



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

FOGHORN READERS RESPOND: HOW TO SPEND ONE MILLION DOLLARS FOR VETS

By Mashaw McGuinnis

No one in their right mind would proclaim that veterans have too many benefits. But with so many areas in the country depending on Obama's stimulus money just to keep them afloat, veterans are not exactly holding their breath for that money to reach their pockets. Recently, the North Coast Journal ran a story about Congressman Mike Thompson's list of appropriations requests for Humboldt County. The article lists a total of 15 areas, totaling \$44 million, mostly having to do with public health, salmon and the watersheds.

That gave us an opportunity to, at least fantasize about what it would be like if Thompson earmarked some of that for the people who served in the military. The question was: "If Thompson were to receive, say \$1 million for veterans in Humboldt, and you were on the committee to see how the money was utilized, what services would you implement?" Education and employment opportunities are certainly important for vets to reintegrate back into society. But how can we address those issues when our neighborhoods are bursting with wounded and traumatized young people who need treatment and medication simply to function in a civilian world? Here are some of the thoughtful responses to that question:

FRED HUMMEL: From what I read lately, I would think money would be well spent providing more effective treatment for Vets suffering from PTS or TBIs in both physical and mental health services. Having those services more available within our own CD makes sense, too.

STEVE SATTONG: I think the three most pressing needs are housing, mental health and job training. We need both transitional housing for returning veterans and long-term shelter for homeless vets. As you well know, we have a lot of homeless vets on the North Coast. They need quiet, restful, uncrowded housing as they transition back into society. And the reason most of them are homeless is because of mental health problems. The biggest of these problems is post-traumatic stress disorder and it's epidemic among veterans. The VA isn't doing enough and the county doesn't have the funds to do more. Adding more veteran's counselors could help to bring some of these homeless vets out of the trees and back into society where they rightly belong. And once they're ready, they'll need job training to get them employed so they can be permanently reintegrated into the country they fought for but which is not giving them the help they deserve.

JOHN SCHAEFER: Veterans' mental health!

ELLEN BRYANT: We need a Vet's Walk-in Clinic.... the medical VA clinic here sucks regarding getting care in a timely fashion.

ROB HEPBURN: I would spend the money on the homeless vets and especially ones with PTSD.

RICH GILCHRIST: I would like to see the Eureka veterans housing complex moved along. Possibly the facility could include dining and meeting rooms where veterans could meet and talk over common problems.

KINDRICK OWNBY: I think a high priority task would be to help homeless veterans get into housing of some sort. I understand that many, many veterans are on the street, and they deserve so much more.

JIM SORTER: I believe that veteran housing and homeless veterans is a major issue, not only in Humboldt County, but throughout the United States. If I could influence Thompson to do something for veterans it would be to open shelters and give medical attention, including psychiatric help, to veterans who do not have the means, physically or mentally, to take care of their own needs.

CAROLYN GOLDAMMER: I think I'd say a halfway house type setting, with counseling, job/educational counseling, rehab, gardens, some type of little to no drug/alcohol policy while staying there. A million dollars could go a long way if part of it were put in a safe foundation for perpetuating an income. Vets would, of course, know the best policies and services.

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Survey: Continued from page 1

MARC KNIPPER: I would secure enough rural land to create a space for returning veterans and their families to simply 'be' and receive support and services to meet their individual needs. Funding would also support Adventure based therapies, tactile and solium based therapies, counseling, yoga, message therapies, and more, without red tape or time limits. It would be veterans helping veterans by providing opportunities, skill development, trauma management, and healing techniques to veterans and their families.

By providing "wrap around" services for the entire family, with realistic and open ended time frames. The environment and culture in which the veterans find themselves will evolve into a supportive environment of understanding and care in which the veteran can thrive, heal and succeed. Reducing or eliminating the suicide rate of returning veterans and breaking the cycle of trauma known as Post Traumatic Stress, within the veteran and their family. To recreate a functional existence rather than the dysfunctional culture we have suffered with as a product of past wars.

JUDI ROSE: The first thing that comes to mind is health care with a strong emphasis on psychological services. Mental health services which address the atrocities which may have been experienced and how to process and move beyond those. Counseling to fit back into civilian society. Family counseling (for the families) whether their is spouse and/or children or if it is just readjusting to the nuclear family (parents, siblings etc) Money for education programs whether it be to acquire a college degree or vocational training. Oh yes, give Marc (Knipper) a good size chunk to help the Veteran's Village become a reality!

