



## MEETING REMINDER

VFP-56's next meeting takes place Thursday, November 3rd, at 7:00 pm at the Marsh Commons, 101 H Street, in Arcata.

## PTSD DISORDER?

As many as 1 of every 10 soldiers from the war on terror evacuated to the Army's biggest hospital in Europe was sent there for mental problems.

Between 8 and 10 percent of nearly 12,000 soldiers from the "war on terror," mostly from Iraq, treated at the Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany had "psychiatric or behavioral health issues," according to the commander of the hospital, Col. Rhonda Cornum.

That means about 1,000 soldiers were evacuated for mental problems.

The hospital has treated 11,754 soldiers from the war on terror, with 9,651 from Iraq and the rest from Afghanistan, according to data released by the hospital.

**MORE INFORMATION  
TO BE FOUND AT:**  
[www.antiwar.com/casualties](http://www.antiwar.com/casualties)

**Also see "Healing from PTSD" by Dr. Paige Alisen on page 4.**

## Recruiters Back in Schools – So is VFP

*by Fred Hummel*

At the end of the spring semester, military recruiters, pressured by their inability to meet recruitment quotas for many months, seemingly went berserk. Reports of improper activities—up to and including threats to prosecute recruits if they changed their minds about signing up—were so rampant in the usually supportive mainstream media that all military recruitment was halted for one day while recruiters were given refresher courses.

Now that the fall semester is upon us, those "refreshed" recruiters will be back in our schools hawking the military life to impressionable high school students. We are not so gullible as to believe recruiters will have turned over a new leaf and will now start giving young people a full and accurate portrayal of what faces them once they sign that contract.

Here's where VFP comes in. Members of our VEOP (Veterans Education and Outreach Program) Committee are preparing to increase the presence they made last year in high schools and special schools throughout north and central Humboldt County. That first year's experience is helping VEOP get off to a flying start since many of the initial contacts with educators have already been made and many of our members now have classroom experience.

To upgrade our ability to function effectively, VEOP will now be led by co-chairs rather than by a single leader. The logistical challenges for going into classrooms may not be readily apparent, but they are real. Both co-chairs, Laura Simpson and Carl Stancil, are well-experienced in this process and are capable of ensuring that our members are adequately prepared when they are scheduled into classrooms.

We do not tell students they should not enlist. Our charge is to inform them of the realities of military life and to debunk the one-sided sales pitches often given them by the recruiting salesmen. We want them to be fully informed when they consider making a decision that may be the most important of their

life. Our own experience in the service plus the fact that we do this work as unpaid volunteers gives our presentations credibility few others can match.

As opportunities to speak to students increase, your VEOP Committee needs more volunteers (members or associates) to help ensure our kids are getting a balanced and honest image of life in the military. Please consider joining us. We are beginning a series of training sessions for new members who don't feel quite confident enough to jump in cold turkey. E-mail Laura, [contact143@hotmail.com](mailto:contact143@hotmail.com) or Carl, [carlstancil@cox.net](mailto:carlstancil@cox.net) if you'd like to help or want to learn more. We—and the kids—sure need you.

## Opting Out From the Military at Age 14

*by Fred Hummel*

Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which most people believed dealt with education "reform" had a little goodie for our military tucked into its fine print. Any private or public secondary school that received federal funds would henceforth have to turn over personal information about each student to the military or else risk losing those federal funds. Suddenly, 13 and 14 year-olds were fair game for recruiters. No wonder some call NCLB the No Child Left Unrecruited Act.

To promote the image that the Feds weren't really strong-arming local school districts, a provision of the act allowed parents to deny their children's info to the military (opt out) providing they submitted a signed form at the start of every school year. Trouble is, most school districts simply added the opt out form to the bulky information packet they sent to students' homes at the start of each Fall semester. Return rates of those forms were often in the single digits.

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# VA Lets Veterans Down

by Rose Aguilar

Twenty-five-year-old Michael Thomas, a member of the Navy since December 2002, was on the ship that fired the first tomahawks on Baghdad in March 2003. He was discharged for psychological problems three months later.

