



NEXT MEETING

Veterans For Peace
Chapter 56 meets
Thursday, Feb. 2nd at
7:00 pm at the Marsh
Commons, located at
101 H St. in Arcata.

- WANTED - Volunteers to Help Plan Eureka Peace March

VOLUNTEERS ARE GREATLY NEEDED, IMMEDIATELY, to help Communities For Peace with this year's peace march, which will take place on Saturday, March 18, two days before the fourth anniversary of the beginning of the current war in Iraq.

Planning sessions have already started. Meetings are held every Friday at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Room at the First Christian Church, 7th & K Streets (long ramp on K St.) in Eureka.

For more info. call Nate at 269-0528.

Goodbye Tom! We will miss you!

Thomas Sinclair Harper, M.D., our oldest VFP Chapter 56 member, died at home on Friday morning, January 20, 2006, two months shy of his 91st birthday.

Tom was born in Grand Junction Colorado on March 24, 1915 to parents Sinclair and Mabel Harper. He had two brothers, Robert and John.

A fact about Tom little known to VFP friends is that he spent his youth playing tennis. He distinguished himself in the sport, earning multiple trophies in Colorado singles tournaments and playing doubles with his father. He even played a match with tennis great Bill Tilden (which he lost).

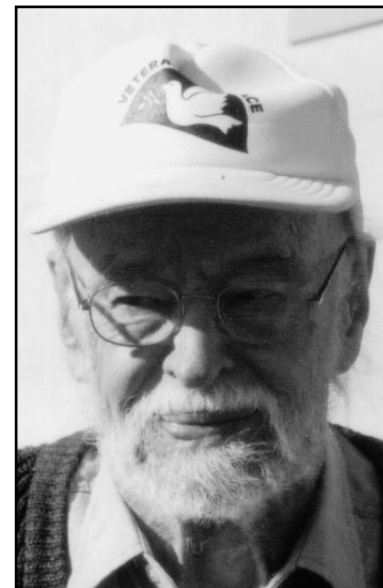
Tom first graduated from Cal Tech in Pasadena, then received a medical degree from the University of Colorado in Denver in 1942. Immediately after graduation, he joined the Navy, where he served for the remainder of World War II, stationed in Hawaii and the South Pacific. Not yet having completed his medical residency, Tom was thrust into being a surgeon on board a storm-rocked naval ship, where he performed an appendectomy by reading from a manual and getting advice on a phone. The patient survived. After the war, Tom decided to switch his medical specialty to psychiatry. He studied at the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, before moving east to Westchester County, New York.

Tom was a strong believer in non-violence and a peace activist for most of his life. In the 1960s, he attended many anti-Vietnam war protests, including the 1968 protest at the Democratic Convention in Chicago, as well as large protests in New York City and Washington D.C.

In 1974, at age 59, Tom packed all he owned into a VW van and moved to Mendocino, California. Tom liked his Volkswagen, but after five engine replacements he finally switched to a Honda Civic, a model to which he was loyal 'til death. In 1990 Tom moved north and opened his psychiatry practice in Eureka. His long medical career spanned more than 60 years.

Big changes came in 2003 when, at age 88, Tom fell and fractured his hip. Veterans For Peace friends rallied around him, taking one of their Friday evening peace vigils to a grassy spot in front of his hospital window. Nurses helped Tom move near the window so he could participate in the vigil from his room. He sat waving his arms practically the entire hour, in solidarity with his friends. He mended well from that fall and was soon able to rejoin the vigil on the Arcata Plaza. He was one of the most stalwart participants in that ongoing action.

In recent years, Tom was incredibly active and seemed interested in everything that



TOM HARPER
March 24, 1915–January 20, 2006

Chesbro to Introduce California DU Testing Bill

by Fred Hummel

At the behest of our chapter's DU/WMD Committee, State Senator Wes Chesbro will submit a bill before the current legislature to call for appropriate testing of California National Guard members who have served, or are serving, in the Mid East. We have also been advised that Assemblymember Patty Berg will likely submit a companion bill on her side of the legislature.

This exciting news comes as a result of the hard work of our DU Committee, especially that of the chair, Peter Aronson, and member Rich Gilchrist, both of whom had extensive discussions with Chesbro's staff about the content of and need for the legislation. Peter made the first contact with Chesbro and though his response was generally affirmative, no final decision was made until Rich followed up and

wrapped up the loose ends.