NATE LOMBA: The main problem I have with the scenario you present is that this is a typical ploy of politicians and government in general: "We'll distract 'them' with a little money and 'they'll' forget about the greater problem."

What I refer to has to do with one of the points in VFP's Statement of Purpose, to wit: "... to abolish war as an instrument of national policy."

The US military budget is now well over one trillion dollars (1 followed by 12 zeros). So what if mike thompson (no capitalization for improper pronouns) garners one million dollars for veterans in HumCo! That's 0.0001 percent of the military budget. So what if he garners ten million; that's a mere 0.001 percent of the military budget. I want the entire one trillion dollars, or whatever it is, appropriated for the entire country and then we could talk about apportioning that sum on the basis of the veteran population within each county, nationwide.

We are easily distracted by a sum like one million dollars because, relative to our existence, that's a lot of money. But it's a pittance in the big picture! That's the whole point of the exercise. The entire debate, and competition for the money, is intended to distract us---the taxpayers---from the big picture; the real goal.

So, I decline to play mike's game. I say: "Make it all or nothing!" Show your true colors mike! Of course, as a Blue Dog Democrat, I know where mikey stands. He is firmly entrenched in the pockets of the M+I (military, industrial) complex and an avowed "hawk," in my opinion.

But, I decline to fight over table scrapes. I would choose to throw it back in mike's face and call him the coward that I consider him to be. Things must get worse before people will rise up from their cushions and throw mike---and all like him---out of political office. But that's what's required in order to effect the change that VFP stands for.

Wage Peace! Abolish War!

** Ironically, the Veteran's Administration website list their vision as: "To provide veterans the world-class benefits and services they have earned – and to do so by adhering to the highest standards of compassion, commitment, excellence, professionalism, integrity, accountability, and stewardship".

Member Update: Dave Berman on Advocacy Journalism

Have you ever wondered what we could achieve if the media was a tool we could use rather than a weapon (of mass deception) from which we must protect ourselves? If we can be clear about our goals, then using the media represents an opportunity to interact and organize; to educate and inspire; and to lead by example, both in the public service work we do (formerly called activism) and in how progressives view and use media.

This shift in thinking illustrates what I have called advocacy journalism over the past seven years. It is on display in hundreds of articles I've written at the We Do Not Consent and GuvWurld blogs, and will soon start appearing in video form at my new blog, Manifest Positivity (see links below). I intend to use this new

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**NEXT VFP 56
MEETING IS
SCHEDULED FOR MAY
7th, 843 EIGHTH
STREET IN
EUREKA**



Veteran Caregivers: Continued from page 2

video site to demonstrate that this approach will be even more effective as a talk show.

Meanwhile, I'm spreading the notion by joining the VFP-56 media committee and submitting content for the Foghorn. I'm also working with Joe Shermis to publish this July issue #51 of the venerable independent Humboldt magazine, The Steelhead Special. In an interesting overlap of the two, the Steelie will feature an interview with Marc Knipper about Veterans Spirit at Incopah, another project I'm working on.

The Foghorn has been on a roll lately and I hope we will continue to see increased submissions from chapter members. Let's make our newsletter more than just an historical record of what was going on at this time and turn it into a vehicle that really helps us make peace and abolish war.

Find more of Dave's work at:

<http://ManifestPositivity.blogspot.com>

<http://WeDoNotConsent.blogspot.com>

<http://GuvWurld.blogspot.com>

Veteran Caregivers-The Parents

By Richard Gilchrist

Medical science always makes major improvements during wars. Each war produces unique life-saving procedures.

For example, the First World War gave rise to plastic surgery because of the large number of facial wounds.

During the Second World War, the use of penicillin, sulfa drugs, and blood plasma saved thousands of lives.

The major improvement in the survival rate of those wounded in battle since WWII has been due to the improvements in the evacuation of the wounded from the battlefield. In WWII, out of 100 wounded, 38 died, with the rate showing a steady improvement with each conflict since that time. In Vietnam, the death rate was 28 per 100 wounded. In the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts, the rate has improved to 6 deaths per 100. The rapid evacuation and the excellent battlefield medical facilities have set world emergency care standards.

