



The Broadside

Winter 2012
Volume 3 Issue 1

Working for Peace and Justice Through Nonviolence

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Upcoming Events

January 15-Professional Firefighters of Wisconsin President Mahlon Mitchell will be speaking at Spring Green Elementary School at 1:30 p.m. in observance of Martin Luther King Day. The public is welcome to attend.

January 16-Madison VFP member Will Williams will be speaking to Antigo, WI high school and middle school students in observance of MLK Day.

January 18-Madison VFP membership meeting at 6 p.m. at the Madison Area Technical College Downtown Campus, 211 N. Carroll, Room 240.

Working class takes the hit

VFP Rallies on Capitol Steps for the 10th Anniversary of Afghanistan War

Editor's note:The following is from a speech given by VFP, IVAW member Todd Dennis at the Capitol for the 10th anniversary of the start of the Afghan War.

By Todd Dennis

I would like to talk about a recent study entitled, "*American Military Deaths in Afghanistan, and the Communities from Which These Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines Came.*" This study challenges common assumptions about the make-up of today's military. The study evaluated 1446 casualties in Afghanistan from October 2001 through December 2010, drawing information from obituaries, tributes and other government sources.

Key Findings

Some key findings are that these casualties are disproportionately white and Native American working-class persons of which 75 % have only a high school education.

Although the highest numbers of casualties came from the South and the Midwest, the highest rates came from rural and small town areas. This is especially important to keep in mind with the critical Truth In Recruiting work that Veterans For Peace does, including the scholarships to smaller schools in South-

information, 78 per cent had working-class jobs; the national average in 2010 was 62 per cent. When combined with joining straight out of high school, these two categories accounted for 96 per cent of the pre-enlistment activity of the casualties. In addition, the



Todd Dennis



VFP rallies on October 15th, a windy day at the Capitol. *Forward Marching Band* members take a break in the foreground.

Central Wisconsin. Contrary to popular belief, there was no indication of a poverty draft. Instead, these persons came from communities which had an income level just below the median income of solidly working-class communities but not very poor. When the study was able to find pre-enlistment activity

counties where the casualties came from had lower poverty and unemployment rates than the U.S. average. These facts support a strong working-class connection to today's military.

(Continued on page 7)

Veterans for Peace Statement of Purpose

- Increase public awareness of the cost of war.
- Restrain our government from intervening overtly or covertly in the internal affairs of other nations.
- End the arms race and eliminate nuclear weapons.
- Seek justice for veterans and victims of war.
- Abolish war as an instrument of national policy

To achieve these goals, VFP members pledge to use non-violent means and to maintain an organization that is both democratic and open.

Chapter 25

Board Members-2012

Steve Books

Richard Chamberlin

Jeff Goldstein

John Carey

Lincoln Grahls

Lars Prip

David Soumis

Madison Veterans for Peace meets on the third Wednesday of each month at:

Madison Area Technical College

211 N. Carroll Street Rm. 240

At 6 pm

Broadside Editor

Richard Chamberlin

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VFP is a 501©(3) non-profit.



Editor's Musings By Richard Chamberlin

About three months ago I got a call from Akeem Torres who works for RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program). I've known him for a long time, so when he asked if Vets for Peace could help them with transportation for elderly veterans, I invited him to our next meeting. Seems the DAV (Disable American Veterans) had ceased providing the service. Several people, including me, signed up to give veterans rides to and from their medical appointments.

I completed some forms at their west side offices and took home a packet of material. It wasn't long before I got a call from RSVP Assistant Director Margie Zutter who gave me my first assignment.

Bob was 92-years old and lived in my neighborhood. I pulled into his driveway on a Wednesday morning and noticed he had a flagpole in his yard with a plaque and flowers next to it. I got out of my car and rang his doorbell.

"Be out in a minute."

I went back to my car to wait. A short time later a tall man with a quick gait got into my car.

We introduced ourselves and headed out. On our way to the hospital I found out that when Bob was drafted during World War II, he was already married with three children and worked as a machinist. He became a stateside instructor for the Army. So much for war stories, I thought.

As we drove west on the Beltline

he looked out at the tall reeds and said, "I used to hunt rabbits out there. I got my rifle from collecting bottles and selling them to bootleggers."

"How did you know who they were?"

He smiled. "Everyone knew who they were."

When we got to the VA, I let him off in the front and went looking for a parking spot, hard to find during the construction of a new parking ramp. Shortly after I parked and made it to the waiting room, Bob came out having finished his blood test. We took a hike back to the car and drove home.

