Transcript of VFP Chapter 25 meeting with Garett Reppenhagen May 29, 2022 at Goodman Center, talking about the state of VFP, nationally and our chapter

Garett Reppenhagen:

Okay. Well, thanks for bringing me out here, I appreciate this. You gave me an opportunity to go to Minneapolis as well and see the folks out there that are chapter, went to the Women Against Military Madness March along the lake there. Went to a bookstore, did a radio interview there.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, appreciate it. You all help fund a big effort. So I was telling some folks that it's rare me coming out and be able to travel around as the executive director for two years while in the pandemic.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, I certainly have been meaning to travel more and visit chapters, now we’re in a financial cruncn, because I think the pandemic, and a lot of a lot of reasons. I think another reason is the fact that what’s impacting on your chapter as well is we're a greying community. It's not just Veterans for Peace, it's the whole peace community.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So we're feeling that crunch. In the last two years, I've cut $120,000 out of our expenses per year, and it's still not enough, I got to make more cuts and raise more money. If it wasn't for your financial assistance, I wouldn't be able to travel around. So thank you for bringing me out here, and I hope I can be of help, you know. I certainly have my ideas but that's all they are. It's not like I'm going and prove it and then get 20 new young veterans attending a Chapter on Earth. I don't know, I'm willing to just be here and work it out with you all, because I think it's important. I think if we don't get young veterans in this organization, we're done in 10 years.

Larry:

I was just working on something today on things I've got to present, and I came across the GAR, the Grand Army of the Republic, there's another veteran’s organization –who’s heard of the GAR? That was the big thing after the Civil War and when I was a kid that's who decorated cemeteries….

Judy:

What happened with IVAW?

Garett Reppenhagen:

IVAW became About Face—that’s the new name-- and they've lost a lot of members, they've changed their model because of their low membership. A lot of their goal is to be a vanguard to support racial justice, indigenous rights. So there really isn't many towns that have more than two members in any one place. Almost everything they do they mobilize and gather in one spot. They have maybe a core of like 20,30 members that do everything. So when there's a call, they travel somewhere and that sort of thing.

It's not a rich gathering round for us to recruit folks from. A lot that I talked to already, I went to their last online convention and I don't think there was ever more than 20 people in one room via Zoom.

Garett Reppenhagen:

In a large sense, it's US wars that get veterans to drive veterans to Veterans for Peace and these movements. And ever since really 2008, after Obama won the election, the war has disappeared from the American public, they use more of Special Forces, contractors and drones, and the US casualties plummeted and we didn't see the body bags coming home. And the peace movement I think evaporated. For one thing, people thought that Obama got it, Gitmo was going to close, the wars were going to end and everyone's going to come home and it's going to be a green revolution, but we aren't reading about healthcare for at least three years, and got into an economic slump, and the Occupy movement took place of where other movements basically were.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Standing Rock and racial justice, really is taking more of a center stage, because I think those things are felt more deeply and divided amongst more people and it's right from ???. So that's the sense of urgency, I think that people have right now, not anti-militarism, which we know that it's all interconnected. But we're not seeing people driving the anti-war movement like we were back in the Bush-Chaney days of course.

Garett Reppenhagen:

That might change, the conflict in Ukraine obviously, we're involved. It's a proxy war now, between NATO and Russia, if it wasn't already the original war. But it's obvious that that's the way it is now. If this grows and spreads out of control, it could very well spark more interest in anti-militarism, but we have an uphill battle. The war is incredibly popular with the American people right now, and the media shows the horrors of war finally, because it's not the Western world that's perpetrating violence. So they're free to investigate how awful war is finally, not that it hasn't been before. We have been the perpetrators of violence for years and years and years, but it's instructive the American people that they're anti-war by being pro-war, if that makes sense.

Garett Reppenhagen:

But it's not unfamiliar territory, the anti-war movement, Veterans for Peace has rallied against popular wars in the past. We've taken the unpopular position of peace constantly. When I came back from Iraq in 2005, the approval rating for the war and for George W. Bush was through the roof. When I was coming back, my anti-war stance, I was getting letters in the mail, they'd call me a traitor even death threats, when I was the President of IVAW. So here we are, we're against the popular war and that might be where it is for a long time, until the body bags of the American troops are coming home on the regular, which may never happen. But we don't know how this is going to go.

Garett Reppenhagen:

The situation we’re in as a peaceful movement is, we could figure out a way to still be affected and still grow despite the odds, or we could make sure that we're a placeholder. So when the world events occur as they will eventually, that there's a movement that veterans can plug into instead, or we can do both. I think we can do both. I think we can make an impact against militarism despite our waning numbers, and if we show that we can be effective, I think people will come to join the organization.

Garett Reppenhagen:

They used to think that people didn't join Veterans for Peace and the anti-war movement, because they were too afraid to, they didn't want to get arrested or they didn't want to be alienated from friends and family or risks work situation, or whatever it is. I thought people could just be lazy a lot, we'd rather just go to a backyard barbecue watching the ballgame, than spend time with the anti-war movement. But really, I think people feel like we're ineffective. They're going to spend their time and resources for nothing. And they're not going to earn liberation more which they want. So they're not going to invest the time and energy in something that they think is a waste, and we prove that it's not.