We have no copy of the proposed bill to show you yet, but we do know it will be similar to legislation passed in both Connecticut and Louisiana. When the bill is introduced there will be a heavy responsibility upon all of us to garner support from other veterans' groups and from organizations who support service members like MFSO, etc.

Ultimately, there will be a need for expert witnesses to testify at hearings in Sacramento. We have the expertise on our DU Committee to do that, but we will be seeking support from other sources as well. Assuming legislative approval, we then have to assure the governor that signing the bill will be in his state's best interest despite any pressure that may come from military or other sources. Are you ready to wage peace?

Revolted? Join the Revolt!

by Jack Nounnan

A Town Hall Meeting on Withdrawing Our Consent(!) is scheduled for 2–6 pm, Saturday, February 11th at the Veterans Memorial Hall in Eureka (corner of 10th and H Sts.).

A number of local organizers and activists, feeling much as you probably do, know we can't just allow this government to go on and on. But feeling revolted never has rid anyone of anything. So we're calling a meeting to thrash out what it takes to seriously build and act our part of what should be a nationwide movement, right here. There ought to be revolutionary councils in every city and town!

Confronted with immense issues of survival—war and violence against everything, all species and the earth itself, perpetuated by corporate/state-controlled oppression, disastrous exploitation and corruption—anyone's claim of "democracy" becomes a farce! But no matter how much corruption or tragedy is amassed, most of us go right on in our complicity with these tyrannous acts. Jerked around so long by this consumer culture, we act unaware or shriveled or worse. We need to seriously dig in and reinvent ourselves right now! We could use a few miracles, but our own determination to make this stand—on a very personal and local level—will do just fine! Making huge revolutionary personal changes is the highest priority of our lives. After all, we're living in revolutionary times!

On February 11th, vigorous and knowledgeable men and women will come together to rap with a focus on inspiring far more of everyone's participation. We'll all dig deep to access our own personal savvy and skills. The format will be a mix

of table, panel, and possibly open-floor discussions, with creative input by artists and musicians thrown in to further inspire. We'll finish by feasting together. Sound all right for starters?

This is to be part of a series of such events. We call on all of you to help make it happen. This is not some entertainment fancy, but our lives we're juggling here! Please join us if you're serious about wanting to change the status quo.

VEOP Committee at Work

by Carl Stancil

On Monday, January 16, 2006, the Third Annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. AmeriCorps Civics Conference was held at College of the Redwoods. Jacob Kevan and Carl Stancil of VFP Chapter 56's Veterans Education and Outreach Project (VEOP Committee) presented a one-hour workshop at the conference entitled "Military Recruitment on Campus and the New Economic Draft."

Participants were introduced to the work of VFP and the GI Rights Hotline. They learned about military recruitment techniques in local high schools, student information privacy, opting-out, and the ASVAB tests. In addition, they examined the relationship between race, class, and the decision to enlist in the military. Attendees discovered what they could do to protect the personal information of students, and gathered resources for their work with young people in the community.

After the presentation the group tabled in the cafeteria, where participants obtained brochures and asked additional questions of the presenters.



Clarity of Commitment: “Just something that had to be done”

by S. Brian Willson

The deaths in January 2006 of Tom Harper, our oldest VFP 56 Chapter member (at 90 years of age), and Hugh Thompson, hero of the My Lai, Vietnam massacre (at 62), has emotionally impacted me. Having known these two men personally, I observed that they both possessed clarity of commitment to peace and justice, and empathy for their fellow and sister human beings, which is inspiring.

Tom Harper was one of our most loyal members, rarely missing our monthly meetings, weekly Friday vigils on the Arcata Plaza, or the chapter’s irregular public events. He is one of only three or four local members who attended two of the last three national VFP conventions: San Francisco in 2003 and Boston in 2004. When Tom discovered our local VFP chapter he was overjoyed to be with like-minded military veterans. It added a real boost to the final three years of his life, especially after he was forced for health reasons to close his private psychiatric practice in Eureka. And of course his presence was a huge boost to our entire membership. Tom’s commitment to VFP is illustrated by his total dedication to arranging rides to enable his presence at the Friday vigils and standing with his cane the hour in silence, a weekly vigil now nearing 170 consecutive Fridays. On one occasion he was not able to locate a driver, and set out to walk the one-mile distance. A local Arcata policeman saw Tom struggling down the street with his cane and knew his destination. He helped Tom into the police car and brought him directly to the Plaza.