When I met Thomas at the Veterans Affairs (VA) Hospital in Muskogee, Oklahoma, he was still visibly shaken by the experience. On his "bad days," he locks himself in his room. "I usually don't talk to anyone. I usually cry and get depressed. No one sees it because I isolate myself."

Like tens of thousands of veterans, when Thomas returned to the states, he attended a class about federal benefits. "They send you to a three-hour course and give you a book. If you don't ask questions, you won't get the answers," he says. "I'm still trying to get my claim. I filed it in December. If it wasn't for my cousin, I wouldn't know what to do."

Michael's cousin Dennis Hammons was a member of the Marine Corps from June 1993 to August 1997. Hammons, 30, was discharged in 1996 after he experienced a parachute malfunction and fell 500 feet at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. Hammons suffers from post-traumatic stress syndrome and has knee, back and neck injuries.

"I'm one of the people that falls through the cracks. I was in during Clinton's police actions," he says. "I was all over Liberia and Rwanda. I got stabbed and there's no record of it. I'm not eligible for benefits because it didn't happen during a conflict. They wrap a lot of that stuff under humanitarian awards. As soon as I got hurt, I was treated like a piece of crap."

Hammons says the claim he filed with the VA took 14 months to process; it took another four months to get into the VA medical system. "My experience with the VA has been horrible. I go to a private doctor for pain meds. If I need to see a doctor here [at the VA], it takes

three to four months to get an appointment," he says. "I took my son down a slide, which wasn't real smart, and I couldn't walk. I had pain shooting down my arm and leg. That happened in April. I got in the second week of July. That's how it is here."

Robert Piaro, a Vietnam veteran who serves as the volunteer president of the California Veterans Assistance Foundation, a non-profit organization of veterans helping veterans, says he's seeing Iraq veterans with intense cases of

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*"I understand the bureaucracies; I understand budget problems, but man if you're gonna send young men and women to war, you've got to take care of them."*

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posttraumatic stress syndrome who have no idea what's available when they return.

"These guys are so frustrated," he says. "I understand the bureaucracies; I understand budget problems, but man if you're gonna send young men and women to war, you've got to take care of them."

The CVAF receives 95 percent of its funding through grants. "If the American public actually knew of the deficiencies in VA healthcare, they would be outraged," says David Gorman, executive director of the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), a 1.2 million-member group that represents disabled veterans. "It's really changed to become an us against them-type mentality on Capitol Hill. Right now the Republicans have the majority and they flex their muscle whenever they have a chance. It doesn't do the country any good and doesn't do the

vets any good."

In April, Republican senators, including Rick Santorum, R-Pa., John McCain, R-Ariz. and Tom Coburn, R-Okla., voted to defeat a Democratic effort to add \$2 billion to the 2005 VA healthcare budget. The only Republican who voted in favor of the bill was Senator Arlen Specter, R-Pa.

"Democrats are the ones supporting the troops. Republicans aren't supporting us," says Bill Huber, Disabled American Veterans Hospital Coordinator in Muskogee, Oklahoma and Korean Veteran. "I'm 71 years old and I've been around a while. The problem is, veterans don't protest. We take what we get. I'm the president of our DAV chapter and I tell my people to write to their congressmen. They just sit back and let our lobbyists do it. They can't do it by themselves; we have to help them."

Huber's group provides transportation to vets who have no means of getting to their VA appointments. The transportation service relies on donations to pay for vans, and volunteers to pick up and drop off veterans, including some who live as far as three hours away.

"We have a breakfast fundraiser once every three months and the only ones that will come are our members. We have that fundraiser so we can go on with our projects, but we don't get support [from the locals]. That's disheartening," says Huber.

The transportation service was recently asked to cut back its operations by 45 percent because of lack of funding, but the director refused to sign on. "What kind of people do we have running our government? So many are non-veterans. The ones that are veterans aren't supporting the veterans," says Huber.