Garett Reppenhagen:

For one, we are the voice of reason and we speak truth to power. And I think veterans have one of the strongest voices in that regard. And two, the community that we build around it is, I think, something really special. I came home as a sniper from Iraq, I had moral injury, I didn't know it. I didn't even hear that word for three years after I came home from the war. But I have post-traumatic stress disorder, and I have moral injury, and the PTSD has actually become more manageable at first through medication and visiting my shrink, and eventually through alternative medicine, other things. Time, has really helped, my PTSD has been a lot more manageable, but my moral injury has been debilitating.

Garett Reppenhagen:

When I first came home, I was in a state where I wouldn't even allow myself to have any pleasure or happiness, because I didn’t think I deserved it. So any good thing in my life I would sabotage, and I'd go out a week-long bender to punish myself for being happy. Even if I just had a good night out with friends, I felt awful about it like I didn't deserve it. So the only trajectory of that is suicide, to ultimately provide self-capital punishment for what I did to people in Iraq. But I was with IVAW and Veterans for Peace, and slowly I started re-identifying myself as a peace activist, as an anti-militarism activist. And I started hearing from veterans that said they were joined the organizations because something I said, they've heard so and so said. I had kids come up to me and say, "Hey, you came to my class three years ago and because of that, I didn't join the military. And thanked me."

Garett Reppenhagen:

I think and slowly I started realizing that I was pretty good back into the world. This karmic scale was starting to balance a little bit more, not so much where I forgave myself. It's been worth along the way, but sometimes we go out and do an action, or we put up tombstones in a park, or we do all the work we do. Sometimes we do it because of the mission, because we feel the need to do it, but sometimes we just do it for each other. We make commitments to each other as a community and we rely on each other to do those things. And we look each other in the eye and say, we're going to do this thing and then we go out and do it. Because we love our community, because we're part of this community.

Garett Reppenhagen:

And there's something that you can't explain to a young veteran yet that is just... You're going to be a family and we were talking about the conventions. The convention is one part, like info gathering and sharing and celebrating successes, but really the bigger piece of it is the family reunion. It's a big family reunion. And a lot of people want the convention back because they missed the family thing. I think we're going to eventually have physical conventions like that again, I don't think we're going to do the business meeting there ever at all.

Garett Reppenhagen:

A lot of the regular rigmarole is the same, I think we maximize getting together in person in two ways. Community Building, we lean heavily in being a community and a family, and we lean heavily on taking action. If we're going to have 300 members of Veterans of Peace anywhere at one time, we better be doing something there that is changing the political landscape, the military environment, the policies. And think we'll start gathering again, but that will be the focus, and we can't spend so much goddamn money.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Spokane cost the organization $50,000. And I looked at some of the past conventions that we had before I became leader and Oh my god, we're losing so much money on that. So we got to figure out a way to do it more economical, which I think we can do, it's just, we're not paying for fancy hotels, video setups and people changing the chairs out, because we're doing the work, but we can do it. So it's long, that's a long way around to get back to the chapters.

Garett Reppenhagen:

You're not alone in the situation there, there's chapters out there that have three people showing up and looking at each other, well, what are going to do? Close the doors or what's up? So you all are in a very progressive town, a college town, veterans are coming to go to school here. You have some access, you've got the F-35 situation that can keep people motivated and gathering something local. We've been organizing the War Industry Resisters Network, you all familiar with that at all?

Garett Reppenhagen:

There's about, I think, 30 names, local organizations in the War Industry Resistor Network. What it is, is just local anti-war industry groups that have come together, and the idea is to protest the war industry in your own community. You find the financial backing, the production of weapons or the research, institutes, academics, whatever it is, that's supporting the war economy, and that's your focus of the protests. And I think it's really been a couple of reasons.

Garett Reppenhagen:

One, there's a reason why all these war toys are built in every district in America, right? Because they want to provide jobs to voting districts. Which means they're all dispersed and that's horribly ineffective, and a waste of taxpayer money, eventually we shouldn't be producing those things. But even if it did, there's more effective ways to do it than building all the pieces in 50 different states and bringing them together.

Garett Reppenhagen:

But it also means that those places are accessible to everybody in America. It changes this inaccessible anti-militarism campaign into a not in my backyard campaign. Because we could just probably, any town in America, there's probably within an hour drive to get to someplace that's important to the military industrial complex.

Steve; Like Oshkosh.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, and I think we start focusing on some stuff like that, and between F-35 and the war industry, politicians that receive massive campaign contributions for military-industrial complex. You get the money, or the finances in those campaign contributions are public.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So you can get a list of the top 20 politicians that have received military-industrial complex contributions. You could go out to these places and protest in front of Raytheon, Lockheed Martin and Honeywell, with a sign saying so and so got $300,000 from Honeywell, and just added $40 billion military plan for the Ukraine.

Steve:

Like Tammy Baldwin, I don’t know if anyone has done the research.

…   
Brad:

Open Secrets is a good website where you can find contributions. My concern around determining where contributions came from is because they're so distributed in so many ways. The Chamber of Commerce has very much to do with these industries. And like Raytheon and Lockheed, they have their own little boards within the chamber. And then there's all this stuff going on at the university like research like you're saying, but it's hard to know that it's actually defense, because they got subsidiaries and whatever, so that's going to take a lot of work.

Steve:

Yeah, the Madison Chamber of Commerce always wants to ….business, they fund it...millions of dollars of business. WMC too, Wisconsin manufactures commerce.