Tom was committed to a radically different politics in our community, our state and our nation. He often stated that Bush II was not his President, and that Schwarzenegger was not his governor.

Hugh Thompson, a “good old boy” from Georgia, was a 25-year-old Army

warrant officer piloting a reconnaissance helicopter on the morning of March 16, 1968, monitoring ground activities of the U.S. Army’s Americal Division’s Charlie Company in southern Quang Ngai Province. He and his two crew members, door gunner Larry Colburn, 18, and crew chief Glenn Andreotta, 20, observed a point-blank murder of an already seriously wounded young woman, and then they couldn’t help but see numerous wounded and dead civilians and water buffalo strewn on the ground in the hamlet of My Lai 4 in Son My Village. Thompson decided to land his helicopter in the line of fire between the U.S. troops who were getting ready to fire and another group of terrified civilians about to be executed. Thompson ordered his 18-year-old door gunner Colburn to direct his machine gun at fellow U.S. troops, ordering them to immediately cease their operations. As Hugh Thompson has said many times, “It was just something that had to be done.” In a moment of clarity he merely did what seemed so basically right. The massacre was stopped at that point but not, as it turned out, before 504 civilians had been murdered, most of them women, children, and elderly men, many executed from the back, some in the head.

I shared time with Hugh Thompson and Larry Colburn on several occasions, including marching with them in a VFP contingent in a 4th of July parade in Monterey several years ago. Congressional Medal of Honor recipient Charlie Liteky and singer Country Joe McDonald were also in the parade. The conversations that ensued were incredibly inspiring as we shared stories into the night about individual and collective actions of conscience stemming from a clarity of commitment and striving for a nation based on justice rather than profits.

Ironically, Thompson for years was

snubbed for being “unpatriotic.” Though nearly three dozen soldiers were originally charged for committing war crimes at My Lai, only one, Lieutenant William L. Calley, 24 at the time and commander of Charley Company’s first platoon, was convicted. “Rallies for Calley” were held around the country. Jimmy Carter, then governor of Georgia, Calley’s home state, urged citizens to leave car headlights on to show support for Calley. Thompson, who got death threats, remembers thinking: “Has everyone gone mad?” He feared a court-martial for his command to fire, if necessary, on U.S. soldiers. One congressman was so upset at Calley’s conviction and Thompson’s “interference” that he angrily declared that the only soldier who should have been court-martialed was Thompson himself. Calley’s original life sentence was reduced to 10 years; in 1974, President Nixon paroled him and set him free. Not until 1998 did the Army award Thompson and his two crew members the prestigious Soldier’s Medal. For Andreotta it was a posthumous award since he had been killed in combat on April 8, 1968, twenty-two days after the massacre.

Thinking about Tom and Hugh has ignited memories of the first experiences that forced *me* to make decisions I never thought I would face. I too remembered a clarity emerging after being thrust into intense war situations.

Though I was 27 when I arrived at a small airbase 100 miles south of Saigon in March 1969, I was not particularly mature. Recently having completed USAF ranger training, I was head of a 40-man combat security unit, but also served as a de facto intelligence officer. Already in graduate school at the time I entered the USAF, my life seemed to continue to revolve around the kind of bliss I enjoyed as an athlete in high

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Clarity of Commitment *(from page 3)*

school. It had spoiled me. I didn't know much about the realities of the world. It was pure fun being the slugging first baseman on my championship Babe Ruth League team, as well as on my high school state sectional baseball championship team, and a second team all-conference basketball player during my senior year.

Rude Awakening

The night my unit arrived in Vietnam began a personal rude awakening. As we disembarked the C-130 we came under mortar attack though the rounds landed outside our perimeter. Immediately assigned to be the night security commander, I was responsible for over 130 personnel guarding the flightline and perimeter. As head of combat security at Binh Thuy, known as "mortar alley," the most attacked of all ten USAF airbases in Vietnam, my anxiety stirred me to study numerous intelligence reports to better prepare positioning of fire teams and their machine gunners on the perimeter, and of my two outgoing mortar teams. I moved from bunker to bunker at night carrying illumination parachute flares strapped to my uniform ready to be popped at the slightest evidence of a penetration.