When we pulled into his driveway I asked him about the flagpole.

He hesitated then said, "It's for my son. He died in Vietnam."

We strode over to the plaque and flowers and I read when his son was born and when he died. Had he lived, he would have been the same age as me. Bob bent down, cleared a few weeds from the flowerbed and we stood there looking up at the American flag gently rolling in the breeze.

He invited me in and we talked about his family. He'd had three children, but his wife and daughter had died leaving him with one son who owned a machine shop in Sun Prairie. However, he did have a "lady friend" who he went to social events with. I noticed that Bob had a large tape deck supplied by a books-on-tape service. Recently I loaned him the tapes of my book, *Hitchhiking from Vietnam* that were specially recorded for the visually impaired.

I've given Bob a couple rides since and I always learned new things about his life. It has been a very enjoyable experience. If anyone is interested in volunteering for the RSVP, just call Margie Zutter at 608-663-7536.

Madison Vets for Peace Show Solidarity With Occupy Washington

By Larry Orr

Dave Soumis, Lars Prip, and I represented Chapter 25 of at the opening of Occupy Washington in early October. We are very grateful to the chapter for granting us the funds that made the trip possible.



Larry Orr

We were there at the very beginning: the Madison contingent marched in, resplendent with our Raging Grannies. There were tents for food (served by Food Not Bombs), media, and medics along one side of the plaza. Lars and Dave slept on the grass. I opted for a rickety platform of chairs, and regretted it. I really envied the Code Pink folks, sleeping warm and dry in the nice cardboard cartons which kids had decorated.

The three of us were very visible, due to the large chapter banner we carried. From the start, media folks sought us out for interviews. We joked that Dave was a “chick magnet” because every time we looked, he was being interviewed by a beautiful young woman from France, Italy, China, or somewhere. CBS spent half an hour with me, and I was interviewed also by a reporter from the Washington Post... but none of this ever made it to the public. We did better with China, and with a community radio station in Virginia.

Two big actions marked the opening days: a march to General Atomics (a contractor for the

drones), and a protest at the Air and Space Museum (which was featuring the drones). A VFP member from Vermont recited a moving poem, comparing the daily life of a drone “pilot” and his family, to the deaths of his drone target... and his family. It put “collateral damage” into perspective for this new and sad era of the drones.

On the march over, we passed by another plaza, where an unrelated protest was taking place. Industry sponsored, its theme was “Jobs Jobs Jobs,” specifically jobs building the pipeline for the proposed tar sands project. The rhetoric from the podium was foul and violent, an interesting contrast with our peacefulness at Freedom Plaza.

At the Air and Space Museum, an agent provocateur caused a guard to pepper spray several people. This led to gas blowing into the museum, which made them close the museum and send the visiting tourists out... not a happy bunch of campers. The provocateur bragged about his exploits on-line, blowing his own cover, but the disappointed tourists didn't know that.

As we put a banner across the front of the museum, we noticed that a man was taking close-up photos of all the demonstrators. His t-shirt proclaimed his website, which sells photos of activists and demonstrators.

Might one assume that his photos are bought by various agencies and used with facial recognition software? No, surely not, eh?

Back at Freedom Plaza, the Park Police treated us fairly, I thought,

and the captain in charge sought us out with recommendations that we accepted with only a little grumbling. In return, we were granted an unsought four-month extension on our encampment.

There were many members of Veterans for Peace at our site, from all over the country. I made friends with vets from Vermont, Texas, Colorado, Minnesota, and Florida, and hope to keep in touch with them.

As in Madison, many people came to talk to us. Many thanked us “for what we did.” I'm always a little leery of that phrase, fearing that it includes an acceptance of the use of military force, so in addition to a sincere 'you're welcome,' I try to add “Work for peace!”

A couple of the men who came up to talk to me were active duty Army, one with two tours in Iraq and the other heading back to Afghanistan soon. Both

agreed that the wars are counterproductive and wasteful. Neither was gung-ho, and neither was glad to be a part of these wars.

I won't forget the woman who sat on a wall across from us as we held our banner. She broke our hearts: the widow of a many-tour soldier who came home from his last tour and disappeared. She thinks he took his own life.

None of us wanted to leave. We feel that we made a good contribution to the “Occupy” movement, and that we learned a lot too. All three of us have been active with Occupy Madison since our return. For current news from Occupy Washington, go to the website: **October2011.org**.