Brad:

I think the local chamber got at least $110,000 in the beginning just to sell us the F-35.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, and sometimes the information comes to you, once you start doing things, people come out of the woodwork and say, hey, I've got some information on that, I work in the college. Like, Oh, shit, okay. Because sometimes you don't have to be the expert on things and you'll find those folks in the community that will help. But yeah, you got to be active with all of them. Doing things and being seen in the public is the first step, and there's a lot of chapters who aren’t doing that, and they don’t have enough members even get to that state where they can have a decent presence. But some of them live in communities that are not very supportive of their message, so you have a little advantage there. I'm sure if you go three miles outside of the city you'll find different views.

Steve:

different cities?

Garett Reppenhagen:

No, just the outside of Madison.

Steve:

Oh, yeah. Well, I think that Twin Cities is a very, very militaristic police department

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, they've got a long way to go with this.

Judy:

Yeah, it's harder to do in Waukesha.

Brad:

We tried in Janesville, we got like nobody wanted to join us. They all wanted to join the Patriotic Society or whatever it was.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Well, you're going to find the members where you can. And when you do get your younger members, I think you don't bring him into a chapter meeting the first thing. Get them out on the streets, doing things, show them where you're active. After they've been in for some months you could invite them say, "Hey, I'm interested in coming to chapter meetings, it's a lot of business, but if you're interested to get involved you can get involved." But don't make it seem the only way you could be a member is if you come to all the chapter meetings.

Garett Reppenhagen:

And also, new folks might be a little overwhelmed with everything, being newly radicalized, given the political education, unfucking their head for being in the military. Learning activist lingo, learning activist culture, even ways to behave and what to say and not say, showing up right.

Steve:

The statement of purpose, that's a good document, and it got recently revised.

Garett Reppenhagen:

There's some additions in that, racial justice and police, yep.

Steve:

We talked to one young person today at the table, Brad or John, John was the guy that came to look at the Gamers For Peace.

Judy:

We were talking about that then.

John:

The question I had, and I asked you this on the phone a few months ago. I mean, we would like to make contact if there's anybody in Wisconsin. I mean, to come and talk with us or we could have a forum and try to bring the public, where they get stuff on radio station, some way to get some connections to some local people and then see where it goes. So you said there's a few 100 around the country, is there some people in Wisconsin we could contact?

Garett Reppenhagen:

I don't know, I'll find out.

John:

We'll have to recruit them ourselves.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, I'll find out.

Judy:

These are gamers you're talking about?

John:

Yeah. Well, according to this, part of the organization, the anti-war gaming.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, I can get into that then. So our first online convention we had, we had a panel at our recruitment workshop there. And out of that, we started holding regular meetings and recruitment meetings. In this way, we quickly realized that the US Military goes into online digital spaces to recruit kids. Because they could no longer have in person conversations in high school and shopping malls because of COVID. They had already started working on the digital organizing through recruitment through video game spaces already, that they put almost their whole budget into video games.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Video gaming now is a larger industry than Hollywood and television programs. So there's more money in it, and there's more people interacting with it.

Steve:

I think that makes some of the Madison

Steve:

Some of the shoot’em up games in Madison. I think one was the shooter games, isn't Madison?

Garett Reppenhagen:

So imagine in a video game, you're playing and this character runs by the section 100 times with their camera. And on the wall there's a recruit poster, they see that digitally hundreds of times. So hundreds of times they're going by this wall and this character playing these games. So not only are they war games, which has conditioned them mentally to accept warfare as something that's normalized, they're also being bombarded by recruitment. And now they're playing in the video game with military recruiters that are identifying themselves as the recruiters.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So in real time, while they're playing, there's somebody playing with them on their team, that's a military recruiter. And they all have headsets on and they're talking to their teammates, and eventually the guy is like, "Hey, you're having fun?" "Yeah, like every other game." "Yeah, you want to do this sort of stuff for real? Why don't we go to this chat room and talk about it"

Brad:

I think another part of it is, not only with the video games, but with the books and the TV is teaching people who the good guys are and who the bad guys are, and who you need to root for, and I think that's one of the main.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Well, we got involved in a campaign called Deplatform Six Days, because there's a video game they're trying to create called Six Days in Fallujah, where it's a simulator where you're playing a Marine Corps Soldier or a Marine in the Battle of Fallujah. We partnered with CAIR, the Council on American and Islamic Relations. We partnered with them and we called it an Arab [unclear], because it was conditioned as Islamophobic and racist. Yeah, it's this good guy, bad guy dichotomy that we always get trapped and we're trapped in the Ukraine thing.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We trying to focus on the Gamers for Peace, I'll try not to get too sidetracked. But we're trying to figure out what we could do to really get involved and interrupt recruitment in these online spaces. And the military has actual paid game players for now an MOS, Military Occupational Specialty branches, where you play video games and interact with gamers or sell military online.

Garett Reppenhagen:

A lot of us have Esports teams, and you know what that is. So they go to tournaments and play in uniform, the army uniform or the Marine Corps uniforms and are playing video games as a team in the military. So then they're winning these tournaments and my kids are like, "Wow, I want to be a Marine." So we're like, okay, we need Esports teams, because there's going to be a day where Veterans for Peace, Gamers for Peace beats the Marine Corps on video game tournament. If that's not a Hollywood script I don't know what it is.