In June, the Department of Veterans Affairs admitted an unexpected shortfall

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# So be it: A Blueprint for Peaceful Revolution

by Dave Berman, 9/22/05

*When in the Course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another...they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.*

—United States Declaration of Independence

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We The People have been divided into a Cold Civil War.\* This divide was intentionally created by a government that does not seek the Consent of the Governed. Unverifiable “elections” leave no basis for confidence in the results reported, and make this government’s power illegitimate. This government benefits from being divisive, and from the inherent uncertainty it creates with Orwellian paradoxes. This paper describes consensus-building measures to heal the divide. It is recommended that communities across the U.S. support a Voter Confidence Resolution\*\* (VCR), modeled after the template language already adopted in Arcata, CA. Part of this campaign involves contrasting proposed election reforms with current conditions to expose the myth of democracy. Other such myths are discussed in this paper and ideas for debunking them are presented as part of the process of consensus building and divide healing. Peaceful revolution is defined as a shift in the balance of power between the government and We The People. Therefore, going from having no say in elections, to having any say at all, is necessarily revolutionary. The essentials of the VCR lay out the parameters for defining success: we must ensure conclusive election outcomes, create a basis for confidence in the results reported, and establish an accountable government genuinely representing us with our Consent. No one single reform can achieve all this and so we must embrace both the notion of an election reform platform, and the broader paradigm of peaceful revolution.

\* A Google search of “cold civil war” returns over 1000 hits. It is not clear who first used the phrase or when, though a German newspaper is cited from 1949 and Ayn Rand used it in the LA Times in 1962. References have been more frequent since the November 2000 U.S. presidential election and generally bear a surface level resemblance to the use in this paper.

\*\* Voter Confidence Resolution, as adopted by Arcata, CA on 7/20/05: <http://tinyurl.com/cr2va>

Read the entire paper here: <http://tinyurl.com/au2pj>

## VA Lets Down Veterans

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of nearly \$1 billion for 2006 budget. “The administration has consistently gotten the numbers wrong throughout this war,” says Paul Rieckhoff, Iraq vet and executive director of Operation Truth, an organization for veterans of the Iraq and Afghan wars. “They’ve done this entire thing on the cheap. People at the VA are trying hard and doing their best, but in the end, they’re allocated few resources.”

The shortfall announcement resulted in negative press and an embarrassed Bush administration. Before Congress took its August recess, the House and Senate were at odds over how much money was needed to adequately fund the VA. The Senate asked for \$1.5 bil-

lion and the House asked for \$975 million. The House finally joined the Senate and approved the \$1.5 billion supplement.

The question is, will the VA be able to distribute the money in time to help veterans? “I’m not sure the money will be spent on hiring healthcare professionals,” says Steve Robertson, legislative director of the American Legion, a wartime veterans organization. “It’ll be spent on replacing equipment and construction maintenance problems.”

For its part, the Muskogee VA Medical Center, which is enrolling 400-500 veterans a month, says the \$1.5 billion supplement will fully fund all of its veterans’ programs. “We haven’t heard how much the trickle-down will be, but we’ll be fully flush,” says Greg

Sorenson, chief of volunteer services at the Muskogee VA Medical Center.

Hammons says he’s glad the supplement was passed, but doesn’t believe it will improve the situation. “If they [politicians] supported our troops, Iraq war veterans that come back with missing legs wouldn’t have to wait six months to get an appointment. Until that’s taken care of, they’re lying,” he says. “I know personally, I’m not letting my kids join the military and have their lives destroyed.

*Rose Aguilar is a San Francisco-based journalist gathering stories from people living in states that voted overwhelmingly for George W. Bush. Track her journey at Stories in America.*

Submitted by Jim Sorter. Source: <http://www.alternet.org/story/24477/>



# Healing from PTSD

by Paige Alisen, Ph.D.

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is considered a serious psychiatric disorder affecting up to twelve million people at any given time in the U.S. alone. PTSD develops as a reaction to severe, often life-threatening trauma whereby a person feels absolute helplessness, terror, and violation in the face of trauma. In many cases, the trauma happens over an extended period of time. The most common reasons for developing PTSD include severe child abuse, domestic violence, and war. People who suffer with PTSD frequently have intense flashbacks, or the reliving of past traumas as if they were happening in the present. Posttraumatic stress symptoms, such as flashbacks, severe anxiety, and sleep disturbances, can begin immediately after, a few months, or even years after the trauma has ended. PTSD is a natural psychological reaction to sometimes horrifying events.

