



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

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“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

Reflections on the 2010 North Coast Stand Down

By Mashaw McGuinnis

The return of the colder, rainy season is refreshing and welcome for most of us reading this Foghorn article. We can take certain things for granted as the temperatures drop. Like wearing a pair of shoes without holes in the bottom and putting another layer of blankets on the bed. Or sleeping in a safe, quiet place, without fear of being beaten, stabbed or arrested. While the nights grow colder and it pours outside, most of us will sip our tea comfortably in front of our wood stoves, and lounge on the sofa without a thought about whether or not the heat will stay on. Hunger pangs merely elicit a saunter to the refrigerator for a nibble while we watch the frost creep up around the edges of the windows outside. I know I won't drift off to slumber tonight worried about freezing to death in my sleep. Most of us will doze off without wondering who will identify our bodies if we don't make it through the night. Few of us are forced to contemplate these drastic scenarios because we are lucky enough to have a place to call home.

Humboldt County's homeless vets are offered a weekend full of exceptional treatment that most would consider minimal amenities, at the North Coast Stand Down. Luxuries like hot showers with soap, fresh meals, clean clothing, haircuts and dental work. These small necessities are but special treats rarely experienced by our houseless vets. Most of who at the tender age of 18 or 19, enlisted for duty because they believed their government would help them be all they could be. They believed the government would make them "Army Strong" and they believed they could be one of the "few, the proud, the Marines". But their recruiters didn't tell them that when they returned, they might possibly end up hungry and living on the streets. And no one bothered to tell those brave young people that suicide rates of returning vets was at an all time high.

Since our returning vets face not only difficulty finding work and housing, but also depression and substance abuse too, which often accompanies return to civilian life. It is encouraging to see the public's participation in the North Coast Stand Down grow each year. The annual event directly helps vets in crisis, leaving out the middle man and bureaucracy. This year it attracted more than 300 veterans and more than 60 service providers.

VFP chapter 56 was represented by members Peter Aronson, Carl Stancil, John Schaffer and Rob Hepburn, four die-hard members who can always be counted on to volunteer. New member Mark Fine generously volunteered his skills doing massage. Only a few years ago at the first Stand Down, so many VFP members volunteered that the information table could be covered in different shifts over two days. But in just a few years time it has become a stretch to fill the spots even for one day.

Our personal schedules get filled up so quickly with our families, school and work demands. But when the next big storm comes through and you find yourself enjoying the patter of rain on the roof while sitting on the couch, take a moment to imagine what it feels like to be out in it with no dry place to sleep. And remember the person you were when you were first discharged, and how it felt trying to find your way in the world. A brief conversation or handshake with a young, houseless vet might just be the turning point in his or her recovery. Volunteering a couple of hours at the VFP table next year might be a way of sharing the warmth that we so often take for granted.



VFP Participates in International Day of Peace

By John Mulloy

In late September Rob Hepburn, Mashaw McGuinnis, Heather Harman and myself ventured into the Redwood Coast Montessori School in Eureka to participate in their International Day of Peace celebration. Twenty sweet 6 to 8 year



olds waited to greet us. Their enthusiasm was awesome and contagious. They sang us a peace song and listened to our



comments on creating peace. They had good questions and we explored the meaning of peace in their own environment of school and home. Late in our sessions the kids gathered up a handcrafted giant cloth and stick peace dove they had made. We all marched across the street to the companion pre-school where about 40 kids awaited us. Peace songs were sung,

and candles lit. It was a scene of boundless joy and hope.

We had a great time. This is a really good age level to interact with youth, before they reach the more difficult years of puberty. I can't say that we created a new crop of peace activists, but we certainly nurtured peaceful attitudes towards others in school, on the playground, and at home. This wonderful school won't be producing any arrogant bullies. Rather they are helping to create a civilization that works out societal problems with peaceful intent and means.

DEPLETED URANIUM

By Peter Aronson

November 6th was the International Day of Action Against Depleted Uranium Weapons.

It also happens to be the United Nations' Day for Prevention of the Exploitation of the Environment during Wars and Armed Conflicts.

- * Depleted Uranium (DU) is nuclear waste.
- * DU is a chemically toxic and radioactive compound.
- * DU is very dense and used as a class of weapons called kinetic energy penetrators.
- * Hazardous DU oxide dust is produced when DU munitions burn when fired or hit a hard target.
- * When inhaled or ingested DUst produces chemical (heavy metal) toxicity, and cell damage from radioactive particles known to cause cancers and birth defects.
- * Health consequences are greater in women and children.
- * Legal, financial, and moral liabilities of using DU weapons are yet to be appreciated, but DU is highly regulated precisely because of known exposure hazards to humans and the environment.