I learned of the ongoing campaigns of the only U.S. ground troops in the densely populated Mekong Delta, the Ninth Infantry Division, along with three Vietnamese Infantry Divisions, all operating in provinces north of our location on the Bassac River, seeking to eliminate the "enemy" between us and Saigon. Their combined operations were claiming 170 kills per day (1200 per week) in four provinces. This was in the beginning months of Nixon's recently launched "Vietnamization" process. Its effort to achieve *huge kill counts* in ground and air operations was intense. Virtually the entire Mekong Delta was a "free fire zone," i.e., a kill-at-will zone. Chemical spraying missions were conducted every two or three days to defoli-

ate vegetation with dioxin-laden Agent Orange and to destroy villager's rice and food crops with arsenic-laden Agent Blue.

The CIA's Provincial Interrogation Center, part of the Phoenix Project, was 8 miles away in Can Tho City where "Viet Cong suspects" were routinely tortured and murdered. There was a U.S. Army airbase 6 miles away that contained a large POW camp, and a Naval riverine patrol base just 2 miles away. An Army evacuation hospital was next door. New planes and pilots were arriving at Binh Thuy Air and Naval base beefing up the South Vietnamese Airforce for accelerated daylight bombing missions and support for river patrols in the 3,000 miles of waterways in the Delta. Admiral Elmo Zumwalt, Commander of Naval Forces in Vietnam, welcomed the new planes in late March. Later, U.S. Navy Secretary John Chafee inspected Binh Thuy Naval and Airbase. On one occasion I chauffeured Vietnamese Vice-President Nguyen Cao Ky from his A-1 Skyraider plane to the Binh Thuy Commander's quarters. Planes were being shot down, the number of dead pilots was mounting. I learned through the grapevine that Nixon had sent U.S. troops into Laos the day I arrived in Vietnam and had launched "secret" bombings of Cambodia my tenth day in country. And Binh Thuy was receiving mortar attacks every two weeks or so, including one that destroyed our mess hall at midnight (and incidentally the air conditioning unit on my trailer). I was overwhelmed even though I was not slogging through waterways or jungles, and rarely carried my M-16.

There were lighter moments. Wes Unseld, the 1968-69 NBA Rookie of the Year and Most Valuable Player with the Baltimore "Bullets," and Milwaukee Bucks guard Jon McGlocklin made a surprise visit. I joined three other G.I.s and we divided up with the two NBA stars to play "three-on-three" on our

lone basketball court.

I wrote regular detailed intelligence reports and sent them by courier to my superiors in Saigon and Phan Rang. Then came the week that would change my life forever. In mid-April, only five weeks after arrival I was asked by Binh Thuy Vietnamese airbase commander to accompany his lieutenant to document the successes of bombing missions by the newly arrived South Vietnamese pilots—i.e., to assess whether or not they were hitting their targets. Between approximately April 11 and April 18 I witnessed the immediate aftermaths of the bombings of five major targets. I was shocked to find the target, in each case, was an undefended, unarmed inhabited fishing/farming village in the southern portions of Vinh Long province immediately across the Bassac River. In that week I witnessed somewhere between 700 and 900 murdered and severely maimed women, children, and elderly men who were left to die and rot on their ancient village lands. I was sick.

I quickly realized that the "enemy" was the Vietnamese people. The kill policy equated to genocide — atrocity committed on top of atrocity. Virtually every villager, every house, every farm animal, every food crop became a target for elimination. To kill was simply routine. I hopped a flight to meet with our intelligence officers in Saigon to discuss what I could hardly believe—an intentional, deliberate systematic policy being waged against the Vietnamese people and their culture; the kills of "VC" a fraud, a cover. The intelligence officers admitted confusion about their own reports which indicated destruction of Viet Cong units only to note that the same unit would appear again a few days later. Of course, the kills were civilians. It was true that virtually the entire population—except career ARVN officers; locally appointed, mostly corrupt political officials; and business people—supported the VC against the U.S.

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military forces and their puppet, mostly unmotivated Vietnamese units. It had never occurred to me, and I was embarrassed to acknowledge, that the political and military forces of the United States were grotesquely intervening to destroy the aspirations of Vietnamese people for independence. We were committing the supreme crime under international law. I regularly conveyed outrage to my peers and superiors.

On August 2, 1969, a courier from Saigon hand delivered a message to me ordering my immediate return to the United States. Before I left, an Army lawyer read me 50 some charges in violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), mostly for sedition. Fortunately, in the end nothing came of those charges.