PTSD is also physiological. People who suffer from PTSD frequently have abnormal hormonal secretions in the brain and experience severe and chronic hyperarousal, the phenomenon of being hypersensitive to sounds, movements, and other environmental stimuli. There were times in my own healing when just hearing a car door slam sent shock waves through my system and it felt like my fingers were jammed in a light socket. PTSD can leave one feeling extremely confused, exhausted, fatigued, depressed, and overwhelmed.

Fortunately, PTSD for most people is treatable, meaning that once symptoms start, there is a high probability it can be "cured." There are a myriad of ways to treat PTSD, including psychotherapy, medication, biofeedback, more holistic approaches, such as acupuncture or massage, or a combination of these. What I have found is that therapy and medications alone will not adequately address severe symptoms. What is need-

ed is a full commitment to healing, and this means having complete love and respect for yourself. Certain acts practiced regularly can make a tremendous difference in whether one simply lives with or suffers from PTSD. With conscious intention, over time symptoms can disappear altogether. Self-care strategies include:

- **Daily Meditation and Yoga practice**—When practiced regularly, meditation and yoga calm our very beings. Certain yoga postures are particularly helpful in relieving anxiety, others are great for sleeping problems. Meditation can help clear the mind of intrusive and violent thoughts. Daily mantras can help us feel better about our life.

- **Eat Well and Rest**—When we eat well, we feel well. Eating foods low in saturated fats and eliminating processed sugar or caffeine from the diet are immediate ways to start caring for yourself. Meals should be well-balanced and regular, with particular attention given to whole grains and fresh vegetables and fruit. A good multivitamin (with plenty of B-Complex) should be taken. Give yourself down-time from newspapers and other life stressors, and the permission to rest. To function well, our brains and bodies need rest!

- **Engage in Body Therapies**—Bodywork, such as massage or chiropractic care, provide a powerful means for us to reintegrate our splintered minds, bodies, and spirits. Professional body therapies, such as acupressure or movement, provide an excellent way to release toxins in the body. Self-care practices are also important. Give yourself regular head, foot, and hand massages, take baths, and try to reconnect with your body in positive ways.

- **A Calm Home Environment**—Simplifying your home environment can do wonders for the person experiencing posttraumatic stress. When possible, minimize external stimuli by turning off the ringer of your phone, turning off the radio, and putting the television in the closet. Only play positive music in the household and de-clutter your house of papers and unnecessary stuff. Lightening your external world can have a direct, immediate effect on your inner world.

## Tune in to PTSD Panel Discussion on Nov. 18

Paige Alisen joins Louis Lester of the Eureka Veterans' Mental Health Clinic for a two-hour-long call-in panel discussion on PTSD on KHUM radio (104.3 or 104.7 FM, depending on where you are) Friday, November 18, from 8 to 10 am.

- **Comfort Yourself**—Your recovery can progress more readily if you begin to treat yourself like a frightened child. Leaving a nightlight on at night or wrapping yourself in a soft blanket can do wonders; reading children's books or listening to a children's meditation CD can also be effective at calming and soothing the body and mind. Learning to parent yourself well will make an immeasurable difference in your healing.

- **Minimize Things that Trigger Past Traumas**—Part of self-love means not re-traumatizing ourselves unnecessarily. The more we can understand our triggers, the better able we are to address the underlying causes of them. For those

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## Healing from PTSD

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in the throws of posttraumatic stress, give yourself permission, at least for awhile, to avoid situations or outside information (including daily news of bombings and war activities) that are triggering.

- **Release Your Feelings**—Finding healthy outlets for your intense emotions is critical. One option is to engage in moderate to heavy exercise, such as running or dancing. Exercising your cardiovascular system 20 minutes a day has profound effects on balancing hormones and promoting sleep. Get out into nature when possible. Finding healthy avenues and spaces to release anxiety, anger, rage, and grief will help your PTSD symptoms significantly.

- **Laugh and Love**—I have a magnet on my fridge that says, “Live Well; Laugh Often; Love Always.” It is a motto I take to heart now. Allowing love and healthy friendships into your heart will help ease the PTSD experience.