Since 1990 the U.S. and the U.K. have used thousands of tons of DU munitions (GW1 and 2 and the Balkans), but refuse to release data on how much and where it was expended thus permitting unnecessary civilian exposures and long-term health risks that may not express for years, or even decades.

Using uranium as a weapon is a more sinister 'Agent Orange experience' with respect to users intentionally delaying the inevitable admission of using poisonous agents in warfare. Only after its military advantage is spent will the truth about health consequences be permitted to surface.

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40 years after declaring AO was “safe as far as we know” was the truth revealed about dioxins, and entitlements for exposed veterans offered. The same fate is likely with DU weapons.

United Nations considers new resolution calling for transparency from depleted uranium users. A resolution submitted to the United Nations First Committee will call on depleted uranium users to reveal quantitative and geographical data on their historical use of the weapons to affected states.

Read more <http://www.bandedpleteduranium.org/en/a/343.html>

United Nations considers new resolution calling for transparency from depleted uranium users International Coalition to Ban Uranium Weapons [ICBUW]

The War Prayer

By Mark Twain

It was a time of great and exalting excitement. The country was up in arms, the war was on, in every breast burned the holy fire of patriotism; the drums were beating, the bands playing, the toy pistols popping, the bunched fire-crackers hissing and spluttering; on every hand and far down the receding and fading spread of roofs and balconies, a fluttering wilderness of flags flashed in the sun; daily the young volunteers marched down the wide avenue gay and fine in their new uniforms, the proud fathers and mothers and sisters and sweethearts cheering them with voices choked with happy emotion as they swung by; nightly the packed mass meetings listened, panting, to patriot oratory which stirred the deepest depths of their hearts and which they interrupted at briefest intervals with cyclones of applause, the tears running down their cheeks the while; in the churches the pastors preached devotion to flag and country and invoked the God of Battles, beseeching His aid in our good cause in outpouring of fervid eloquence which moved every listener.

It was indeed a glad and gracious time, and the half dozen rash spirits that ventured to disapprove of the war and cast a doubt upon its righteousness straightway got such a stern and angry warning that for their personal safety's sake they quickly shrank out of sight and offended no more in that way.

To read the rest of this poem go to:

<http://www.lexrex.com/informed/otherdocuments/warprayer.htm>

Submitted by Rich Gilchrist

APPLEBEE'S HONORS VETERANS

Applebee's Restaurant on Broadway in Eureka is honoring veterans on Veterans' Day with a free meal.

Any veteran, past or present, who can show proof of service will be given a free meal from a special menu provided.

Meals will be served from 10:00am until 10:00pm.

Must have proof of service. A discharge or present military ID will be accepted.

Next VFP56 meeting will
be held on Thursday,
November 11th at 7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held in the
Commons Room at 550
Union Street in Arcata.



GOLDEN RULE GETS NEW FACELIFT

Progress on the Golden Rule project is moving right along. She has presently been moved from her sandy beach position and is now on a new frame construction which will allow repairs to begin. A roof has been added so that repairs can continue during adverse weather conditions. Master Shipwright Mac is very optimistic about getting her sound and seaworthy in the next year.

Anyone who has time on his/her hands is more than welcome to drop by and lend a helping hand to getting her back shipshape. She is presently located in Finntown on the Samoa Peninsula. If you don't know where Finntown is call 826-1781 for information.

Pictures of the new construction and progress on the Golden rule can be seen below.



SHARING PEACE ONE PIN AT A TIME

By Jim & Linda Sorter

Linda and I just returned from our trip to France to visit our son's family and get acquainted with our new granddaughter, Juliette. We had a great time but it is good to be home after traveling five weeks to favorite places in Ireland, the Scottish Highlands, the Lake and Dales Districts in England, France and the crown jewel—Morocco.

Before we left for Europe I had contacted National VFP and ordered 100 Veterans For Peace hat pins. Most of you know that I wear a beret with a Veterans For Peace patch sewn on it with numerous hat pins I have collected while traveling in different countries. My intention for buying so many VFP pins was to give one to anyone who made a comment about my hat, therefore setting up a dialogue about what the beret stood for and the message of the dove. My contacts exceeded my wildest expectations. Sharing the story of the beret and explaining the message that it contained was to become a constant event. Throughout Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Morocco and places in between questions were asked and personal connections made leaving me to conclude that the vast majority of people in this world want nothing more than to live their lives surrounded by loved ones in security and peace. Of all the pins that I passed out, there are three treasured incidences.