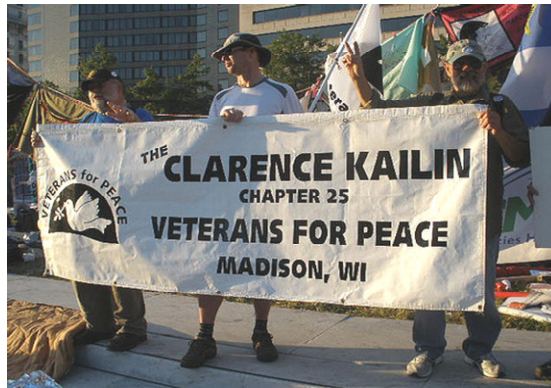


Photo by David Soumis

Lars Prip (left) and Larry Orr (right) Occupy DC.

Occupy Oakland Reminds VFP Member Grahlfs Of General Strike in 1946



By **F. Lincoln Grahlfs**

For some of us, recent events in this country are somewhat of a grim reminder of things that occurred more than a half-century ago.

Early in the week of October 25 the evening news broadcasts on television, reporting about the “Occupy Wall Street” movement and its proliferation around the country, showed a young man in Oakland, California, being carried away from the demonstration on a stretcher. I noticed, particularly, that he was wearing a Veterans For Peace (VFP) T-shirt. Eventually I learned that this was 24 year old Scott Olsen, a recently discharged marine from Onalaska, Wisconsin, who had done two tours in Iraq and was a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW). People who know Scott well have described him as a gentle person. Moreover, both VFP and IVAW constantly remind members to maintain a non-aggressive attitude in demonstrations.

Inevitably, in my mind, I was transported back to December, 1946 and what is generally remembered as the Oakland General Strike. At some point, near the beginning of the traditional Christmas shopping season, a strike was declared by retail clerks against Oakland’s two major downtown department stores. On December 3, Oakland police were seen escorting vehicles which con-

tained scabs (strikebreakers) and merchandise for the shelves of those stores. The word quickly spread and union workers, particularly truck, bus, streetcar and commuter train operators, literally walked off their jobs. It wasn’t long before other workers were joining the action and for almost three days the city was effectively shut-down; no busses, trains or trucks entered or left the city, and by the second day people who could not show a union card were discouraged from coming in. There had been no official strike authorized by any of the unions; this was a completely spontaneous “grass-roots” protest action.

After almost three days, with word that the Oakland City Manager had promised that the police would not again be used to bring in scabs, activity in the city gradually returned to normal. Although no concessions had been gained for the women retail clerks at Kahn’s and Hastings Department Stores, whose strikes had triggered the action, the consequences were notable. The city manager’s action negated the immediate cause of the action, four of the five labor-backed city council candidates were successful in the next election and, most impor-



Supporters of striking retail workers clog streets in Oakland, CA in 1946.

tantly, the strength of the labor coalition in Oakland had been established. These events affected me only peripherally, but I was able to observe them in some detail and to appreciate their significance. The ship on which I was serving had very recently returned from the western Pacific. We were berthed at Hunter’s

Point Naval Shipyard, preparing the vessel for decommissioning. My wife (not my current wife but my now deceased first wife) was, at that time, living in Oakland and, as long as I didn’t have watch duty, I was able to commute across the bay every night. For the duration of this action I was forced to remain on the San Francisco side of the bay.

In the spring I was sent overseas again, and didn’t return

until my release from the Navy in October of 1948. I then lived and worked in Oakland for three years before returning to New York and completing my education. The Oakland police continued, in my opinion, to exhibit repressive tendencies. The business climate, the political administration and, most definitely, the *Oakland Tribune* were definitely on the conservative side. Balanced against these forces, however, was a strong labor movement, in which both blue collar and white collar elements were unified within a central labor council. It is notable, also, that a large segment of Northern California's population in the late 1940's consisted of returned World War II veterans who were beginning to feel that they hadn't fought what they believed to be 'a war

against fascism' to return home to the divisive aspects of exploitation and privilege.

In closing, I would suggest that notably



Retail clerks man the picket line in front of Kahn's Department Store.

similar conditions exist today, not in one city, but across the country. Because there is much more effective communication possible, what started as a relatively small protest in New York's financial district quickly spread across the country. The protest was joined by union members who

have seen their bargaining rights diminished, by young people with huge student loan debts and no jobs, and a whole new contingent of disillusioned veterans.