A cost is associated with the improved survival rates. With the improved protective equipment that the soldiers have been issued and the type of weapons used against them, many of the wounds have involved the head and extremities. Many of the troops that do survive their wounds will never be able to return to a life of independent self-care.

The Wounded Warrior Project has estimated that over 10,000 veterans depend upon their parents for their daily care. The parents find themselves doing procedures usually performed by skilled medical caregivers. Bathing and dressing their adult children may begin their

busy day. Their day continues with cleansing burn wounds, cleaning suction drainage tubes, and assisting normal body functions. To make matters worse, the parents often have to fight the government for the veteran's benefits. The parents and other caregivers face a lifetime nursing commitment to their veterans.

I wonder how many of the parents that were so proud when their son or daughter marched off to war would like to go back in time...

Each additional day that we have troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, the number of broken bodies returned to their parents will increase. More families will carry the lifetime burden that did not have to be because of wars that did not have to happen. We need to do all that we can do to bring our troops home.

WATCHMAN

Review By Larry Hourany

I just saw the film Watchmen. If you go expecting a conventional movie viewing you will probably be disappointed. There is no protagonist, no conventional narrative, and no "message" (at least not one relevant to our times). But if you go open to a stunning experience you will not be disappointed. It will expand your vistas.

Homeless Vets Trying To Integrate

By Mashaw McGuinnis

Imagine for a moment that you are a veteran whose only income is disability or social security. That fixed income doesn't stretch far enough to rent a place in Humboldt county, especially if you have medical bills and want to eat a couple of times a day. Sure there are low-income residences which are government subsidized, but to get into one you can expect a typical waiting period of two years. One homeless veteran recently told me that since the aftermath of the Hurricane Katrina disaster, even subsidized places with waiting lists are no longer accepting single people without children. So what would you do?

California's climate is so mild that people who lack the resources for shelter naturally gravitate here, but some areas of Humboldt County seem to be overflowing with homeless folks. How much can we do as individuals, to help our homeless veterans? If we were in their shoes, how much would we like to be done for us? Where do we draw the line between helping them out and trying to control their lives? When someone is standing in the parking lot of the grocery store with a sign that says "Homeless Vet" what are you prompted to do?

A) Hand the person a few bucks and wish them well?

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Homeless Vets Trying to Integrate: Continued from page 3

- B) Buy them a sandwich and talk to them for 10 minutes?
- C) Invite them to come home with you?

Probably every person reading this has experienced just such a scenario with similar quandaries.

My partner Carl (a Viet Nam war veteran), and I often compare stories at the end of our day, about these types of interactions. We share the stories we've heard, expressed to each other how badly we felt, and wondered out loud what could have done or should have done. Recently we reached out to a homeless vet and learned that the problem takes more than a couple of caring people. Taking care of our homeless vets indeed takes a whole community.

In early March we met a fellow who was very nice, clean and homeless. "Mike" was camping near Trinidad where we had seen him before and given him a ride. Our conversation with him revealed that like Carl, Mike had served in the navy. The 46 year old vet was fairly upbeat for someone who was living on the streets and suffered from serious health problems. He had recently undergone open heart surgery and was taking a myriad of pharmaceuticals, including blood pressure medicine, narcotic painkillers and even anti-anxiety medication. Looking like he was in good physical shape, Mike eagerly revealed his scar to me, which ran vertically down the middle of his chest. His eagerness to display his scar made me wonder if he had grown accustomed to people automatically disbelieving what he said, simply because he was homeless. Not the kind of life one would expect after serving one's country for eight years.

Without a tent he said, it had been a challenge for him to stay dry. It seemed he was forced to travel light now because the heart surgery severely limited his physical stamina. He was resigned to stop one of his medications because it made him so lethargic and weak that even carrying a light pack was impossible. Talking with Mike made the wet, drizzly afternoon seem even colder. He was polite and sincere and after all, a veteran, and weren't we supposed to take care of our own? We had an extra room so we invited him home with us, hoping we could help him back on his feet.

