against his principles. I don't know about some of you, but that's the kind of activist I can get behind.

* For anyone interested, the address for Iraqi Girl's blog is <http://iraqigirl.blogs...>

**PEACE IS NOT MERELY A
DISTANT GOAL THAT WE
SEEK BUT A MEANS BY
WHICH WE ARRIVE AT
THAT GOAL.**

- Martin Luther King, Jr.



Myths Of Our Time : Morality vs. Material Interests

By Paul Craig Roberts

13 November, 2009

Vdare.com

It is conventional wisdom that it was the draft that ended the Vietnam war. According to this explanation, cowardly college students subject to the draft and their unpatriotic families, forced an end to the war. This is Karl Marx's explanation. Material interests, not empty morality, are said to have brought the war to an end.

That fact that in those days the US still had an independent media of sorts that sometimes framed the war in moral terms is ignored. Are we sure, for example, that the film of the naked little girl running in terror down the road burning with napalm was ineffectual in arousing moral opposition to the war? Are we certain that it wasn't an aroused moral conscience that brought about the end of the war but was college students' fears for their lives and limbs?

If we ascribe ending the war to material interests, it makes ending the war look as unworthy as the war itself.

Yet, virtually every conservative columnist, commentator, news person and politician, as well as today's antiwar protesters and apparently the Pentagon, believes that a military draft would reduce Americans' toleration for wars because of body bags coming home to middle and upper class parents. Apparently, the lower class doesn't mind its kids coming back in body bags.

Those in thrall to this explanation, which derives from Marx's materialist explanation of history, do not notice that Vietnam was our longest war. It apparently took almost forever for the material interest of students and their parents to realize itself and stop the war.

Why are we afraid to say that the war stopped because American troops and the American population got tired, offended even, from killing women, children and noncombatants? Vietnam had not attacked the US. The US had interjected itself into a civil war in a far off place, as it has done in Afghanistan.

By invading Iraq the US started a civil war between Sunni and Shi'ite. In Pakistan the US has started a civil war between the religious tribal population and the secular US puppet state. In Palestine the US started a civil war between Fatah and Hamas.

One continuously reads from those Americans opposed to America's wars of aggression that the wars are possible because they don't affect Americans, just those few who sign up for the voluntary military. Thus, there are insufficient material interests at stake to stop the war. This is a common explanation for the weakness of the antiwar movement. One could argue instead that it is the triumph of Karl Marx's materialist thinking that has made moral protests impotent.

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What is morality? You can't weigh it, define it, measure it. It can be dismissed as the whining of material interests. In contrast, material interests, such as lives, limbs, and bank accounts are real.

For whatever the reason, morality has shown itself to be an impotent force in 21st century America. Americans show no remorse at over one million dead Iraqis and four million displaced Iraqis due entirely to an American invasion based on lies and deception. The lies and deception are now well proven. Yet, there has been no apology for the horrors that Americans inflicted on Iraq.

Afghanistan is another example. Intentional lies conflated the Taliban with al Qaeda and "terrorists." The diverse peoples in Afghanistan who were first ravaged by Soviet bombs are now ravaged by American bombs. Weddings, funerals, children's soccer games, people waiting for fuel or food, people asleep in their homes, people attending Mosques have all been murdered and are murdered routinely by US and its NATO puppets.

Each time civilians are murdered, the US denies it, only to be contradicted every time by the evidence.

Why is the president of the United States contemplating sending yet tens of thousands more US troops to kill people in Afghanistan?

The answer is that the United States is an immoral country, with an immoral people and an immoral government. Americans no longer have a moral conscience. They have gone over to the Dark Side.

Humanity has endeavored for millennia to control evil with morality. In the American "superpower," this effort has collapsed and failed.

The United States needs to be censured for its immoral behavior, not have that behavior rationalized as being in its material interests.

Paul Craig Roberts was Assistant Secretary of the Treasury during President Reagan's first term. He was Associate Editor of the Wall Street Journal.