A Different Drummer

After Vietnam I began my search for an authentic people's version of U.S. history. Vietnam was no aberration, but part of a brutal historic pattern. Our country was founded on deep, racist values that promoted White male oligarch-driven expansion that selfishly assured their own prosperity. Our country's crimes have included waging of "preventive" wars; massive killings of civilians, starting with our native inhabitants; and utilization of terror and genocide through systematic commission of atrocities (war crimes). Self-defense asserted by victims of US aggression is considered an unacceptable crime. In contrast, commission of the supreme crime of aggressive war is rationalized as necessary for national security, to protect "U.S. interests." The make-believe fairy tale had ended for me.

Hooray for people like Tom Harper and Hugh Thompson, and others in VFP who have demonstrated clarity of commitment to a world based on empathy and equity. We need each other as we venture on a revolutionary path guided by a different drummer. As Hugh said. "It just has to be done!"

US Constitution in Grave Danger

by Albert Gore Jr. (submitted by Jim Sorter)

This speech by Al Gore was published on truthout.org on January 16, 2006. Too long to print here in full, it's well worth the time to read in its entirety. For the full text go to <http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/011606Y.shtml>.

Congressman Barr and I have disagreed many times over the years, but we have joined together today with thousands of our fellow citizens—Democrats and Republicans alike—to express our shared concern that America's Constitution is in grave danger.

In spite of our differences over ideology and politics, we are in strong agreement that the American values we hold most dear have been placed at serious risk by the unprecedented claims of the Administration to a truly breathtaking expansion of executive power.

As we begin this new year, the Executive Branch of our government has been caught eavesdropping on huge numbers of American citizens and has brazenly declared that it has the unilateral right to continue without regard to the established law enacted by Congress to prevent such abuses.

It is imperative that respect for the rule of law be restored.

So, many of us have come here to Constitution Hall to sound an alarm and call upon our fellow citizens to put aside partisan differences and join with us in demanding that our Constitution be defended and preserved.

It is appropriate that we make this appeal on the day our nation has set aside to honor the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who challenged America to breathe new life into our oldest values by extending its promise to all our people.

On this particular Martin Luther King Day, it is especially important to recall that for the last several years of his life, Dr. King was illegally wiretapped—one of hundreds of thousands of Americans whose private communications were intercepted by the U.S. government during this period.

The FBI privately called King the "most dangerous and effective negro leader in the country" and vowed to "take him off his pedestal." The government even attempted to destroy his marriage and blackmail him into committing suicide.

This campaign continued until Dr. King's murder. The discovery that the FBI conducted a long-running and extensive campaign of secret electronic surveillance designed to infiltrate the inner workings of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and to learn the most intimate details of Dr. King's life, helped to convince Congress to enact restrictions on wiretapping.

The result was the Foreign Intelligence and Surveillance Act (FISA), which was enacted expressly to ensure that foreign intelligence surveillance would be presented to an impartial judge to verify that there is a sufficient cause for the surveillance. I voted for that law during my first term in Congress and for almost thirty years the system has proven a workable and valued means of according a level of protection for private citizens, while permitting foreign surveillance to continue.

Yet, just one month ago, Americans awoke to the shocking news that in spite of this long settled law, the Executive Branch has been secretly spying on large numbers of Americans for the last four years and eavesdropping on "large volumes of telephone calls, e-mail messages, and other Internet traffic inside the United States." The *New York Times* reported that the President decided to launch this massive eavesdropping program "without search warrants or any new laws that would permit such domestic intelligence collection."

During the period when this eavesdropping was still secret, the President went

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US Constitution in Grave Danger *(from page 5)*

out of his way to reassure the American people on more than one occasion that, of course, judicial permission is required for any government spying on American citizens and that, of course, these constitutional safeguards were still in place.

But surprisingly, the President's soothing statements turned out to be false. Moreover, as soon as this massive domestic spying program was uncovered by the press, the President not only confirmed that the story was true, but also declared that he has no intention of bringing these wholesale invasions of privacy to an end.

At present, we still have much to learn about the NSA's domestic surveillance. What we do know about this pervasive wiretapping virtually compels the conclusion that the President of the United States has been breaking the law repeatedly and persistently.

A president who breaks the law is a threat to the very structure of our government. Our Founding Fathers were adamant that they had established a government of laws and not men. Indeed, they recognized that the structure of government they had enshrined in our Constitution—our system of checks and balances—was designed with a central purpose of ensuring that it would govern through the rule of law. As John Adams said: "The executive shall never exercise the legislative and judicial powers, or either of them, to the end that it may be a government of laws and not of men."

