



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

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2009

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

An Exercise in the Web of Complicity

by 'Nate' Lomba

A few years ago, Andy Kimbrell related a story (www.tvcradio.org) that he termed: *The Pilots Dilemma*.

“A pilot, on a bombing mission, is shot down over enemy territory [emphasis added]. He is taken in by a family in the area he was previously bombing. His injuries are treated and he is fed and cared for. Several weeks pass when a Special Forces Unit arrives to rescue him. Before departing, the pilot is ordered to kill the family in order to protect the secrecy of his mission. The pilot returns to the family hut. After a few minutes a single shot rings out. The soldier in charge of the Special Forces Unit steps inside to see the family surrounding the pilot who is laying on the floor, dead from a single gunshot.

“Those who had helped the pilot were the very same people he was trying to destroy prior to being shot down. Rather than kill the family who took him in, the pilot took his own life. When faced with the requirement to destroy his enemy – face-to-face – the pilot could not bring himself to kill the innocents whom he had come to know on a personal level.”

Kimbrell states the obvious: “In modern warfare, the participants, for the most part, are :
Distanced from the consequences of their actions.
Distanced from taking responsibility for their actions.”

After contemplating Kimbrell’s story, I began to list a series of events to unravel the veil of detachment, or what I call: The Web of Complicity.

Imagine your community is under attack by an unprovoked, invading enemy :

armed soldiers march through the streets;
breaking down doors in the middle of the night;
shooting indiscriminately at unarmed civilians, men ... women ... children; and,
aircraft/missiles bomb homes, businesses, factories, and schools indiscriminately.

Who among us would not consider those acts :

a violation of International Law ?
a violation of the United Nations Charter ?
a war crime as defined under the Nuremberg Principles ?

Who would not be aware that such acts by US Forces are also :

a violation of the military rules of engagement ?
a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice ?

The last incident where anyone was prosecuted for such acts was the Court Martial of Lt. William Caley for the massacre of over 350 unarmed women, children and elderly inhabitants of the village of Mi Lai, Vietnam in 1968. But, that example is too easy. Let’s try a more complicated exercise — one more relevant to present day circumstances.

If enemy aircraft knowingly attacked your community, causing damage and loss of life on the scale seen throughout the Middle East: Would that act of aggression be subject to the same constraints?

If so, who should be held responsible for the deaths of innocent civilians?

[Pay attention , this is where the Web of Complicity begins.]

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Exercise in the Web of Complicity: Continued from page 1

Who is responsible for the unprovoked attack For the deaths of innocent civilians? Is it:

- The Bombardier* that dropped the bombs ?
- The Pilot* who flew the aircraft ?
- The Navigator* who guided the aircraft to the target ?
- (* Often, but not always, in modern warfare the bombardier, pilot, and navigator are one and the same; or it may be a Drone operator thousands of miles away).
- The Flight Deck Officer who signaled the aircraft to launch ?
- The Officer on the Bridge who gave the order to head the ship into the wind in preparation to launch aircraft ?
- The Flight Deck Crew who prepared the aircraft for launch ?
- The men and women who loaded the bombs on the aircraft ?
- The Marines who escort the bombs — under orders to “shoot to kill” anyone who might attempt sabotage ?
- The Photo Interpreter who identified the target from reconnaissance photography ?
- The Intelligence Officer who reported the target to the Airwing Commander ?
- The Airwing Commander who gave the order to bomb the target ?
- The Captain of the aircraft carrier who has responsibility for the ship ?
- The Admiral of the Fleet who has responsibility for the aircraft carrier and all the other ships and submarines under his authority ?

All the foregoing could be said to be “actively” engaged in rolls supporting the bombing. Now the “complicity” becomes less apparent.

- Is the person responsible :
- The Cook who prepared the Pilot’s meal so she /he would be nourished for the mission ?
 - The Orderly who made the Pilot’s bunk so she/he could be rested for the mission ?
 - The Squadron Commander back home who assigned the Pilot to the Airwing ?
 - The Yeoman (Navy talk for clerk) who prepared the orders sending the Pilot to the Squadron ?
 - The Flight Surgeon who certified the Pilot as physically fit to fly ?
 - The Flight Instructors who taught the Pilot to fly and honed his/her skills in bomber aircraft ?
 - The Pre-Flight School Instructors who taught the Pilot the science of flight ?
 - The Drill Instructors who molded the Pilot into a military officer ?
 - The Recruiting Officer who administered the Oath to the Pilot ?
 - The Recruiter who enlisted the Pilot ?
 - Societal influences (enculturation) that shaped the Pilot’s character long before she/he joined the military ?