Severe trauma profoundly damages the spirit: one loses a sense of self, identity, and even a place in the world. Learning to love and respect ourselves is perhaps the most empowering thing we can do to heal. Ultimately, it is what we have most control over. I feel great compassion for anyone undertaking this journey. Peace and light to you all.

*VFP-56 associate member Dr. Paige Alisen is an educator, author, and activist who has conducted extensive research on PTSD and trauma-related disorders as a result of her own trauma experiences. She is the author of **Finding Courage to Speak: Women’s Survival of Child Abuse** and currently is the director of The Emma Center, a new nonprofit women’s organization serving survivors of abuse and trauma.*

## Opting Out From the Military at Age 14

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When North Humboldt Union High School District (NHUHS) Board member Kathy Marshall learned that districts elsewhere had increased the return rate to over 90% by doing a separate mailing of the opt out form, she promptly drew up a resolution for the board to require just that. Marshall also had concerns about recruiters’ unfettered freedom of access to school buildings and classes and the lack of an opposing viewpoint to the sophisticated sales pitches recruiters do so well.

Marshall’s resolution was presented to the NHUHS Board in September where it was received with little enthusiasm; the Board adopted the time worn hedge of submitting the resolution to their attorney for legal review. Not one to sit on her hands, Marshall, who had researched the issue at length, went public, seeking support for an issue few people knew about but one that could have significant effects on their children’s lives.

Chapter 56 members turned out in numbers to the board’s October meeting to both make a presence and to testify in support of Marshall’s proposal. It was, to say the least, an interesting evening. By going public, Marshall not only garnered support but also infuriated reactionary forces, especially in McKinleyville where the meeting was held. Once the rabid right had purged themselves of anti-Arcata and anti-VFP sentiments, a more orderly discussion of the merits of Marshall’s resolution then followed. Surprisingly, none of the anti forces had anything concrete to add to the debate once it took place. Vitriol they have; savvy is another matter.

While Marshall’s proposal was voted down, a substitute resolution was adopted that included the requirement for a separate mailing for the opt out form and the provision that once submitted, the request on the form shall be honored throughout the child’s high school years; the requirement to submit the form annually was thus scrubbed.

Marshall’s attempt to properly restrict recruiter access to schools and to require opposing viewpoints to be presented whenever recruiters go into their act did not fare as well. However, language was added that would appear to somewhat restrict recruiter access by requiring them to make prior arrangements for visits, sign-in, wear identification, and do their business only at times and places designated by school authorities. Access to classrooms for purpose of recruiting will be prohibited. The weakness here is the “designated by school authorities” clause. A diligent board is the best approach to that issue and, surprise, we get to vote for new board members in a few days!

While Kathy Marshall didn’t win the whole nine yards, we are indebted to her for the substantial progress made in this matter as a result of her initiative. We need more Kathy Marshalls on our school boards and one way to make that happen is to support candidates who share our positions on critical issues. Chapter 56 has endorsed Shane Brinton for the NHUHS Board; Kathy, too, endorses Shane as well as Becky Kurwitz and Don Avant. The latter two were profiled in the Sept. 27 issue of *The Arcata Eye*. Check them out and be sure to vote.



## Incredible “American” Reach Demands a Draft and Direct Financing – Or a “No Business As Usual” Nonviolent Revolution

by S. Brian Willson, October 22, 2005

According to the Department of Defense (WAR), as of June 30, 2005, the U.S. government had nearly 1.4 million military personnel positioned in 149 countries and virtually in every world waterway and global airspace. The U.S. has 7,000 military installations around the world, major and minor, 6,000 of which are scattered around the United States. Why do we take it for granted that one country, ours, can blanket the world with its intimidating military prowess?

It is instructive to examine post-WWII National Security Council (NSC) Memorandum 68 (Truman, 1950). NSC-68 declares that American policy is to “foster a world environment in which the American system can survive and flourish.” It observes that it would be American policy to develop a “healthy international community” even if there were no Soviet threat. Though manifest destiny and American exceptionalism have been historic values of our civilization, imperial hubris became a more explicit policy formulation under and since president Truman.