An executive who arrogates to himself the power to ignore the legitimate legislative directives of the Congress or to act free of the check of the judiciary becomes the central threat that the Founders sought to nullify in the Constitution—an all-powerful executive too reminiscent of the King from whom they had broken free. In the words of James Madison, "the accumulation of all powers, legislative, executive, and judiciary, in the same hands, whether of

one, a few, or many, and whether hereditary, self-appointed, or elective, may justly be pronounced the very definition of tyranny."

Thomas Paine, whose pamphlet, "On Common Sense" ignited the American Revolution, succinctly described America's alternative. Here, he said, we intended to make certain that "the law is king."

Vigilant adherence to the rule of law strengthens our democracy and strengthens America. It ensures that those who govern us operate within our constitutional structure, which means that our democratic institutions play their indispensable role in shaping policy and determining the direction of our nation. It means that the people of this nation ultimately determine its course and not executive officials operating in secret without constraint.

The rule of law makes us stronger by ensuring that decisions will be tested, studied, reviewed and examined through the processes of government that are designed to improve policy. And the knowledge that they will be reviewed prevents over-reaching and checks the accretion of power.

A commitment to openness, truthfulness and accountability also helps our country avoid many serious mistakes. Recently, for example, we learned from recently declassified documents that the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, which authorized the tragic Vietnam war, was actually based on false information. We now know that the decision by Congress to authorize the Iraq War, 38 years later, was also based on false information. America would have been better off knowing the truth and avoiding both of these colossal mistakes in our history. Following the rule of law makes us safer, not more vulnerable.

The President and I agree on one thing. The threat from terrorism is all too real. There is simply no question that we continue to face new challenges in

the wake of the attack on September 11th and that we must be ever-vigilant in protecting our citizens from harm.

Where we disagree is that we have to break the law or sacrifice our system of government to protect Americans from terrorism. In fact, doing so makes us weaker and more vulnerable.

Once violated, the rule of law is in danger. Unless stopped, lawlessness grows. The greater the power of the executive grows, the more difficult it becomes for the other branches to perform their constitutional roles. As the executive acts outside its constitutionally prescribed role and is able to control access to information that would expose its actions, it becomes increasingly difficult for the other branches to police it. Once that ability is lost, democracy itself is threatened and we become a government of men and not laws.

The President's men have minced words about America's laws. The Attorney General openly conceded that the "kind of surveillance" we now know they have been conducting requires a court order unless authorized by statute. The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act self-evidently does not authorize what the NSA has been doing, and no one inside or outside the Administration claims that it does. Incredibly, the Administration claims instead that the surveillance was implicitly authorized when Congress voted to use force against those who attacked us on September 11th.

This argument just does not hold any water. Without getting into the legal intricacies, it faces a number of embarrassing facts. First, another admission by the Attorney General: he concedes that the Administration knew that the NSA project was prohibited by existing law and that they consulted with some members of Congress about changing the statute. Gonzalez says that they were told this probably would not be possible.

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So how can they now argue that the Authorization for the Use of Military Force somehow implicitly authorized it all along? Second, when the Authorization was being debated, the Administration did in fact seek to have language inserted in it that would have authorized them to use military force domestically—and the Congress did not agree. Senator Ted Stevens and Representative Jim McGovern, among others, made statements during the Authorization debate clearly restating that that Authorization did not operate domestically.

When President Bush failed to convince Congress to give him all the power he wanted when they passed the AUMF, he secretly assumed that power anyway, as if congressional authorization was a useless bother. But as Justice Frankfurter once wrote: “To find authority so explicitly withheld is not merely to disregard in a particular instance the clear will of Congress. It is to disrespect the whole legislative process and the constitutional division of authority between President and Congress.”

This is precisely the “disrespect” for the law that the Supreme Court struck down in the steel seizure case.

It is this same disrespect for America’s Constitution which has now brought our republic to the brink of a dangerous breach in the fabric of the Constitution. And the disrespect embodied in these apparent mass violations of the law is part of a larger pattern of seeming indifference to the Constitution that is deeply troubling to millions of Americans in both political parties.