“ I’m there protecting the rights that we have. When I took the enlistment oath when I joined the Marines, I swore to uphold and defend the constitution from enemies foreign and domestic and I’m continuing to do that.” Scott Olsen on the *Ed Schultz Show*

Check Out Our New Website

After over a year of false starts, Madison Vets for Peace finally has a new web site and blog at www.madisonvfp.org. We are still in the process of adding material but we invite the public to take a look and try it out for themselves.

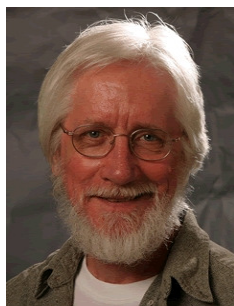
It features copies of all of our newsletters back to the Spring 2010 issue that you can read as well as contact information, videos and links to other sites.

Special thanks to Belle Dorn of BelleMedia for designing the site for us.

Visions of Peace For Veterans Day

by David Giffey

Glorification of the military—“militarism”—has attained such prominence in the American psyche that it exists as a surrogate and unofficial curriculum in our public schools, and many of us don’t even realize it. Militarism is often mistaken for patriotism, much like capitalism is misidentified as democracy.



As a frequent visitor and long-time observer of public schools in Wisconsin, a couple of egregious

examples that I’ve witnessed come to mind.

To set the scene, consider Memorial Day (the last Monday in May) or Veterans Day (November 11). Both observances occur during normal school years when classes are in session. Both days are the topics of widespread coverage in all media, ranging from interviews with elderly war veterans to nostalgic reminiscences about “heroes” or snappy displays of militarism by young men and women in uniform. The air is saturated with military references.

The most common signs I’ve seen of militarism in schools are evident in elementary schools involving the most impressionable of young children. Teachers often engage elementary school children in long-term projects in preparation for an outpouring of military glorification, intended or not.

The projects could be considered educational. They might include interviews with family members, compiling historical family data, and organizing the information for public exhibition, all under the tutelage of teachers. But the subject matter matters. I’ve seen elementary school hallways and display cabinets lavishly decorated with detailed information about numerous ancestors’ participation

in a war, complete with photos, dates, images of weapons, and inevitably adorned with stars and stripes, all serving to ally the U.S. flag closely with the concept of war. While history probably proves that relationship to be accurate, the constant association of citizenship and the flag with the violence of war undermines lessons children should learn about peace.



Photo by David Giffey

Militarism linked with patriotism a common theme in public schools.

In schools familiar to me, the patriotic programs usually unfold by gathering all the kindergarten through fifth grade children to sit on the gym floor. A detail of uniformed Veterans of Foreign Wars or American Legion members is either seated in front or marches in as a color guard, usually armed. After the color guard is dismissed, a program of readings and patriotic music follows. Adult speakers, either veterans or clergy, give talks. Awards may be presented. And the programs often end with a 21-gun salute fired immediately outside the door and startling most of the children because they can’t see what’s happening and haven’t been briefed about it.

A few years ago, during such a program, several World War II veterans were invited to describe their experiences to about 110 children on November 11. One of the speakers described capturing of a group of German soldiers, and summarily executing all but one of the prisoners of war whose life was spared for interrogation. I was shocked to hear such

a blatant war crime proudly described to anyone, much less a captive audience of children as young as 5 years old. I lodged a complaint with the school staff and the programs since are somewhat less overtly militaristic and horrifying.

In another public school, I saw a large visual display lauding veterans for being religious, bold, righteous, and so on, used as a backdrop for second grade boys holding poster-sized renderings of deadly weapons including tanks and howitzers. The little boys had been coached to recite the deadly capabilities of the weaponry into a microphone for the gathered assembly of fellow students, parents, friends and veterans.

What can we do?

I believe Veterans for Peace is the correct antidote for this kind of militaristic brainwashing of young children. As veterans, we deserve a hearing in the schools, a hearing at least equal to that given to the VFW and American Legion.

After becoming acquainted with the local schools where I live, I was invited to present Veterans Day programs in 2011 to about 320 students in the middle school gym and about 100 elementary students in a rural village school. Their teachers wisely split the younger children



Middle school students recite the pledge for peace using “human mic” technique at River Valley Middle School. (Contributed photo)

into two age groups, so I made two presentations in the elementary school.