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Submitted by Richard Gilchrist

Army Sends Infant to Protective Services, Mom to Afghanistan

By Dahr Jamail

VENTURA, California - U.S. Army Specialist Alexis Hutchinson, a single mother, is being threatened with a military court-martial if she does not agree to deploy to Afghanistan, despite having been told she would be granted extra time to find someone to care for her 11-month-old son while she is overseas.

Hutchinson, of Oakland, California, is currently being confined at Hunter Army Airfield near Savannah, Georgia, after being arrested. Her son was placed into a county foster care system.

Hutchinson has been threatened with a court martial if she does not agree to deploy to Afghanistan on Sunday, Nov. 15. She has been attempting to find someone to take care of her child, Kamani, while she is deployed overseas, but to no avail.

According to the family care plan of the U.S. Army, Hutchinson was allowed to fly to California and leave her son with her mother, Angelique Hughes of Oakland.

However, after a week of caring for the child, Hughes realized she was unable to care for Kamani along with her other duties of caring for a daughter with special needs, her ailing mother, and an ailing sister.

In late October, Angelique Hughes told Hutchinson and her commander that she would be unable to care for Kamani after all. The Army then gave Hutchinson an extension of time to allow her to find someone else to care for Kamani. Meanwhile, Hughes brought Kamani back to Georgia to be with his mother.

However, only a few days before Hutchinson's original deployment date, she was told by the Army she would not get the time extension after all, and would have to deploy, despite not having found anyone to care for her child.

Faced with this choice, Hutchinson chose not to show up for her plane to Afghanistan. The military arrested her and placed her child in the county foster care system.

Currently, Hutchinson is scheduled to fly to Afghanistan on Sunday for a special court martial, where she then faces up to one year in jail.

Hutchinson's civilian lawyer, Rai Sue Sussman, told IPS, "The core issue is that they are asking her to make an inhu-

(Continued on page 6)



mane choice. She did not have a complete family care plan, meaning she did not find someone to provide long-term care for her child. She's required to have a complete family care plan, and was told she'd have an extension, but then they changed it on her."

Asked why she believes the military revoked Hutchinson's extension, Sussman responded, "I think they didn't believe her that she was unable to find someone to care for her infant. They think she's just trying to get out of her deployment. But she's just trying to find someone she can trust to take care of her baby."

Hutchinson's mother has flown to Georgia to retrieve the baby, but is overwhelmed and does not feel able to provide long-term care for the child.

According to Sussman, the soldier needs more time to find someone to care for her infant, but does not as yet have friends or family able to do so.

Sussman says Hutchinson told her, "It is outrageous that they would deploy a single mother without a complete and current family care plan. I would like to find someone I trust who can take care of my son, but I cannot force my family to do this. They are dealing with their own health issues."

Sussman told IPS that the Army's JAG attorney, Captain Ed Whitford, "told me they thought her chain of command thought she was trying to get out of her deployment by using her child as an excuse."

Major Gallagher, of Hutchinson's unit, also told Sussman that he did not believe it was a real family crisis, and that Hutchinson's "mother should have been able to take care of the baby".

In addition, according to Sussman, a First Sergeant Gephart "told me he thought she [Hutchinson] was pulling her family care plan stuff to get out of her deployment".

"To me it sounds completely bogus," Sussman told IPS, "I think what they are actually going to do is have her spend her year deployment in Afghanistan, then court martial her back here upon her return. This would do irreparable harm to her child. I think they are doing this to punish her, because they think she is lying."

Sussman explained that she believes the best possible outcome is for the Army to either give Hutchinson the extension they had said she would receive so that she can find someone to care for her infant, or barring this, to simply discharge her so she can take care of her child.

Nevertheless, Hutchinson is simply asking for the time extension to complete her family care plan, and not to be discharged.

"I'm outraged by this," Sussman told IPS, "I've never gone to the media with a military client, but this situation is just completely over the top

Submitted by Nate Lomba

Using Humor As a Tool

By Mashaw McGuinnis

Without discipline the Army would just be a bunch of guys wearing the same color clothing. – Frank Burns, in an episode of *M*A*S*H**

After a recent VFP event, a member shared with me that he overheard a couple of audience members as they were leaving early. One was saying to the other one that "I just couldn't take any more". Our films are serious, our discussions are serious, and of course, Veterans For Peace have a serious mission. We deal with war, depleted uranium, suicide and PTSD. Where could you find anything in those that isn't serious?