Or, is it “All of the above,” and many more? Who should be held responsible for killing and maiming the innocent people of the community?

Without the acquiescence and support of individuals all along the way—including society at large—the bombs could never be dropped. This scenario can be played out in many different ways in many different countries. The consequences are the same. Eldridge Cleaver (Black Panthers Activist) said: “If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the problem!” No one serving in the military can claim to have clean hands. Many in civilian life, likewise, share in the web of complicity by their work in defense industries or blind, unquestioning obedience to authority.

Albert Einstein said: “You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war!” The only way to not be an accessory to war or a war crime is to not participate in or support anything having to do with making war. It is incumbent on every individual to recognize this fact if we’re going to eliminate war. It is incumbent on every individual to work toward that end if we are to survive as a species. If you are to retain your humanity, it is incumbent on each individual to reject war, and participation in war making activities, and work to abolish war as an instrument of foreign policy.

An Iraqi mother cries for her dead and wounded babies the same as an American mother.

A Palestinian father mourns for his dead and wounded children the same as an American father.

We are no different — and no better — than anyone else on this planet.

To put it bluntly: We have no greater right to our SUVs than anyone else on the planet.

(Spacing and capitalization as per writer’s request)

Afghan Fund-raiser

by Judi Rose

We had a very successful fund-raiser for the Afghan Tent School project. Please read the details.

If anyone has a group who would be interested in holding a yard sale with the proceeds donated to the project let me know

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**NEXT VFP 56
MEETING IS
SCHEDULED FOR
JUNE 4th, LABOR
TEMPLE, 843 E
STREET IN
EUREKA, 7:00pm**



Afghan Fundraiser: Continued from page 2

and I can take a major role organizing the sale. It would be great to have one sale in the fall and one in the spring. It is a satisfying feeling to see the over-abundance of stuff that we know longer use get recycled and the money given to children who really benefit from our help.

Yard Sale, Grand Success!

Thank you all for your support! We had a fantastic sale raising \$1964.09 for the Tent School project. The bake sale raised \$111.00 of that amount. Thank you students and one alumnus for taking charge of the cookie table. (Cookies for Peace and Education)

I was hoping we would raise at least \$1000.00 for school supplies for the students and that anything over that could go to teachers who make the equivalent of approximately \$60.00 per month. Here is the breakdown of funds.

\$100.00 expenses of fund-raiser

\$ 500.00 (\$250.00 each) for the two teachers and sisters of Sunny Rose's (Equinox alumnus) Afghan interpreter while he was deployed to Afghanistan. The teachers live with and help support their parents and a brother and sister who all live in the home. As you may know the interpreter is no longer living in Afghanistan, as the oldest son he was the family's main breadwinner. I will transfer the money to the teacher's bank account in Kabul and with the assistance of their family they take responsibility for purchasing and distributing the school supplies to students. They have a relative who runs a business in Kabul where they purchase the supplies. He generously gives them a discount on their purchase.

\$250 to the Mother and family of the interpreter's wife. The wife was a second grade teacher in Kabul but had to leave with her husband. While in Kabul she contributed to her Mother's household income. Her Mother is a widow and although she has some sons who live with her they had a hard time earning enough money for food and heating fuel this past winter.

\$1214.09 is for the purchase of school supplies minus fees I will pay to transfer the money as well as a transaction fee the teachers will pay on their end. There will be approximately \$1150.00 for the purchase of paper, pencils and anything else they wish. Thank you all students, parents, staff and community members for your donations, generosity and support!

In the past I have received thank you letters and photos of the students who benefit from our project. I will share more news and any thank yous we receive as they arrive.