Judy:

It is, that's a great movie.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We do a lot of interruption wherever they're playing, we try to go into those spaces. We have a good community, just a big online community where we share information, but we have bots that look for when the military start streaming video games. And the bot alerts us and says, hey, army is online streaming, here. And all we have to do is gather even if it's just two or three of us. We gather and we're like, oh shit, the army is streaming, we can click the link, go in there and get in the chat and just start talking truth to power, oh, this is my experience as a sniper in Iraq, it wasn't anything like this, we're just jam it up.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We've had the military just cut off chat before, which is great, now they're not recruiting through the chat. And we've had to stop streaming altogether and shut down the streams.

Judy:

The whole games?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, they're 15 minutes dead time and trying to play the streaming game and shut all of it down.

Judy:

Wow.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah.

Judy:

That is great.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, so we've had some success. We do Twitch streaming, so we do our own streaming. But while we stream we talk about anti-militarism and we talk about the toxic culture in the military. We talk about all the reasons why you shouldn't join the US Military, and if you want to join this is what you should know.

Garett Reppenhagen:

And if you want to join, this is what you should know. Right?

Judy:

Is that for any age? The Twitch-

Garett Reppenhagen:

Any age.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Anybody could get on there.

Garett Reppenhagen:

I would say probably our Friday program is the most edgy.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We used to have a show called At Slam where we would watch military recruiting videos. Have you ever seen Mystery Science 3000?.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So the gimmick there is in that show they watch a movie, just see their silhouettes, and they just talk about the movie in front of it. So we watch ads and you could see all of us in the corner and then the ads in the middle. We watch the ads and we make fun of the ads.

Judy:

Cool.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Say how unrealistic it is or how ridiculous it is or how it's a lie or whatever. We make fun of it. But we'll tear about any military movie. We've tore up Top Gun and all the Hollywood military movies we've gone through. We just poke at bad veteran culture folk, a lot of veteran people that have become politicians and are awful. We'll just slam folks. Now it's kind of spread into really just taking apart this veteran exceptionalism and war culture that we kind of interconnected with entertainment. But we get a real energy on that show. So, I don't know. If you got kids that are probably younger than 16, you might want to watch it with them-

Judy:

Be a little ... Watch it with them. See what's going on. Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, yeah. Talk to them about things as they come up. But yeah, so we Twitch. Twitch is like ... Think of it as pirate TV. That's what Twitch TV is, right? It's pirate TV, it's streamed on the internet. All the video gamers are using it. There are now just professional video gamers that make so much money through Twitch ads and through support from the community that they are becoming millionaires online, playing video games. So we have a VFP Twitch Channel that we stream all this content on, whether it's us just playing games and talking about it, talking about better culture, talking about anti-extremism, because there's also white nationalists that are using video game platforms to sort of organize and recruit kids as well.

Judy:

Oh, wow.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So we challenge all of that on Twitch and ... I want to say the VFP Convention in Kansas City, not sure when was that. I can't remember. IVAW, we did a thing. There's a video game expo there and the army video game came out around that. I think it was called that Army of One, I can't remember the name of it, the name of the video game. But we went down there and we walked through the halls of the video game expo and yelling "War is not game."

Judy:

Wow.

Garett Reppenhagen:

In our uniforms.

Judy:

Interesting.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Back then, while you were playing the video game, the only people you were interacting with was the people you were playing a video game with at the time. Now with Twitch, we record all the content. So not only are you interacting with the people that are playing with the video games at the time, you also have an audience that's watching you play the video game that you can interact with while you're playing. Because you can see what they're typing and you can type back and say, "Hey John, thanks for coming in. You think I should go left or right? Right? Okay, you got going right." And then John's like, "Holy shit. I'm talking to the guy on TV," you know?

Garett Reppenhagen:

So it's super interactive and then it's recorded so people can watch it late. So if we play Stardew Valley and somebody's just like, "I really like Stardew Valley, I wonder if there's any Twitch streams out there for that. Oh, here's one. I can watch three recorded episodes." They can watch it, right? So now we're not just isolated to like the real time universe, now it's a way to like-

Judy:

Spread the information-

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Build that audience and become more viral. Yeah, I think that's ...

John:

Question. Okay, so we ... Obviously we're not gamers.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Sure.

Judy:

Grandson is.

John:

Grandson, okay. So we're talking high school students and college students. So what ... I mean, do we leaflet them with, "Hey, why don't you check this out?" What's the angle to get to them?

Garett Reppenhagen:

I think you ... You know, It's good to try to understand what's going on even if you're not going to be a gamer and watch all the time. But just check out a like one show one time, see what's happening. You know, there's a lot of different kinds of shows, but at least you'll know what it is. If a few of you feel like joining the Discord community, you could get on Discord and you could at least see what, what people are talking about there. Because we'll get kids into the Discord. They'll watch a show and just tell people on the shows like, "Hey, come to our Discord community and chat with everybody." And they'll come on there and say, "Oh, let's think about joining the military." And you got like eight people on there, "No, don't do that!" You know? And then they support them. You know? They're like, "Oh, well what do you want to do?" Like, "Oh, maybe there's other ways you can do that," you know? And we start building a community with them.

Judy:

Exactly.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So now they're not just somebody isolated thinking about joining the military. Now they're a member of our community where we're actually making it cool not to join the military. Right? So when they say, "Ah, I decided not to join," we're like, "Yeah, you're awesome, man. That's cool. Like play a game sometime with us," you know.