I chose “Visions of Peace” as a topic, and carefully prepared a 30-minute program including a slide show with images from a 1995 return trip to Vietnam I made with a group of Americans dedicating Vietnamese-American Peace Park. I used a Native American ceremonial pipe carved for the occasion and some ingen-

ious folk toys I bought from a Hanoi street vendor as props. I also took along my Veterans for Peace flag and a peace sign I've used for years in peace demonstrations, and displayed them prominently.

To conclude the middle school program, I asked for about a dozen volunteers. The students had been incredibly attentive during the entire time and it seemed like everyone wanted to volunteer. I gathered the volunteers across the gym, turned off the mic, and they became a human microphone (like the occupiers' movement) eagerly and loudly repeating a "pledge for peace" which I got from a San Antonio website salsa.net/peace. The pledge was brief and included terms like "respect all life" and "reject violence" and "preserve the planet." It filled the gymnasium.

For the elementary students, I followed approximately the same format but used more visual aids like picture books showing Native Americans and ceremonial traditions.

In both schools, I emphasized how the students should insist on learning about peace. Based on my Vietnam war experience, I reminded them that war isn't like a video game but causes real pain and suffering to soldiers and civilians alike, that the so-called enemy is also part of a family. I encouraged them to learn about the incredible peacemakers of the world, and said that they should also insist that their teachers help them do research for essays and art based on peace studies.

The feedback has been positive, and several teachers said they hoped I could return for future programs. A public librarian reported that a teacher had requested some peace study books for the elementary school students.

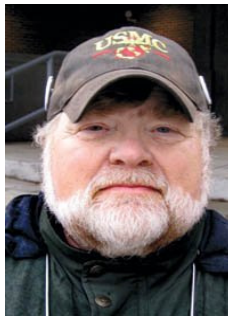
All in all, it was the most interesting and encouraging Veterans Day in my memory. It gave me hope to continue working for a peace consciousness in the schools, with the realization that militarism isn't inherent in the minds of young people. If militarism can be taught to children, it must follow that they are equally adept at learning to be peace loving. Veterans for Peace is a perfect vehicle for teaching about peace.

MADISON VFP ADDS TWO NEW MEMBERS TO BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Since there were no other candidates, the membership approved two new directors at their December meeting, replacing retiring director David Giffey and Mike Boehm who resigned late last year.

LARS PRIP

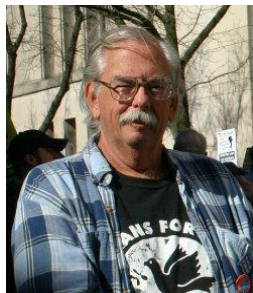
Lars Prip, AKA Yon Yonson, is a Marine Corps veteran who served two tours as a U.S. embassy guard Saigon in 1968-69,



and later in Tehran, Iran. He lives with his wife on a farm in Afton, WI where he dabbles in antiques and collectibles. He also worked as a mechanical engineer for 35 years. Recently he has been doing peace vigils with the Fellowship of the Reconciliation in Janesville and counter-recruiting at Janesville High School.

DAVID SOUMIS

David Soumis joined the Air Force in 1969 to avoid the draft but ended up spending a year in Binh Dinh Province,



Vietnam anyway as an aircraft mechanic. After his discharge in 1972 he re-upped with the Navy for ten years as a corpsman working on medical equipment, a field he works in today. He has been active in Vietnam Veterans Against the War since 1969. He and his wife have raised four children. Today he is active in Occupy Madison as well as several local peace groups.

Continued from page 1

Women's Casualties

For the 23 women who died in Afghanistan, they were more educated than their male comrades. The women were three times more likely to have a college degree and almost three times more likely to be a military academy graduate.

Obviously this study was limited but when compared to U.S. society as a whole it confirms the belief that members of the military do differ significantly. For example, because of the strong connection to working-class families, executive and professional families appear to be underrepresented in today's military.

The casualties are also largely young adults, with almost 85 per cent being between 18 and 34 years old. Specifically, 40.37% were 20-24 years old and 24.93% were 25-29 years old. Compared to the rest of the U.S. population where 12.16% are 20-24 and 12.14% are 25-29, the numbers are staggering.

Another important connection to consider is that these differences may contribute to the political dynamics surrounding opinions about the war and war in general in the U.S.

(For more information on this study contact the Center for Working Class Studies at Stony Brook University www.stonybrook.edu/workingclass/publications/afghan-casualties.shtml)



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