Veterans on the Path Naturally

by Harold Bustamonte

I grew up like many in the country. Believing in what the TV told you, listening to what mom knew. Sometimes when I was sick I was just sent to the doctor and given medicines..quick fix. As I

became of age and joined the enlisted ranks after I dropped out of some calculated moves to go to College and attend ROTC, I began to learn the truth in life was that life is a mystery and I had no idea what I was doing..

As years go by in proving myself as a man I discovered I was just another number. I knew who I thought I was but I still had no idea. So I stepped in college out of serving a year in Korea as a sniper and I started to see the other side. Side of me I wanted to explore. I met this beautiful organizer in school who convinced me to help her out on recycling programs in the local city and I found my new mission.

The Gulf War was brewing, knowing slowly inside I was going back to something I cared no more about. Politics, manipulation of truth, money oil plots, international meddling of other cultures and societies. This was kinda all in my head but I ignored it to live for a moment as a different me that thought about creating something instead of destroying something. Eventually I was called back into service and I found out that a number I became on the chess board and was given many shots to go fight a war I felt I would survive the chemical suits in.

I followed orders and I was delayed by a knee injury and before I knew it the ground war was over and I was being released back into civilian life. It took me a few months more but I finally severed my ties to the military and I moved on with my life.

Four years later in the midst of struggling thru economics and education indecision I dropped out of college. I ran out of my GI Bill which barely paid my rent and I found my self on a path of discovery. I attended a rainbow gathering and I dropped out of society to seek my true self. Who was I, why was I hear, that's all that came to me ..over and over and with that I left the world and drifted and traveled for over 13 years. Some called me homeless, transient, hippie etc.. I called my self who I was really becoming, me!..

It took me a while but with all my PTSD, gulf war syndrome related to my infantry day, shots and bar fights and just my own anger I held inside for the injustice I felt that society treated me indifferent to my ignorance.. I was confused. But in that time I discovered human love, true friendships and spirituality of the land, god, and humanity. I also discovered my ability to heal with natural herbs and medicines and even ceremonies. You see I discovered I had Indian blood and I dipped into that world and I found peace by helping others and becoming an activist.

At one time I was a Earth First activist in the Humboldt and I even marched on to Ft., Benning Georgia against the School of America's. I had various and many reasons to do what I have done and one of the main ones I found that empowered me was the fact that I swore to a constitution to serve and protect our rights not just as citizens but as humans. These days I live a normal life and I feel whole and at home with the world again and not confused.

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Veterans on the Path Naturally: Continued from page 3

In all that I found another thing that helped me thru my healing process, that helped me see more clearly and live a healthy life-style. I rediscovered cannabis also known as marijuana or medical marijuana in California. I discovered that one herb helped me see clearly thru the fog and guide me back to a respect of all natural things. It healed my PTSD, and I feel that with proper educational and use it can heal many of our veterans coming home and dealing with life's confusion and nightmares.

When are we vets going to get the VA to recognize cannabis as a healthy alternative to pharmaceuticals to heal the anxiety vets have from being in the service and the stress of life? This is the 1st step in my opinion to end hypocrisy of this society and this world. My story is not about legalization, its about healing with natures gifts. Nature has many gifts to offer the human world.

Bless

VFP56 MEMBER RETIRES FROM HSU

by Sam Oliner

Steve Stamnes Retires: Reflections on Years of Teaching, Mentoring & Service are immeasurably important. He has created safe environments for students to take risks. These risks have lead to their success. We'll be hard pressed to find someone who can fill his shoes. Steve has made multi-cultural and diversity action central to his work at HSU. Steve is also a member of Veterans for Peace, local Chapter 56, an educational and humanitarian organization dedicated to increasing public awareness of the costs of war. Over the years I have had many discussions with Steve about the well being of society. I have learned much from his world view.

He and I believe strongly that caring, compassion, and justice could be an antidote to a divided and painful world. Steve leaves a void in our faculty not easily filled. He will be greatly missed by the students and faculty, but especially by me.

We wish him good luck in his new endeavors. Samuel P. Oliner Ph.D. Emeritus Professor Department of Sociology Director, The Altruistic Personality and Prosocial Behavior Institute I don't understand why this Sociology Department, indeed the University for that matter, would let Steve Stamnes retire. Only kidding. I suppose he has a right to retire. He is truly an outstanding educator, colleague, friend and neighbor. I have known Steve for seventeen years. He was one of my graduate students and in 1995 joined our faculty as a lecturer and became a colleague. It is a pleasure for me to recall Steve's contribution to the university, the community and to sociology.