Judy:

I can imagine my grandson starting a club at his school for this kind of thing, because he's very peaceful and wants to promote peace. It's kind of like the counter recruitment tables that we would have though, only the kids would be organizing it more. But how that helps the chapter then, and that gets a little ... I don't know.

John:

Well ... But that's where ... That's getting our message out and-

Judy:

It's getting the message out.

John:

Because see, one of the things that the chapter's been doing is ... Trying to do is these scholar ships... The point of it being counter recruitment. So give scholarships so kids can go to community college and not the military.

Judy:

Yeah, we do that.

John:

Not join the army. Okay. So David Giffey has been doing it very successfully. And while I guess in the city here Will Williams was doing that a while ago.

Judy:

Yeah.

John:

But we've been unsuccessful for several years in getting anybody in Madison. It was a question of how do we get these kids, how do we counter-recruit these kids? And this sounds exactly like-

Judy:

Yeah.

John:

So it's not like they write an essay for us or they write a poem or something. They get involved in this-

Judy:

Into our club.

John:

They get involved in this stuff.

Garett Reppenhagen:

That'd be great.

John:

And we support it. We advocate it.

Judy:

I think we could do something.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We've been talking about scholarships through the membership committee and the Gamers for Peace. We thought about creating something on a national level called the Alternatives to Military Service scholarship. And we are intending it to go to children of military families. Right? So this does two things. One, it's counter-recruitment because the child doesn't join the military, right? But two, you're talking about somebody whose family members, whose father and mother, could be a veteran.

Judy:

Right.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Right? And are potential members of Veterans for Peace.

John:

Right.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Because-

Judy:

Ah ha, yeah. That's true.

Garett Reppenhagen:

You know, these parents are now my age. Right? Or even younger, you know?

Judy:

Yeah. That's a good idea.

Garett Reppenhagen:

You know, there's potential to recruit. I think not only get the kid out of the military, but get a member.

Judy:

Right.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So that's a thought too.

John:

So the chapter ... Okay. So again, I've been involved for 17 years and the first few years I hated the meetings, coming to meetings. There was fights between people in them.

Judy:

Yeah.

John:

Anybody here remembers? There ... Two guys would go into it. They were fist fights.

Judy:

Oh.

John:

You know? And I only got involved ... I would work with the Memorial Mile. So I would start getting involved in maybe February or March for the Memorial Mile. Then I would stop coming. And so ... But I'm saying if our meetings were showing these ... Whatever these things are, these movies of ... I mean like Science Mystery Theater 3000? Which I love that, because I have a relative who's involved in that. Yeah. I mean, so that something like that could bring people. We've had people come to our meetings and never come back.

Judy:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Right.

John:

Yeah. So-

Judy:

Meetings are hard.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. It can be a revolving door. You know, like new members especially will come in and be like, "Oh, this is not what I want to do," right?

Brad:

I think that ... Of the new people we've brought in meetings in the last ... Whatever, five years? How many of them made more than one meeting?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Right.

John:

Yeah.

Brad:

Some saw, they don't come back.

John:

Yeah.

Brad:

So yeah. Putting them through our meetings is not the right way to go.

Judy:

You guys have been meeting socially though. You tried it out at different pubs or something. Did that work better?

Larry:

Yes.

Judy:

Yeah? Where it's more of a social meeting as well as your other meeting. Because maybe that's ... Would it be more attractive? I don't know.

Larry:

A little business may get talked about, but mainly it's a social occasion.

Judy:

Yeah.

Larry:

We get together at Dairy Land restaurant, Slices Bar & Grill and bar-

Judy:

Or maybe alternate. Because you have to have some business meeting too. But ...

Larry:

I think that we do. We do both, actually ... Well, one and then the other.

Brad:

I think the protests would be good.

Larry:

Yeah.

Brad:

You know, get in the streets, vent.

Larry:

Join-

Brad:

Have them sign.

Larry:

Yeah. Some events.

John:

Yeah.

Larry:

Have some adrenaline.

Brad:

I'm going to contact those ... The youth girls again. Because I'm sure they want to do it again, but we just kind of got lost in our other stuff.

John:

What's that?

Brad:

It's a bunch oif area high school girls there. Want to raise some hell about the environment and the military.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. And the F-35's is great target for that.

Judy:

Yeah. Garrett, I think your program, that Green, or the War's Not Green or whatever that video thing is, has been great. We've been putting it out on the network and stuff. But the environmental has a lot of these active kids.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah.

Brad:

Oh yeah.

Judy:

And they're worried about the world. And then when they realize what war does to, you know, what it takes away from our earth. So I think that's a good hook too, the environmental stuff.

Garett Reppenhagen:

I mean, to youth, the climate issue is similar to how the nuclear issue was for older-

Judy:

Absolutely.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Like the nuclear situation is definitely ... If it happens, we're wiped out. Right?

Judy:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

That's brutal. But that's if somebody pushes the button-

Judy:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Right? The climate thing feels inevitable to most youth-

Judy:

Kids are feeling it. Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

They just ... They're like, "We're screwed. Like this is awful."

Judy:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

They're not thinking in the sense of like, "Let's stop it from happening." They're they're thinking of like, "Let's try not to go extinct over it."

Judy:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

You know? So ... So yeah. I think the climate issue is very motivating for younger people. I feel like folks are just starting to talk about the interconnections to military-

Judy:

I do too.