War may be no laughing matter, but when examining why so many of our events end up "preaching to the choir" and Michael Moore's films enjoy box office success each time one is released? Though his documentaries deal with very heavy subjects, they are delivered with such sharp wit that record-breaking audiences keep coming back for Moore. (That wasn't a typo, it was a pun).

Michael Moore knows that tickling the funny bone is a very effective tool to deliver a heavy message, because while we're laughing and thinking about its meaning, it makes it OK to talk about the painful part. Take Jay Leno's famous quips about the Iraq war. "War continues in Iraq. They're calling it Operation Iraqi Freedom. They were going to call it Operation Iraqi Liberation until they realized that spells 'OIL.'" The first time I heard that I laughed out loud and it made me think about the connection between oil and the war.

Thinking about dark truths is not something Americans typically enjoy. In fact we tend to zone-out on television and computers to avoid thinking about dark stuff. But look at the success of the T.V. series "M*A*S*H*" which dealt with the harshest realities of the Korean war. Imagine audiences tuning in week after week for 11 years to watch a show about medics dealing with death and dismemberment of soldiers! But they did, and when the series ended, the finale got the highest-ever ratings for one episode in television history. That wasn't because the message of war was so popular, it was because the writing and acting were downright hilarious! But the underlying message was so poignant that decades later, the story lines are still pertinent. One could easily replace the Korean war references with Afghanistan or Iraq and the biting sarcasm would still hold up today.

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Recently fans of Dr. Wendy Ring's puppet show "The Sound of Moolah" have seen just how a humorous slant can be used to educate people without depressing them. One part of their comedic presentation involves spinning a colorful wheel full of medical insurance trivia questions. The show's host, (a black and white cow) invites audience members to guess at the answers and wedges silly cow puns in between. The puns elicit chuckles and groans from the audience, while causing some to gasp and exchange glances at the facts they were learning. "Did you know a colonoscopy could cost that much?"

What if, at a future VFP event, we interspersed comedic skits between the serious lectures, and had a comic doing a routine to close the evening? Would the laughs ringing through the auditorium somehow make us less sensitive to the cost of war? If we started printing topical cartoons in the Foghorn would that make our mission any less honorable? If our audience goes away with a statistic about D.U. or knowledge about TBIs embedded in a funny story, we have merely broken a barrier and possibly laid the groundwork for attracting new members.



I invite all members to submit jokes and cartoons for the Foghorn's next printing, retell the quips you heard on Jon Stewart's show, and maybe keep humor in mind the next time we plan a talk or screening. Maybe those who are tempted to leave halfway through would be so engaged they stick around and learn something.

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By Lance Hernandez, 7NEWS Reporter

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"We use horses as a tool because they are such majestic creatures," said Paula Quillen, an instructor at Coventry Farms.

In order to understand how horses can help vets, you have to understand what the vets are going through.

"They come back horribly, horribly scarred from what they've seen, and rather than talk about it, which is re-traumatizing, it's easier to just shut down emotionally," Froug said.

"It was the best time of my life and the worst time of my life," said Iraq war veteran Robert Burge. "The best times were building schools and hospitals. The worst times were going to Arlington (National Cemetery) to say goodbye to friends."

For Iraq war vet Andrew Lubbers, the worst times were the roadside bombs.

"It did affect me but it took awhile to realize. It was a little rough," said Lubbers.

Froug said one of the vets was so traumatized by improvised explosive devices that he couldn't bear to look outside the van windows on the way to Coventry Farms, because his experience was re-triggered seeing all the trash bags alongside the roadway.

"They turn inward and start to avoid people," Froug said.

"Their experiences are so intense and sometimes so traumatic, that it's hard to relate to other people, their values and priorities," Avrin added.

That's where the horses come in.

(Continued on page 8)





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LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to turtldnccer@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.

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