As the chair of the department and evaluator of Steve's teaching

ability, I must say that I have seen few teachers with his talent in the classroom. He is very much concerned with the welfare of his students. He puts in extra effort to make sure that the learner understands the meaning of sociology and its place in society. Steve's teaching philosophy is student centered; he makes sure that every student is involved and learning. Failure is not an option in his class. All his life and energy are devoted to teaching. He wants to nurture and encourage students to do well and succeed. Steve is very much interested in students as individuals.

Observers of Steve's effectiveness include provosts, deans, colleagues and students who uniformly evaluate Steve as an outstanding professor. A perusal of his student evaluations shows frequent quotes such as "best teacher I have ever had." One student reflects the quality of his learning with Steve: I think Steve's compassion, earnest and genuine care for everyone in our class was most beneficial. He really wanted us to understand the concepts; he was enthusiastic and showed care with difficult topics. Steve is one of the most personable teachers I have ever had. A great teacher.

Steve taught regularly the EOP section of Sociology 104 Introductory Sociology. EOP is the "Educational Opportunity Program" designed to improve access and retention for low-income and first generation college students.

Dan Saveliff (MA Sociology 2003), Director of EOP, said: Steve has an unyielding support of students. For low income and first-generation college students, his level of encouragement and support "For low-income and first generation college students, his level of encouragement and support are immeasurably important. He has created safe environments for students to take risks." Dan Saveliff Director of EOP

Code Pink Vigil in Washington DC

by Carol Goldammer

On Thursday, May 7th I flew out of Arcata for the Code Pink 24hr Mother's Day Vigil in Liberty Park across the street from the White House. Before I go on, I want to thank VFP 56 for helping me with a sponsorship which supported my taking this trip. It was truly a pivotal experience of a lifetime.

I went to Washington largely inspired by Media Benjamin's (Code Pink co-founder & founder of Global Exchange) saying that we have a president who is saying "talk to me so I have the support to enact change", and so whether he likes it or not, he's going to hear us speak up. And I went because of the true origins of Mother's Day in the United States, mother's calling for peace, culminating in the 1772 call from Julia Ward Howe to women to:

Arise then...women of this day!

Arise, all women who have hearts!

Whether your baptism is of water or of tears!

Say firmly:

"We will not have questions answered by irrelevant agencies

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Code Pink DC Visit: Continued from page 4

...Our sons shall not be taken from us to unlearn
All that we have been able to teach them of charity, mercy and
patience.
We, the women of one country,
Will be too tender of those of another country
To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs."

By going, I met wonderful women from around the country, most leading ordinary lives in ordinary jobs, who also decided to announce our presence, our watchfulness and our message.

I stayed at the "Pink House", Code Pink's rented house in central DC. Everyone was abuzz with preparation for that night's fund-raiser at a local restaurant and for the following two day's vigil. I dropped off my things and headed out for my meeting with Mike Thompson's aide on health care. That was an experience in itself which I'll go in to at another time – be it said that he and I had fairly polar-opposite views. But back to Code Pink.

Prior to the Mothers' Day vigil, a call had gone out on the Code Pink list serve and website for a "radical act of knitting." Knitters were asked to send four-inch squares in either pink or green (4pink to 1green) to create a 4x100+ foot banner that would read "WE WILL NOT RAISE OUR CHILDREN TO KILL ANOTHER MOTHER'S CHILD." When I returned to the Pink House, I worked with other women joining the thousands of 4" knitted squares of pink and green that would be the finished banner by Sunday. More than eight thousand squares had been sent to the pink house from at least 14 different countries. There are wonderful stories about the sources of some of the squares. As the afternoon grew on, I once again met and talked with retired colonel and peace activist Ann Wright who sends her best thoughts to VFP56. At the fund-raiser many of us continued sewing squares together while listening to a panel discussion with women from the Congo, Sri Lanka (a Tamil woman), Afghanistan, Iraq, Gaza, and Iran... maybe a few more. The speakers at the small fund-raiser were amazingly focused, committed, intelligent, composed and devoted to tears women hoping to grow awareness and support for their countries by getting the message out about what horrific things that are happening particularly to women, and to innocent children families and civilians in their countries. When you hear the history and the shocking stories..... well, on and on I could go.