The first pin I gave away was to a gentleman sharing a shuttle bus from our plane to the terminal in Dublin, Ireland. While standing beside him, he noticed my hat and made the comment that he liked it very much. He said he was from England and was in Ireland to attend a seminar on the very issues of promoting peace throughout the world. In the brief moments we had while on the bus, I told him about the Veterans for Peace group and what we stood for. I then gave him one of the pins I had brought along. He was greatly surprised and pleased and pinned it on the lapel of his jacket at that very moment. He said it was quite serendipitous that this should happen.

On another occasion while Linda and I were walking one evening in Rabat, Morocco, a man we passed sitting on a bench told me in broken English that he liked my hat.

We stopped to talk to him and I told him that the large patch on my beret was the logo of a veterans' group in America who was trying to share the message of peace throughout the world. I then gave him a Veterans for Peace hat pin. He was quite moved by this gesture of friendship. He told me that he was a veteran also and that he too believed in trying to promote peace.

He then asked me if we were going to be in Rabat for long. I told him unfortunately we were going to leave his beautiful city the next day. He asked me what time and I told him 8:30 am. He then asked me the name of the hotel we were staying in. He asked me to meet him in front of the hotel the next day at 8:15. Not knowing why, I agreed to meet him.

At 8:15 the next day, I stepped out of the hotel to see the man standing by the front door. He saw me and came over. We greeted and then he asked to see my hat once again. I took it off and gave it to him. In his hand he held a lapel pin which he pinned to my beret, explaining that this was his veterans pin that he wanted me to have. He wanted me to know that he cherished peace also. He bowed deeply and placed his hand over his heart, which I did also. He stood in front of the hotel while Linda and I boarded our bus. My last view of him was flashing us the peace sign, while covering his heart with his right hand. Although I know I will never see this person again, I believe, we shared a connection that day which can never be broken, nor forgotten.

On another day while Linda and I were walking through a park in Marrakech, Morocco, a young man of about 30 passed us and he too indicated he much admired my hat. He asked about it and again I told him of its significance. He told me he too was a veteran. We shared a brief and cordial conversation and I gave him one of the Veterans for Peace pins. As he reached to take it I noticed that his right arm had been blown away at the elbow.

The gentleness, hospitality and kindness which he was showing these foreigners in his homeland will never be forgotten by me. This young veteran who had suffered so much had nothing but love in his heart. We bowed, placed our hands over our hearts and went our separate ways, knowing that the road traveled for peace is the only salvation for humankind in this savage world.

If you are ever in Europe or north Africa (there are many Arabs now wearing a VFP pin), and happen to see a hotel porter, a policeman, a transit security agent or anyone else wearing a Veterans for Peace lapel pin, give them a hug from Linda and Jim.



The Signature Injury of The War in Iraq

By Kelly Koopmans KVAL News

Harvey Jay Leal remembers how and when Iraqi insurgents blew up his convoy, but it's hard for him to remember how a conversation even started because of a Traumatic Brain Injury.

During his deployments, Harvey Leal lived through multiple mortar attacks, attacks that sent powerful blast waves through his helmet - and through his brain.

EUGENE, Ore. - Harvey Jay Leal remembers how and when Iraqi insurgents blew up his convoy, but it's hard for him to remember how our conversation even started.

"I go off and can't remember the question," said Leal. "I have no idea what I'm talking about."

Leal is an Oregon National Guardsman who is 100 percent disabled by The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs standards. He served multiple times in Iraq and was only 20 meters from where a mortar landed on Aug. 10, 2004. "It's kind of hard to explain how it all went down," said Leal. "I remember seeing white and then couldn't see at all basically."

During his deployments, Leal lived through multiple mortar attacks, attacks that sent powerful blast waves through his helmet - and through his brain. Leal received disability for leg and back injuries immediately after returning home from Iraq but it would take four years and dozens of doctors to finally identify his most debilitating injury: Traumatic Brain Injury, or TBI.

Leal said because TBI screenings for all returning service members didn't become mandatory until 2005, he didn't realize was suffering from brain injury. It wasn't until a couple of months after he returned from Iraq when he began experiencing massive headaches.

Leal said family members were the first to notice a difference in his demeanor. He didn't like things he used to like. He suffered mood swings that prevented him from holding down a job. The once avid hiker and outdoorsman couldn't enjoy activities that he used to.

Leal eventually contacted the VA and sought treatment for what he believed was TBI. But in late 2004, TBI still mystified doctors. Leal said his brain injury couldn't be detected by traditional methods.

"When you have EEGs and cat scans and MRIs done and they don't show anything, they don't show conclusive evidence that you've had any brain injury whatsoever," he said.