Once back at our place, our no-longer-homeless vet was thrilled to have a warm bed regardless of the lumpiness of the mattress. After a meal, a hot shower and freshly laundered clothes, he was understandably grateful. He was talkative and jovial, but when asked questions about his predicament he was hesitant to get too personal. He said simply it was uncomfortable to revisit the past for many reasons, and told us of being questioned repeatedly by people who simply saw his situation as a novelty. He expressed amazement at some people's ignorance and said one of the stupidest things he had ever been asked was "how do people like you go to the bathroom"? I cringed, thinking of how I would feel being asked that. It seemed since Mike was lacking the physical boundary of four walls and a door then society assumed he had no personal boundaries as well.

Another obstacle Mike faced was getting into the V.A. to sign some documents that would release some much-needed funds into

his bank account. It seemed the V.A. had tight security would not allow him to bring his backpack inside. The pack contained everything he owned and since he had no safe place to leave it he had been putting off the transaction. We happily offered to hold his pack at our house as well as drive him to the V.A. the next day.

Things seemed to be going well, but we began to notice small signs that integrating with regular society was not easy for him. He seemed pleased to help us cook dinner and be productive but when it was time to eat he couldn't bring himself to sit at the table with us. He also drank more than his share of wine. Afterwards he asked 6 or 7 times if he "did OK" at dinner and repeatedly asked if his homemade corn bread was well received. He seemed to need a lot of reassurance, and it was obvious that he was out of practice at social situations. We felt empathetic and figured it would smooth itself out.

Later when we were winding down for the evening we noticed he seemed restless. He announced that he had an acquaintance down the street and wanted to stop over there for a visit and we thought nothing of it. When he returned later he stood outside our door, and the smell of marijuana drifted up over our balcony. We weren't necessarily concerned, after all we had not discussed any smoking rules ahead of time, only telling him that neither of us smoked. He seemed content and we expected that we would all turn in soon but it turned out that Mike was just getting started.

An hour or so after we went to bed we still heard him rummaging around downstairs. Clinking dishes and pans, and listening to music. Once in awhile he let out a line from a song. We were already feeling uneasy so when it went on past midnight we each took a turn going downstairs, asking him to turn in so we could sleep. By that time he helped himself to every bit of alcohol in our kitchen and was quite loud and intoxicated. I remembered his narcotic pain medication, and started worrying about the effects of his mixing those with alcohol. By three A.M. he was still making noise and by then we had passed the point of uneasiness were feeling downright unsafe, realizing that no matter how nice he seemed we really didn't know this man or what he was capable of. We reluctantly agreed that in the morning we would have to tell him to leave.

We had to wake him up at 10:00 and though things were a bit awkward when we told him the news, there was no resistance. He was savvy enough to know it was not going to work out. The saddest part though was when Carl told Mike quite frankly that last night we both felt threatened. Mike said simply "that's the way I feel all the time".

We figured we would soften the blow by renting him a motel room, thereby giving him the safe place to leave his pack and enabling him to take care of his business at the V.A. When we dropped him off at the motel he said he didn't want to go to the V.A. but would probably just sleep all day, and I wondered if he wasn't a little hung over. We paid for the room, and both hugged

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Homeless Vet: Continued from page 4

him. We told him it had been a pleasure, which was not completely untrue. I was glad that we at least got to feed him, offer him a warm bed and shower. We said goodbye and drove away.

A few weeks had passed and I saw Mike again outside of an Arcata coffee house. He stood outside, laughing and talking to some young people who were selling handmade jewelry. The thought crossed my mind that his happy-go-lucky attitude must be a coping mechanism. He had learned to survive in his world by coming across as likeable, no matter how miserable or scared he was on the inside. I remembered his being asked that question about how he went to the bathroom, and could easily imagine him smiling politely and coming up with a joke to respond. I felt a sense of loss as I walked past him, unnoticed into the coffee house.

I realize now that Carl and I should've done things differently. We neglected to set boundaries up front, or put a time limit on Mike's staying with us. We didn't discuss things in advance like smoking pot or limiting alcohol consumption. We were naive and thinking with our hearts. But in retrospect, what else could we/should we have done differently? The task of reintegrating a vet like Mike was too big for just the two of us. He needed a multitude of services and obviously the V.A. just isn't enough. I invite other VFP members to submit their ideas and share any similar experiences to the Foghorn, in trying to tackle this problem of helping our homeless vets. As the well-known African proverb goes "It takes a village..."