Saturday morning we moved our sewing project, a stage, thousands of donated roses, sound equipment, sleeping bags, etc. to Liberty Park. The vigil officially lasted from 1pm Saturday until 1pm Sunday. For that 24 hours, Liberty Park was a sea of green dotted with pink ladies and some pink men sitting in groups, some sleeping a little, many darning the pink and green squares together and attaching them to a cloth backing, women chatting & getting to know one another, and organized learning circles.. There was an evening program of a few speakers, poems/readings, and music. Different men and women sewed throughout the night. In the middle of the night there was a pink "fashion show"!

We walked our banner to face the White House Saturday afternoon then again, with it finished, on Mothers' Day. We sang beautiful songs of peace and fun songs of peace. We then placed most of the roses at the base of the White House fence and distributed them to mothers and other onlookers at the park. We knew that there were eyes that watched from inside the big house, though no one came out.

One of the really lovely things was the presence and joy of people from other countries, who talked to us, took pictures with us, sewed with us, and broke into beautiful smiles when they came upon us in the park. At one point an elderly Muslim man and his middle-aged son asked if they could sew with us. It was wonderful.

A few periphery things also took place. On Mothers' Day morning, one of the guys from Vets for Peace drove three of us to Walter Reed Hospital with roses. We went to the wards and told patients that it was Mothers' Day and we wanted to wish them a good recovery, a good day, and wanted them to know mothers on the outside were thinking of them. It was unbelievably touching. We also gave roses to their moms or wives, etc, that were visiting, and to the hospital staff. Most of the staff was very welcoming and grateful. Also, on Saturday night, Medea and another very tall Code Pinker, Deseiree went to the welcoming area of the Washington Press Corp. gala where Obama was to speak, just to be there and be pink and observe, and spotted Donald Rumsfeld and Alberto Gonzales. Each in turn confronted Rumsfeld, arms raised, shouting "This man is a war criminal". They were escorted out, but not arrested. Finally, on Sunday, after the peace vigil we went over to the Mall where the army was displaying their weaponry for Mothers' Day! We walked in a "peace train" with members of the Friends Society to the mall. (I got to pedal the rolled up banner on a pink three wheel bike through the streets of Washington – quite a kick!) We sang peace songs and unfurled our banner outside the cyclone fencing that "protected" the army. Medea and Deseiree got inside before all of us arrived. Des jumped up on a humvee in her pink attire with her pink hula hoop and started doing a hula hoop for peace action. They were removed. After our presence caused them to close one of the entrances, things ended up getting confrontational with the police and we were forced to leave the mall. It was awful to see such a display on Mothers' Day, and to see families with their little children playing with the unloaded war machines and weaponry as if it were toys.

This is such a long article, but it just touches the iceberg of this experience and the things I learned and the interesting and wonderful people I met. I've returned with a renewed vigor to help develop a coalition Code Pink/WILPF group, hopes of recruiting more and younger torch-bearers, developing some cultural awareness presentations & projects in schools and the community, and hopefully strengthening our alliance with VFP56. The general tone and spoken word was that this is a time for the peace movement, including health care movement, to not slumber in complacency or burn-out, but to re-commit to do small or big things. Every little bit we do may help to tip the balance.



It Takes Courage To Resist

by Dave Berman

Everyone who attended the May 2009 meeting of VFP-56 will long remember the guest who joined us that night. "Hugh" (a pseudonym) was recently back from serving in Iraq. Clean cut and well dressed, when asked for his story, the soft spoken man told us he was 29 days AWOL and would technically be considered a deserter the following day.

Seemingly without hesitation or reservation, members offered safe crash space, camping gear, and a bucket we passed around that quickly filled up with money. It was a VFP-56 meeting, after all, so I would expect nothing less.