For example, the President has also declared that he has a heretofore unrecognized inherent power to seize and imprison any American citizen that he alone determines to be a threat to our nation, and that, notwithstanding his American citizenship, the person imprisoned has no right to talk with a lawyer—even to argue that the President or his appointees have made a mistake

and imprisoned the wrong person.

The President claims that he can imprison American citizens indefinitely for the rest of their lives without an arrest warrant, without notifying them about what charges have been filed against them, and without informing their families that they have been imprisoned.

At the same time, the Executive Branch has claimed a previously unrecognized authority to mistreat prisoners in its custody in ways that plainly constitute torture in a pattern that has now been documented in U.S. facilities located in several countries around the world.

Over 100 of these captives have reportedly died while being tortured by Executive Branch interrogators and many more have been broken and humiliated. In the notorious Abu Ghraib prison, investigators who documented the pattern of torture estimated that more than 90 percent of the victims were innocent of any charges.

This shameful exercise of power overturns a set of principles that our nation has observed since General Washington first enunciated them during our Revolutionary War and has been observed by every president since then—until now. These practices violate the Geneva Conventions and the International Convention Against Torture, not to mention our own laws against torture.

The President has also claimed that he has the authority to kidnap individuals in foreign countries and deliver them for imprisonment and interrogation on our behalf by autocratic regimes in nations that are infamous for the cruelty of their techniques for torture.

...The British Ambassador to Uzbekistan—one of those nations with the worst reputations for torture in its prisons—registered a complaint to his home office about the senselessness and cruelty of the new U.S. practice: “This material is useless—we are selling our souls for dross. It is in fact positively

harmful.”

Can it be true that any president really has such powers under our Constitution? If the answer is “yes” then under the theory by which these acts are committed, are there any acts that can on their face be prohibited? If the President has the inherent authority to eavesdrop, imprison citizens on his own declaration, kidnap and torture, then what can’t he do?

The Dean of Yale Law School, Harold Koh, said after analyzing the Executive Branch’s claims of these previously unrecognized powers: “If the President has commander-in-chief power to commit torture, he has the power to commit genocide, to sanction slavery, to promote apartheid, to license summary execution.”

The fact that our normal safeguards have thus far failed to contain this unprecedented expansion of executive power is deeply troubling. This failure is due in part to the fact that the Executive Branch has followed a determined strategy of obfuscating, delaying, withholding information, appearing to yield but then refusing to do so and dissembling in order to frustrate the efforts of the legislative and judicial branches to restore our constitutional balance.

For example, after appearing to support legislation sponsored by John McCain to stop the continuation of torture, the President declared in the act of signing the bill that he reserved the right not to comply with it.

Similarly, the Executive Branch claimed that it could unilaterally imprison American citizens without giving them access to review by any tribunal. The Supreme Court disagreed, but the President engaged in legal maneuvers designed to prevent the Court from providing meaningful content to the rights of its citizens. ...

The remainder this speech can be found on the truthout website at: <http://www.truthout.org/docs_2006/011606Y.shtml>





**Veterans For Peace
Chapter 56**

**NEW Phone: 707-822-4975
Email: VFP56@aol.com**

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the Web!**



<http://www.vfp56.org>

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Media: Becky Luening
VEOP: Laura Simpson
Carl Stancil**

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 turtldncer@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.

TOM HARPER *(from page 1)*

was happening in his local peace community. Becky Luening remembers his attendance at a meeting of WILPF's Cuba Friendship Committee where he admitted he had never traveled to Cuba, but expressed a desire to do so. When he turned 90, VFP-56 threw a birthday party to raise money for the G.I. Rights Hotline, and members presented Tom with a beautiful glass plaque for his life-long dedication to peace and justice. He was the life of the party, telling jokes about George W. and eating more than his share of birthday cake.

Tom also was an active participant in the Marsh Commons co-housing association where he lived. Marsh Commons residents John Schaeffer and Kit Crosby-Williams, familiar faces at the Friday vigil, were especially fond of him. He was affectionately known as Tomas to his second family from Mendocino, Marlene, Shean, Terry, Marla, Heather, James, and Laura Greenway, to whom he was a friend, father, intellectual companion and confidant.

Tom's brothers and his ex-wife Maureen preceded him in death. He is survived by his sons Richard and Paul of Arizona, his daughter Joan and son-in-law Don Morgan of North Salem, New York; and granddaughters Elizabeth Morgan and Katherine Morgan.

The family welcomes memorial contributions to Veterans for Peace.



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