Neighbors

Living side by side
yet worlds apart
identical on the inside
so what makes it start?

Why can't they get along?
these enemies at heart
why is their hate so strong?
they really are not smart

Peace is not that easy
or so they say
it's really pretty sleazy
to have people dying every day

If they would only stop to think
that we are all just people
who are trying to get in sync
I believe - war would be obsolete

Dave Berman, 1987

A MURMUR OF WAR

By San Fernando Curt

http://tpmcafe.talkingpointsmemo.com/talk/blogs/san_fernando_curt/2009/04/murmur-of-war.php?ref=reccafe

My childhood supper table occasionally was buffeted by war. That happens with parents of World War II-vintage, whenever they dropped the carefully attended screens concealing that singular, spiritual minefield of their youth. My father was a gunner's mate who rotted away four years on a Pacific-based "tin can" destroyer, sailing from boredom and apathy to earth-rending horror, and back again, to paraphrase Thomas Heggen's Navy pastorate. Back in the states, my mom walked a nerve-wracked zombie's tightrope, married to a paratrooper who narrowly missed getting his fool Texas head shot off in snowy Belgian fields during the last Christmas time before peace.

They didn't talk much about their memories except to recover the asides, the "backstage" stuff of rare humor and carefree fun, those moments when the shock and awe of that lethal passage seemed, for a few moments, distant and tamed. There'd be long, shaggy-dog stories about getting transferred to Pearl Harbor and ending up in a Boston navy yard. There'd be tales of cross-country drives with long-ago best friends, of bed bugs and devastating, corrosive worry - the life of a military "camp follower".

All this could be backed up with evidence - old photos with saw-tooth borders, those primitive 75 rpm records available from arcade recording booths, filled with hope and desperation all scratched into thin layers of enamel. There was, also, testimony from relatives. My mom's brother-in-law served with her long-divorced mate, and could legitimate any reports she'd gleaned from his filtered, guarded correspondence. In fact, all their friends and family played some role, or had some insight, in that massive ambiguity that had torn such a hole in their lives, that common experience they almost fur-tively called "the war".

There was one relative who came a few years too late to serve actively. His war was Korea, and like the rest of the "silent generation", he went without a peep. Long after my childhood, and even after Vietnam had so upended our ideas about service and sacrifice, he talked about that war for the first time.

After a year or so of fast-moving, wide-ranging combat, the Korean War settled into a two-year stalemate, the kind of entrenchment and attrition not seen since the days of fruitless, stupid slaughter along the Western Front. Endless battle dispatches and casualty figures slowly faded from the front pages of newspapers as the conflict's routine made it of secondary concern to a newly booming postwar America.

"People say Korea is the forgotten war," he said. "But it had been forgotten long before it ended."

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Murmur of War: Continued from page 5

I think of him now, often when I think of Iraq. Beset by meltdown and torture, a resurgent Afghanistan, uncertain future and eight years of bizarre, shameful past, Iraq seems a faraway memory, something that once gripped us tightly - like World War II confronted earlier generations, grim as a draft notice and uniform as fence post. Iraq has receded, silently, peacefully into the distance, behind us.

But the killing has not.

Eleven American soldiers have died this month, so far, while at least 30 have been wounded; the death toll has already surpassed the total in March, and is the highest monthly toll since early last year. Two years after the much-touted troop surge was to have put to sleep all Iraq's restive insurrection, and more that six years after the war began, the ancient country, birthplace of human civilization, remains a place very uncivilized, very dangerous.

In a piece for Antiwar.com this week entitled "The Next Forgotten War," Ryan McCarl writes: Americans are leaving the Iraq War behind; it is seen as an embarrassing episode, best unmentioned in polite company. The Obama administration is stacked with liberal hawks who supported the Iraq War, and figures from the former Bush administration are signing book deals and making the rounds of press conferences and interviews, propagating meae culpa of the "mistakes were made" sort. A war of choice is being quietly transformed into an unfortunate but ultimately unavoidable mistake, one caused not by politicians and public intellectuals cocooned in their hubris and their reckless ideologies, but by an "intelligence failure."