Garett Reppenhagen:

You know, when we're talking about like carbon output, like ... You know, the military's not even saying how much each base is just producing carbon-wise. And any place with fighter flying is an easy target for activism. Because those are the biggest carbon pushers.

Judy:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Is the aircraft. So I'm sure there's a way that you can even calculate the numbers. If you could figure out how many flights are flying, how many miles-

Steve:

Well they got ... Yeah. The group Safe Skies flew onto Wisconsin-

Garett Reppenhagen:

They got a number?

Judy:

Yeah.

Steve:

Yeah. And then I think the Wisconsin Air National Guard's environmental impact would have information too.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Okay. Wow.

Steve:

But I think they're ... I think that they got sued out there. Something. Yeah, something wasn't right-

Brad:

They didn't do a very good job, but when the F-35s come, it'll be like an additional 2400 cars on the streets of Madison. Dane County, all the time.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. I mean the environmental impacts, it's not just the carbon released right? You've got the US military supporting like fossil fuel exploitation all over the world, transportation of fossil fuel, the suppression of indigenous and local protests against-

Steve:

And the water too. The water.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. The pollution of ... Yeah. Poisoning the water. Yeah, I mean it's awful. And then the fact that the military is monopolizing all our resources to create solutions for climate and just transition, you know, there's so many ways that can attack the military around climate andI don't know why the environmental organizations haven't done that more. It could be because they just feel like it's ... They're already trying to fight against so much, that also trying to challenge the US military seemed like impossible. So the possible avenue to allow them to do that is a military veteran standing next to them, saying that it's wrong, gives them empowerment to also say this is wrong. Right? Because they're not going to be accused of being a traitor, you know? Well, they will, but it's a little harder if a veteran is standing next to them, right? Not that we don't get called traitors. We do. But you know, it at least provides some sort of insulation.

Larry:

Does the environmental working group within Veterans for Peace do that? I was reading their email for ... At the very start, and then because of other commitments I dropped off. But I wonder about them. Are they having an impact and are they getting in with the environmental issues?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Not as much yet. But we've had some folks out in New York get arrested with Extinction Rebellion. There's some folks down in San Diego with 350. Yeah. Some folks I think in Baltimore area is connected with the Sunrise movement. So they're just starting to build those connections. And I think the efforts they did around the recent cop (?) helped like make some networks and connections for them. So where they were giving their presentation mostly to VFP chapters, now their climate presentations are mostly to environmental groups outside the organization.

Larry:

Great.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So let's start now.

Judy:

Do any of you vets know Greta? Send her a note and have her start speaking about the wars and-

Garett Reppenhagen:

Brad was trying to say something.

Brad:

So we did a good job with safe skies, F-35 opposition. At one point we got like I think 55 different groups write letters of why they were against the F-35. And it's all on the website, and I wonder if some of the environmental groups are in there. Because I agree with you that they're fighting against so much, they don't have the time or energy to add on the military too.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. I think we could do it. You know, I'm looking for a grant with the Climate Emergency Fund right now to provide some additional assistance to chapter level organizing around climate stuff. And I haven't quite figured out how it's going to be. It's not going to be tons of money, like $40,000. But one of the things I asked for in the grant was if I could do some paid stipends for our on-the-ground organizers. So iIf there's somebody that could be connected with the chapter that you want to get more involved in ... Maybe one of these young women that would like to help or if you find a young veteran that wants to get involved or you know, needs the extra money. I think it's only going to be like a $1000 or $2000 for a few months of work. But it's something to get somebody more engaged and feel like they have more responsibility to help.

Brad:

They can put on their resume.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. We give them a letter of recommendation and ... Yeah, I mean it beats a summer job, working a bar back or scooping ice cream somewhere, no offense to ice cream scoopers. I have an ice cream shop. Does anyone have a question?

Larry:

To get back, just for a second, to the gaming. Has Veterans for Peace or any other good organization contacted the developer and said, "Please, could you do something peace based?" Has there been anything like that?

Garett Reppenhagen:

We've been flirting with the idea and talking to some like really independent developers. We don't have any connections to like really the big, you know, big makers. But we've talked about it. We do play games that are not, we have games that play that aren't shooter-related, that aren't conflict-related like that. A lot of them are cooperative games that you work with each other to like build a farm or there's a game that is around like Earth simulation, to try to figure out how to make sure it's balanced and not destroying the environment. So bring some climate stuff into like the gaming thing. So there are games out there that we try to raise up that aren't militaristic, that we like to play and talk about. We still talk about military issues or something but ...

Jeff:

But it's a good idea.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Some like that. Some like the games-

Jeff:

I'm sure some do, Majority of them. Like they were saying on the news about those gamers, and the AR-15s. But on their gaming, they can actually feel the vibration of it. So the kids are getting that feeling of what it feels like.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Yeah, it's tough. We do have one show that is a first person shooter show, that they go back and look at it like the history of first person shooters and talk about like where these styles of games came from and they play these retro games and then they're progressing up through the calendar to like play more modern games, and they talk about what's kind of real and unrealistic about it. What's different between this and actual combat. And that's kind of interesting because they actually, because we're not, we try not to poo poo all the first person shooters. We don't want to alienate the audience to not want to be there. We don't want to make them feel like they're judged for like ...