Within the United States we have 275 military training institutions annually offering 4,000 courses to 100,000 students from 150 countries to support “democracy” and “order” through military and police control methods. The School of Americas (SOA), now called the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security and Cooperation (WHISC), is but one of these, which has been noted for a variety of military training courses, including torture/interrogation. But it is only one of the 275 military schools in the U.S. Additionally, the U.S. trains military and police in 180 countries.

The U.S. military budget that is public is about \$450 billion per year, more than eight times that of China’s military budget. This equates to \$14,500 a

*second!* The Pentagon’s motto has become “Full Spectrum Dominance” (1997)—the need to control all spaces above the earth, on the earth, under the earth’s surface, and in our inner thought space.

The U.S. possesses only 4.6% of the world’s population but insists on consuming anywhere from 25% to nearly half the globe’s finite resources (depending on the resource), continuing an insatiable addiction to consumption and profits at human and earth expense. George Bush I declared that the American Way Of Life (AWOL) is not negotiable. Our insatiable consumption is enforced primarily by a “volunteer” military which functions in effect as an imperial, mercenary army. It is obscene. It is painful to acknowledge that virtually every one of us is complicit in perpetuating our unsustainable, addictive American Way Of Life (AWOL). Might we need to endure the equivalent of a twelve-step program to break our addiction? It is encouraging to know that, since ultimately we are all in the same boat, we can choose to radically simplify our lives in local sustainable economies. These are historic human evolutionary times requiring new courage, huge stretches of our imagination and people empowerment. Necessity is the mother of invention.

A two-fold strategy for liberating ourselves might look like this:

(1) Discontinue our belief in the “American” political economic oligarchic system disguised as “representative democracy.” This might entail actively withdrawing our support, i.e., ending our continued legitimization of a politics designed to support a few at the expense of our very lives, motivating refusal of military service, refusal to pay taxes by living more simply or risking jail, refusal to vote for national pluto-

crats claiming to be “democratic representatives,” refusal to work for the national government or multinational corporations, refusal to buy certain consumer products, refusal to invest in the stock market, etc. Each choice is an opportunity to participate in a revolutionary act.

(2) Begin participating in the construction of an alternative local economy—buy local, invest and save local, vote local, preserve and protect local water and land for food growing, convert lawns into edible landscapes, drastically reduce our need for transportation, thus reducing our dependency on and general addiction to petroleum, and network with others working for sustainable communities in the northern California region. Peak oil becomes an opportunity, perhaps just in the nick of time.

Consistent with my essay in VFP-56’s October newsletter, “Prohibited Government Recruiting,” countering local military recruitment emerges as an important component of community resistance to the scourge of our nation’s insane militarism. Half of the recruiting goals seek enlistments in the National Guard and State Reserve Units, the latter of which are currently contributing over 145,000 mobilized in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere, over 10,000 of whom are from California, along with most of their best equipment. That leaves us more vulnerable to natural disasters at home.

The U.S. government spends \$4 billion annually for military recruitment at a cost of \$14,000 per recruit, including \$2,000 on advertising. Bonuses are extra. Fifteen thousand recruiters in thousands of recruiting offices have at their disposal 26 flashy vans with all kinds of bells and whistles. Annually

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# Red Poppies

by Becky Luening

While visiting British Columbia in November 2003, I noticed that the Canadian \$10 bill had a poem printed on it. Although the poem addressed soldiers who died in war, to me it spoke of life and peace, and I was surprised to find it printed on money. My curiosity was piqued and I kept one as a souvenir.

Recently I had the opportunity to learn more about this poem, “In Flanders Fields,” and its author, John McCrae, a Canadian doctor from Guelph, Ontario, who served in the First World War. I also learned that the poem is directly connected to the custom of wearing red poppies on November 11th—Veterans Day in the U.S., Remembrance Day in Canada.