It is possible that Americans feel that, having elected a president who had the courage and foresight to oppose the Iraq War from the beginning, we have done our penance and can now move on with our national political life. There is no talk of holding any of the national leaders who dreamed of and executed the war accountable; the idea of war-crimes trials for the leaders of a rampaging superpower is a pipe-dream, far removed from political reality. And so while the Iraqi and American families who lost everything in the war struggle to find stability and rebuild their lives, the great majority of Americans are far too concerned with the sudden evaporation of their wealth, savings, and jobs to spare a moment to reflect on Iraq.

It appears sometimes, as we debate the war, that we want as much to bring out the troops, or at least shrug off our share of the violence, as we do to somehow absolve ourselves of any responsibility for bombing and shooting many parts of the country either fully back to the Stone Age or at least to a level at which demand for infrastructure is fulfilled by a hole in the ground to dump dung, garbage and the dead.

We forgot somewhere along the way Colin Powell's admonition. We broke Iraq. Now we own it. This rotting albatross around our necks is strangling us.

There is a lot there that haunts. A photo from The Age comes to mind, from 2004, early on really: A child sits in bombed out rubble,

his face buried in his hands. A U.S. airstrike in Fallujah had wiped out... enemy... civilians. Both. At some point, does it matter? Is there a dividing line when we're there, from the outside, from far away, killing them? How can we not be "the enemy" to them all?

As if bearing testimony to the pressure, to the grinding margin to which they're pressed by "stop loss" - our Pentagon-certified Shanghai gambit to keep troops in ranks long after their legitimate enlistments have ended - the Army Times reports 13 soldier suicides this month, bringing to 56 dead the 2009 total.

As many as 143 soldier suicides were reported in 2008, the fourth year in a row the Army has seen an increase in suicides, and leaders have said factors such as the stress of deployments and personal relationships played a role in the deaths.

There is no breakdown of where the suicides took place, or whether the dead soldiers had served or were serving in combat theaters like Iraq and Afghanistan. Maybe that's not surprising. The Pentagon is sensitive to how we feel about the war; after all, they have just recently, on orders from President Obama, allowed photos of our fallen. There is an odd note about suicide rates lower among those with multiple deployments, but, again, no mention of those deployments' locations.

Stress can kill. It does so slowly or with a bullet. A little glimpse of the sheer, high-tension craziness of Iraq punched through a story on the Baquba suicide bombing in The New York Times this week:

The bomber, wearing an Iraqi special forces uniform and a hidden explosive vest, blew himself up around 10 a.m. outside the city's administrative office on Tabu Street, north of Baquba's center, shortly after the American troops arrived in armored vehicles, the witnesses and officials said. "It seems he was waiting for them to arrive," said the chairman of Baquba's city council, Raad al-Dehleky.

...The Americans opened fire immediately after the blast. "There was random shooting everywhere," said Hamid al-Zaidy, who was on his way to the city's electricity department when the explosion occurred. "I lay on the ground because the American forces were in a complete state."

Baquba is the capital of the Diyala province, and is filled with a full complement of Iraq's allergic sects - Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds. An odd wind-up to the story notes:

Another provincial council member, who spoke only on the condition of anonymity for fear of his safety, warned that the attacks would intensify. "Armed groups are working to make the situation unstable to prevent the American forces from withdrawing from Diyala," he said.

Is this a typo? Does the writer mean the attacks are meant to

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Murmur of War: Continued from page 6

accelerate the American withdrawal. Why wouldn't enemy forces what us to leave? Why wouldn't they battle to drive out American soldiers? Do they, in delusional frenzy evidently endemic in that part of the world, expect to militarily trap our high-tech forces in this cow-shit province of adobe metropolis and roadside bombs?

Or is this another indication of the shadowy, indefinite nature of this long slog? Are the attackers our daytime "allies" who simply want to spike the violence, the bloodshed, so we'll abandon this silly draw-down talk and stick around for a full John McCain century, tooling Mesopotamian democracy and birthing liberated babies in the backs of Humvees?

If so, just who the hell are we fighting over there? And why?

Why wouldn't enemy forces what us to leave? Maybe they fear they would be crushed by their enemies soon afterward.

COMMENTS BY READERS:

WWII was not forgotten because the entire nation fought it. The women went to the factories. About all the men went to war. Every "real man" was expected to go. Korea was forgotten, at least in the collective sense, because only a few went. Same with Vietnam. Same with Afghanistan and Iraq.