Hugh told us he was walking away from the military with two confirmed kills on his conscience, plus the memory of seeing the violent death of Alex, the buddy with whom he had enlisted. Hugh thoughtfully put himself in the shoes of Iraqis, pondering what we would be doing if a foreign force invaded and occupied our country. The war is illegal and based on lies, he said. Understanding the risks of both returning to Iraq and refusing to do so, Hugh said earlier that day he had attempted to go public with his story but the local TV station told him he was not a credible source (is that the pot calling the kettle black?).

Following the meeting I waited my turn to have a few words with Hugh. Handing him my business card, I offered to help him get his story out if he decided to continue trying to go public (he has not reached out to take me up on this offer, which still stands). On the back of the card I wrote www.CourageToResist.org, the website of a group dedicated to helping those who refuse to fight in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The seeds of Courage To Resist were first planted in the Bay Area in February 2003 when Marine L/Cpl Stephen Funk became the first military serviceperson to publicly refuse to fight in Iraq. By May 2005, CTR launched more formally and now operates as a 13 member collective with three paid staff, over 2000 donors, and services including "political, emotional, and material support to all military objectors critical of our government's current policies of empire."

In addition to supporting the well-known Lt. Ehren Watada, the CTR website also features profiles of Cliff Cornell, Robin Long and dozens of other people whose names and stories should be known throughout the broader peace movement. According to CTR:

"In the past few years, tens of thousands of service members have resisted illegal war and occupation in a number of different ways - by going AWOL, seeking conscientious objector status and/or a discharge, asserting the right to speak out against injustice from within the military, and for a relative few, publicly refus-

ing to fight."

Tens of thousands. Let that sink in. 10,000 x ? We are always so much stronger than we realize. I'm reminded of the excellent documentary Sir! No Sir! Perhaps it is time for VFP-56 to sponsor another screening?

CTR Project Coordinator Sarah Lazare says their message for soldiers is "if you have the courage to resist, we have your back." Hugh heard the same from VFP-56, that he should regard us as family, and that if he is in our area he is welcome at our future monthly meetings.

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

by Dave Berman

This month VFP-56 members were asked to respond to the Foghorn question of the month: What is the most important benefit you get from being a part of VFP-56 and how can we do better at offering that as a way to recruit new members? There was little response. But Jack Nounnan wrote and took a broader view of this sweeping question, speaking to the importance of our group's existence and the role we must play in our community...

I would begin by saying how important it is to join others in their work, at least in some outreach, learning first hand their efforts and their concerns, while they, in turn will certainly learn more of who we are. And seeking out all the returning vets we can find and allowing them a chance to know more about our work, particularly, 'in the field' efforts rather than merely meetings. Also seeking out the young, always, wherever we can find them.

Facing these extraordinary times has many of us wondering why bother in face of the odds and being ignored by this government. Part of what a number of groups including Communities For Justice and Peace are working on right now is: some deeper soul searching...

1) How can each one of us be more effective in helping with these crisis' we face?

2) How much time can we spare regularly to be challenging the very myths of our times? They're real...and so far dominate us. What of the legitimacy of this government and/or it's ability to act on our behalf?

3) Do we have hesitation or inability to see the necessity of such practice?

4) If we seek out 'known' remedies for feeling helpless and/or discouraged to outright apathetic before the odds we face, will we find them? Seems we will.

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Question of the Month: Continued from page 6

They're right there if we're willing to keep at it:

1) In deeper personal searches for our own sense of what we live for.

2) Being informed enough, knowledgeable enough to know undeniably and personally what we face and thus energized to act toward resolving such threats to survival, as surely as all of what shear survival sense ought to easily wake in us...if we're not too immersed in this cultures system. To break with it is to also sense the "hero myths which are born out of the very same substance.

3) Understanding the need of facing any situation for the truth it arouses in us...and getting through the suffering which surfaces in overcoming hardened, long practiced, cultural mind-sets...until one is freed of those old myths of self deprivations and or cravings.

4) Finding involvement and bonding with sensible, compassionate, down to earth people, working together for livable, sustainable, cooperative ventures and finding we can relish it!