In April 1915, some of the heaviest fighting of the “Great War” took place during the Second Battle of Ypres, Belgium (Flanders). A doctor in the trenches, John McCrae tended hundreds of wounded soldiers every day. He was surrounded by death and the suffering and screams of the dying. In a letter home he called the battle a “nightmare.” In later writings he described it as “seventeen days of Hades.” The day after a young friend and former student of his was killed by a shell burst, McCrae composed his poem while gazing at the cemetery where wild poppies grew among makeshift graves.

John McCrae’s poem was first published in England’s

## In Flanders Fields

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved, and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae, 1915

*Punch* in December 1915, after a friend of his submitted it to the magazine. Within months, it came to symbolize the sacrifices of all who were fighting in the First World War.

In part because of the poem’s popularity, the poppy was adopted as the Flower of Remembrance for the war dead of Britain, France, the U.S., Canada and other Commonwealth countries. Begun by an American woman, Moina Michael, in 1918, the custom of wearing a red poppy on November 11th was expanded by a French woman, Madam Guerin, who hand-made poppies to raise money for destitute women and children in war-torn areas of France.

The symbolic poppy and John McCrae’s poem are still linked and used to honor those who have died on the battlefields of WWI and in other wars. The third verse of the poem (left

off the Canadian bill), which speaks of an “unending quarrel with the foe,” is de-emphasized by those who believe that the “quarrel” exists mainly in the minds of politicians and generals who have not experienced the horrors of war. Conversely, these words, and this poem, are often misused to glorify and justify unending war. I have heard that there is a movement in England to wear white poppies instead of red, to symbolize abhorrence of war.

In the process of researching all this, I came across “The Heritage of the Great War,” a fantastic website with photos and essays about WWI: <http://www.greatwar.nl/index.html>

## “American” Reach

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they target 500,000 students at over 2,500 schools. Despite this massive effort, the unpopularity of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars and increased counter-recruitment activities around the country caused the Army to miss its 2005 recruiting goal by more than 6,600 soldiers.

An equally important strategy is to demand national conscription *and* direct annual (rather than deficit) financing of war to “democratize” the daily imperial human and financial costs that AWOL requires. A drafted army is fairer and less dangerous than a “volunteer” force,

the latter being a form of economic conscription. Since U.S. wars are illegal, imperial aggressions that truly endanger us all, the policy begs total disobedience to conscription once adopted. But conscientious objection also requires withholding all monies for imperial war. Thus, tax resistance needs to accompany bodily resistance. Conscientious objection is what it declares—objection based on conscience.

The stakes couldn’t be any higher—our very lives, our future. Our human dignity begs noncooperation, not continued business as usual. It begs us to choose sustainable alternative economics from below (i.e., right here at home).

The degree to which we are willing to take risks determines the extent of our freedom. Noncooperation liberates us from addictions which are killing us *and* the Planet. How could we possibly be participating in our own voluntary servitude? The politics of obedience must cease!

Liberation psychology encourages disobedience while creating an alternative way, thus enabling us to recover our physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional health. Let us begin the journey as newly emboldened men and women. A renewed focus on dignity trumps any obsession with longevity.

See you on the journey.





**Veterans For Peace  
Chapter 56**

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the Web!**



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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 that might interest the members of VFP-56, please email it to [turtldncer@aol.com](mailto: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.

## **"Spirit of Garberville" Leaves For Louisiana**

*by Fredy & Sherry Champagne*

Veterans For Peace Chapter 22 of Garberville has sent its beloved peace bus, the "Spirit of Garberville," off on its mission to deliver aid to the victims of Hurricane Katrina. The bus left Southern Humboldt at noon on Wednesday, October 12, and is expected to return in ten days.

The local Veterans For Peace would like to thank the many members of this community for your generous support. We would especially like to thank the members of the Southern Humboldt United Relief Effort (SHURE) for their efforts to gather the cargo of aid this bus will carry. Many people helped with the supplies, the storage, and financial contributions required to send this bus. Thank you one and all.

In addition, we thank the many Girl Scouts, school children and all those who worked to gather, purchase, pack and inventory the family packs picked up in Sonoma, Mendocino and Humboldt Counties.

Veterans For Peace Chapter 22 meets the First Tuesday of the month at the John Haynes Memorial Veterans Hall in Garberville at 7:00 pm.



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