Forgotten? Not really. I spent a year in Vietnam. No one who was there will forget it. None of the women who lost their husband will forget it. None of the parents who lost a child.

Just after WWII I would ask my mom "Who won the war?" She would answer "We did" but I would press her "I know, but what was his name?" It was because I had developed a very specific vision of the war in my mind. I mean, I was really young, and all that war talk had filtered in as my mind was forming. There were three or four or five soldiers who were all dodging and hiding behind bushes shooting at each other. Every man for himself. What's really weird is that many years later I was driving on 99E between Red Bluff and Chico in Northern California, and I came to a large S curve, and that was the spot - it was the exact terrain of my childhood vision of the war.

It's a pointless anecdote, I suppose. It's just that I wonder what it would be like for a child to develop and hone its consciousness in a world without war. In the history of the future, will there ever be the headline: "The World's Last Vet Buys the Ranch!"

There is a dog next to me. A boxer chow cross with a big square boxer head and a mottled chow tounge. His 82d Airborne Division owner called me one early morning from Afghanistan and told me his wife was going to take the dog to the pound unless someone would adopt it. A few days later his wife informed him she did not want him either, and the divorced military counter ticked up another notch.

There is a guinea pig in a cage downstairs. A long haired furball that belonged to a child who lived next door. He was recruited by Marines on patrol in his high school and they signed him up before I

had a chance to talk to him about it. He asked if we could keep Lilly Mae while he was gone. She will be staying a while. He has a beautiful grave site in our National Cemetery. It is up on a ridge with the mountains he loved behind and a sweeping view of the city to the west.

We've learned that we can move on. The nation has turned their backs on the dopey nonsense of Bush II, and our united lack of commitment to his project is obvious.

WWII was different. The population was smaller, and the war was bigger. We understood Tripoli and Saipan, but Baquba? Tikrit?

Remember that before the end of WWII, the map looked a lot different. The states we fight in now weren't there.

Submitted by Nate Lomba

Fundraiser for Afghanistan School

By Judi Rose

Union Street Charter School on the Equinox Campus is having a yard sale to raise funds to send to Kabul. The money will be used by teachers Malia and Zarmina Faizi to buy school supplies for their poor students.

Equinox is the elementary school Sunny Rose attended. Many of his teachers are still teaching at the school. Malia and Zarmina are the sisters of Samad Faizi, Sunny's Afghan interpreter whom he befriended while serving in Afghanistan.

All 80 students of Union Street Charter have written and received pen pal letters from students in Kabul. The fourth grade students are currently working with their amazing art teacher, Jan Ramsey, painting murals of their classroom life in Arcata to send to their friends in Kabul.

The yard sale takes place Saturday May 9th, 9:00am to 3:00pm on the Arcata Equinox Campus at 470 Union Street.

If you have items you would like to donate for the sale please contact Judi Rose 822 2142 or rosebuds@humboldt1.com

MAY MEETING AGENDA

Items for the agenda for the May VFP56 meeting will be accepted until May 5th. Please submit all agenda items to Jim at turtldncer@aol.com prior to that date.





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Chapter 56**

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LEADERSHIP TEAM

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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.

VFP National Convention - 2009 University of Maryland, College Park Campus

REGISTRATION OPTIONS:

Full Convention - \$200

This includes the entire convention, including the plenary sessions, workshops, banquet, and special events. * This is an early bird registration fee, price goes to \$225 during June, and goes to \$250 after July 1st. REGISTER EARLY!

Banquet - \$45

This is for the banquet ONLY.

One or Two Day Attendance - \$75 / \$150

This is for one or two days of convention attendance. Perfect for those who cannot attend the entire convention. (Thursday will include the Opening Plenary, workshops, and possibly other events, Friday will include workshops and an evening community event).

*There are several prices available for the VFP Convention. Please pay attention to the option you choose.

Convention Contacts: The 2009 VFP Convention is being co-hosted by:

VFP 016 - Delwin Anderson Memorial Chapter, Washington D.C.

VFP 105 - Phil Berrigan Memorial Chapter, Baltimore, MD

For more information contact Ellen Barfield at ellene4pj@yahoo.com

Patrick McCann at unityact2@aol.com

Veterans For Peace
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