It takes resolve, a deeper commitment to the truth we find in ourselves, rather than any escape stuff or thinking we're going to somehow overcome all this in our individual, separated out lives. Many women have rediscovered lost way, secrets of what's essentially innate, down to earth sensibility. When the going gets tough, they seek one another out, getting together in a bunch to hang out for the simple fun of it, the outright enjoyment and the restoring it brings. Keeps them sane and not playing as if they're the ultimate answer or how they've gotta shoulder the responsibility alone like their counterparts..."us bread winners who've been yoked with all the miserable myths of this "system" our entire manly lives.

Submitted by Jack Nounnan

KBR Does It Again

by Associated Press

Far from suffering for its shoddy military contracting in Iraq, Congressional investigators have found that KBR Inc. was awarded \$83 million in performance bonuses. Even worse, more than half came after Pentagon investigators linked faulty KBR wiring to the electrocution of four soldiers intent on relaxation. One soldier died taking a shower and another in a swimming pool.

How such settings became part of harm's way for the military was the question put to an electrical engineer hired by the Army who reported finding that 90 percent of KBR's wiring work in Iraq was not done safely. Some 70,000 buildings where troops lived and worked were not up to code, according to the engineer, who told a Congressional hearing of "some of the most hazardous, worst-quality work I have ever inspected."

Officials of KBR, the offshoot of the Halliburton conglomerate once run so lucratively by former Vice President Dick Cheney, deny responsibility and say the work met the British code used in the war zone. Flat denial is an all-too-familiar refrain from this most favored and most questionable of military contractors. The electrical engineer found most wirers were not experienced in the British code and many were third-country nationals with no electrical training at all.

Confronted with the airing of these lethal findings, the Pentagon at least had enough sense to tell Congress last week that KBR bonuses were suspended pending a full review. Senator Byron Dorgan's description of the Pentagon's performance as "stunning incompetence" is an understatement for such tragic profiteering.

The Army continues to investigate the deaths and reports of hundreds of non-lethal shocks suffered by troops. It has ordered emergency repairs, but the electrical inspector found that the building where the showering soldier was electrocuted still was not safely grounded by KBR until last October, 10 months after his death.

Submitted by Jim Sorter

Memorial Day Letter from a Vietnam Vet

by Mike Whitney

Charlie Ehlen is a former Marine now living in Glenmora, Louisiana

Originally, Memorial Day was created to honor Union troops who had died during the "Civil War" but, eventually it was expanded to include all American troops killed in action. At first, it was called Decoration Day and was the traditional day for the running of the Indianapolis 500. Monday through Friday was Race Day. Now, we've changed all that so we get a long weekend and businesses can have special holiday sales and make a quick buck. Ain't America great?

I just finished an article about "Rolling Thunder", a patriotic group of ex-vets who ride their motorcycles to Washington DC every year to honor the men who died in Vietnam. The article tells how the group "lost their way" in recent years and turned into a pro-war group. The article repeats the myth that vets were spit on when they got back from Nam. This is total CRAP! As a veteran of the Marine Corps and Vietnam, I never had any such experience, nor did ANY veteran I've ever talked to. It's a lie, plain and simple.

Another myth is that all Vietnam vets are drugged out criminals who lost all sense of morality.

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WE'RE ON 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 which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to turtldnccer@aol.com, in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.

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That's just more BS. We were not all criminals.

The same crap is being spread about Arabic people today. Why? Because, like the "de-ranged Vietnam vet" of the 70's they're an easy target to blame and abuse. It's just another way of reinforcing stereotypes and building support for the war.

We don't see that every person we kill in a foreign country creates more radicals who hate us. It's like Vietnam all over again, only worse. America is just too bloody stupid to figure it out. We ever learn from our mistakes?

People need to see what war really is, not the Hollywood version. They need to know what it smells like on a battlefield, although that's impossible to transmit through TV or the movies

Having survived a tour in Vietnam, I'd like for all of these armchair generals and cheerleaders to see what war is really like— the sights, the sounds, and the smells. That would cure them fast!

War is the most pornographic thing humans have ever devised. Trust me on this. Unless you've been in a war, you'll never, really understand what it's like. It's beyond your wildest dreams....or nightmares. It's just something you have to experience yourself. Then you'll hate *it much as I do*.

On this Memorial Day holiday, we need to remember not just the troops who have died in our wars, past and present, but all the people who've been killed or maimed from war.

Semper fi Charlie Ehlen