Despite records documenting Leal's presence in mortar attacks, some doctors said Leal was lying about his injury. One wrote Leal presented "intentional exaggeration and fabrication" of his head injuries.

It would take persistence and multiple doctors before Leal began receiving treatment for his brain injury.

Why undiagnosed?

According to the Department of Defense, about 150,000 soldiers are living with TBI. But in 2008, the independent research group Rand found that about 320,000 - or about twice the DOD's numbers - are actually suffering from brain injury.

Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden said the difference in numbers means the soldiers aren't getting the help they need.

"This is the signature injury of the war in Iraq and Afghanistan," said Wyden. "There's no question in my mind that many of our service members are falling through the cracks, and to a great extent it's because of funding and again the lack of research. Now it's going to take modern medical approaches both in research and services to deal with that."

According to the Rand study, only about half of TBI cases are treated. Guardsmen, brain injury specialist, and VA doctors said there are three reasons many are undiagnosed and untreated.

First, many service members don't want to admit they have a brain injury. If a soldier goes through a TBI screening and says they may have symptoms, that person may be held for further testing that could take up to two months.

"You see, those screenings are just, you just want to go home," said National Guardsman Julio Najara, who is living with TBI. "You want to put this behind you and go home. You don't want more testing, you just want to leave."



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Second, the VA is trying to keep up with the flood of service members coming back with an injury they don't know much about.

"You tend to treat wounds of the previous war," said retired Col. Scott McGrea of the Oregon National Guard. "So, they were prepared to treat gunshot wounds, broken limbs, things like that, but weren't ready to treat traumatic brain injury."

Three, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and TBI have similar symptoms, such as change in mood or depression. It's difficult for doctors to distinguish between the two internal and invisible injuries.

"A traumatic brain injury is neurological damage to the brain. So the brain is physically damaged. That's the difference," said Brain Injury Association of Oregon Executive Director Sherry Stock. "Most people that had a traumatic brain injury don't remember when they got it so memory lapse is one. Significant headaches and memory lapse and fatigue, those are all signs of a brain injury."

Doctors, the VA and brain specialists say education is the key to getting a head of TBI. They more people know about it the sooner they can notice their symptoms. "See when I came back it was before we were learning all this about TBI," said Leal. "Unfortunately I'm changed forever, and it's just too late for me."

Submitted by Jim Sorter

Army Reports Record Number of Suicides Unit Leaders Are Now Being Trained to Better Spot Warning Signs, Encourage Soldiers to Get Professional Help

By Don Teague

*Fort Hood Reports Record Number of Suicides
Fort Hood Remembers Victims of 2009 Rampage*

(CBS) After returning from Iraq in 2006, Staff Sgt. Sarah Campbell Hester was looking forward to enjoying life, newly married to a soldier who had also just returned from war, reports CBS News correspondent Don Teague.

"He was just funny, he was the ultimate prankster, very solid with the unit," Hester said.

But secretly her husband was a man in crisis, unable to re-adjust to life after war.

"Iraq changed him, he came back kind of an angry man,"

Hester said.

One month after their wedding, Richard Hester, 34, committed suicide.

"I always sympathized with him, empathized I guess would be the word, and understood and never blamed him," Hester said. "And now I'm just like you left two little girls without a dad, you left me with a mess to deal with why would you do this?"

It's a question the Army is struggling to answer as well.

The Army's suicide rate is now double the national average. There were 162 suicides in Army ranks in 2009 - a record. Fort Hood has had a record 20 confirmed or suspected suicides this year, four in just one week in September.

And while it's clear the stress of nine years of war contributes to the problem, it's not the only cause.

At Fort Hood the majority of the victims had never been in combat, or had served only one tour, and none were connected to the mass shooting of soldiers here one year ago.

While commanders at Fort Hood say there's no single factor contributing to the spike in suicides, they believe there is a solution: better leadership.

Unit leaders are now being trained to better spot the warning signs of suicide, and encourage to soldiers ask for psychological help - not punish them if they do.

"I can work their bodies until they can pass their PT test no problem now they're giving me the tools I need to be able to take care of their mental well being," said Staff Sgt. Clinton Beene, a squad leader.

For Sarah Campbell Hester, help came too late save her husband. But the Army is hoping by bringing the problem to light, other soldiers won't die alone in the dark.





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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 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.

AFGHANISTAN CASUALTIES BY YEAR

Year	US	UK	Other	Total
2001	12	0	0	12
2002	49	3	18	70
2003	48	0	10	58
2004	52	1	7	60
2005	99	1	31	131
2006	98	39	54	191
2007	117	42	73	232
2008	155	51	89	295
2009	317	108	96	521
2010	420	97	106	623
Total	1367	342	484	2193

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