Garett Reppenhagen:

You know, I mean those kids didn't make the games. They didn't make the economic environment that pushes these games onto kids. They didn't create the war culture that we're in. You know, they're just ... But they are products of it. Right? So we try to say that games like that should only be fantasy, you know? And the problem is that they're not. Like these games are either trying to simulate something that's real or trying to shift what is real based off of what's in the game. Right? And it's been somewhat successful. There's a lot of people in our community that, you know, just don't watch the show and don't want to be part of that. You know? And that's understandable. But I think it's something that we have to like realize is part of our culture, and if we want to reach those kids that are playing them, we can't alienate them from the (?). So we just don't. We don't celebrate it and we don't normalize it, and I think that's a big difference, right? We talk about it for what it is and not trying to make it seem like it's glorified.

Judy:

I think your point though, that you point out how the recruiters are using it, is great. Because kids don't like to be used either that way.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Right.

Judy:

So just letting them know that and who might be on the game, I think that's great.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Just telling a kid like, "Hey, like you want to know who a drill sergeant is? Imagine the teacher or the faculty member at your high school that you hate most. Now imagine that they can tell you when you can pee, when you can eat, how many pushups you have to do. You know, when you wake up, what you have to wear, you know? And now you're talking about like the US military."

Judy:

Well, that could be a game. Couldn't it be? What, "Here's boot camp." How they struggle.

John:

"How many days can you survive?"

Garett Reppenhagen:

Most kids think they can't handle basic training because of the physicality of it. And they don't even ... They can't even imagine the oppression of it. Like losing their individuality- And when they start thinking about it, they're like, "Holy shit, that's-"

Jeff:

Breaking down almost ... Brainwashing, right?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Definitely. At least conditioning them. Yeah. So yeah. Gamers for Peace, it's ... You know. Yeah, I don't think any of you have to be an expert on it and it's not something that everybody has to do. But if you get a couple of your chapter members that at least come into the Discord space and know what it is and learn how to invite people to it, and maybe go on there and just ask the community for help if you need it. Like, "Hey, I forgot how to do this thing, but can anybody show me how to do it?" And it's the most supportive community. Like everybody will be like, "Whoa, who is this person? Yeah. Let's help. Like, what can we do?" You know? So you'll find like if you're looking for help, it's a pretty good place as long as you know how to log on and type something, you'll get a good, helpful response.

Judy:

Well, I could volunteer my grandson to come and give a webinar on it, show it right up there, so you know what it is.

Garett Reppenhagen:

And you know, Chris Vasquez is our digital organizer. They could meet with somebody on Zoom and share a screen and show how to get in the space, how to get through it and interact with it so you don't get lost. It's even amazing for me, being in there. Like there's just so much activity that I have to choose like I'm only watching these three things and that's like my bandwidth. But some of these, I call them kids, some of these kids on there. Yeah, I mean they could watch everything simultaneously while they're multi-tasking some other thing. It's just like, "I have no idea how you're keeping up with this. Because they'll text me, "Did you see this thing I put on?" "No, I didn't see the thing. When did you post it?" "10 minutes ago." Like ...

Judy:

I think I see a movie here. We can have all these guys logging on.

Brad:

This makes me want to play Pong. I think, you know, Remember Pong?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Well, we could play Pong. I think that would be fun. Do a live stream Pong game. You know, it really doesn't matter what the game is. Like it's more important like the dialogue that's happening. The background-

Judy:

And the support and the camaraderie.

Garett Reppenhagen:

And when I'm in the Gaming for Peace community, I'm the old person there. Okay? Like I'm 47 and I'm usually the oldest person in our meetings and our games. So, you know, and they just have a blast that I come on and play games. Because they're like, "Oh, the old guy's playing games." But if some of y'all came on there and learned how to play a game, even if it was like an old school game, like an easy game and just had a discussion with them, they would have a blast. Because they're asked all the time to show up to other people's stuff. And they never get people showing up in their-

Judy:

To their space.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Right, to meet them where they are. And I think that's a big barrier, because the younger people come and they're like, "Man, you want me to go to the Neil Young show and you know, sit at a table and sell T-shirts? Okay."

Garett Reppenhagen:

That's great. You know? And you know, they're like, "It's not my music," and I don't know if tabling's the right ... You know, "I don't know if I'm there for that." But you know, they get asked to do all these things there. You know, their legacy, there's traditional stuff that you do as activists I think, but you know younger people are like, "I don't know. I don't really get it." But they probably have ideas and they're involved in communities in different ways that you can probably pick their brains and be like, "Hey, like how can we support you in this thing? How can we make it radical? And how can we give back some peace into that," and they might come up with some really interesting solutions. But it might not always be within your comfort zone. You know? So sometimes you'd be like, "Normally, I wouldn't do this. And I'm not going to do all the stuff, but I'll show up for now. In the space, and just so you see me and know that I'm supporting you, and sometimes really, that's all it takes to be like, "Fuck, these Veterans for Peace is all right."

Larry:

So we don't need an avatar. We don't need to pretend we're not who we are. We can be an old fart and be there.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Absolutely. Yeah. No, be genuine. They're going to respect you for being you. Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Right, right. Yeah. You know, Jim Walworth of Tennessee, who does the radio show, always posts the radio ... He goes in there and posts what the radio show's going to be. And you know, some of the younger people are now following Jim's radio show down in Tennessee, just because we posted it in the Discord community, you know?

Judy:

Oh, interesting.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Where they see it. Right?

Garett Reppenhagen:

You know, because they're not even on Facebook. Facebook to them is like ... That's the old peoples' .

Judy:

Absolutely.

Garett Reppenhagen:

It's like they don't ... They don't even do Twitter anymore. Or some of them don't even do Instagram. It's like, you're either on TikTok or Discord.

Judy:

TikTok. That's what Stefan said, yeah. TikTok and Discord.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. You got to be doing a video. You know? They want to watch a short little video of you and you know, they don't care about your post or your link to an article. Yeah. It's a lot. They're telling me all the time, it's like, "You should do ... At least once a week, you should go on TikTok and just let folks know what you're doing in Veterans for Peace." I'm still working on that. You know? My comfort zone is ...

Judy:

Stefan was showing me this, this morning, telling me this is what he does with his TikTok. And he was showing me and how easy it was. And so I was tempted for a second. And then I thought, "Oh no, my gosh."

Steve:

Could do a TikTok Memorial Mile visit.

Judy:

I could. Oh my gosh.

Garett Reppenhagen:

But the trick is, if you get ... If you start a social media like that, you've got to use it. Right?

Judy:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Like Brad's ... Brad's uses all social media and it's good because cause there's posted content all the time. If you start a TikTok and do one video and two months later do another one, you might as well not even have it.

Judy:

You've got to get followers.

Brad:

Actually. It's similar with like Facebook and the Twitter we have, it would be so much better if people came in on and had more conversations and posted their ideas and pictures and videos and all that stuff-

Judy:

And then it spreads more.

Brad:

Instead of me playing with myself there and commenting on all the things.

Judy:

I play with you a little.

Brad:

Yes you do.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. It's almost ... You know, with the social media, if Brad's managing it, y'all should have like at least maybe reminders of like, "Oh Tuesday and Thursday, I should go on social media and read what's on there and make a comment." Two or three posts.

Judy:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Because that boosts algorithm.

Judy:

Yeah. And it goes up farther.

Garett Reppenhagen:

And then more people see it, you know? You don't even have to have like incredible things to say. And you can just go on there and be like, "This is awesome." Like that helps the algorithm and more people will see it because we're using the algorithm, you know? So yeah. Being-

Brad:

Or we could have committed people who get $50 a year to just post once in a while ... I don't know. I'm trying to do that for Safe Skies too for a while, but I don't know.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, yeah. Like with speaking of About Face. About Face, I think eight of them has access to their like Twitter account, Instagram account. So they have, they have eight people that are in there posting-

Judy:

All the time.

Garett Reppenhagen:

You know? So they'll get sometimes a post out, like a couple every hour. And that's generating a lot of-

Judy:

That gets a lot of movement. Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, yeah.

Brad:

I'm on there. If I need something, sometimes I'll put in About Face and see what they're doing and then I'll retweet it or whatever.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. Yeah. So yeah, social media is a funny creature and it's always going to be. It's always going to be morphing into something else.

Judy:

Yeah.

Larry:

That's it? What next?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Right? Yeah. You know, and like Elon Musk just bought Twitter, so a lot of people are leaving Twitter.

Brad:

Did that happen?

Garett Reppenhagen:

I think it ... Did it not go through?

Judy:

It didn't go through yet.

Judy:

He backed off.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We'll see. See what happens.

Brad:

You realize that wasn't worth $5 billion or whatever.

Judy:

I keep wondering when this virtual reality will hit, because they've talked about for years, but I don't think people really are doing that much yet. What do you think?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yes. That's-

Judy:

That's going to be a whole different thing too with these games if you're actually in it.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Right.

Judy

It's kind of what you said about the [?] and the gun games.

Larry

Well, we have a visitor in the village right now, who's done 12 hours yesterday with a headset on.

Judy:

Oh, they have it?

Larry:

Yeah. Straight-

Judy:

Or maybe people are doing it then.

Larry:

And I'll talk to him when I get back there. He's the son of one of our residents.

Judy:

Maybe it's happening more than we know.

Larry:

I don't know.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Soon, it's going to be integrated in our lives. We're all going to be wearing virtual reality goggles, glasses, at least. They'll be like your sunglasses, your prescription glasses, but also in all glasses-... because everything is going to be augmented reality.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So you'd want to know about that. You're never going to see actual real billboards anymore, because they're going to be too expensive. So you just put digital billboards in an augmented space. So while you're walking down the street, you might pass a Chinese restaurant that actually looks like a it's a building, because you've got augmented reality glasses on, you see the regular world but you also see the virtual world at the same time.

Judy:

Oh, you guys. I don't know.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So people could put ads-

Larry:

I don't know if I'm ready for that. if you're outside looking at your neighbor freaking out.

Garett Reppenhagen:

You could walk past a Chinese restaurant, swipe at it and the menu will show up right in front of you and you can look at the dish and then you can order- You could order on the menu. And then you could walk over to the Chinese food restaurant and have your order ready.

John:

And pay for it too.

Judy:

And no cash. It will all be card or run your fingers and-

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, it will be all automated within your cloud and-

Brad:

I went into Best Buy recently, and I walked just from end to end. And the technology in there, I don't know what the heck half of it was, then there was a row of glasses. But I think they were glasses with speakers on them, so you can listen to your music.

1:04

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, it's changing fast. It's going to be integrated. We talk a lot, Chris, Jules and I, with the younger staff members in Veterans for Peace. But in the future, it's really, really perfecting military wise, is how data is integrated with AI technology, where cloud and AI technology mix. We're talking about drones, but soon it's just going to be AI. We're going to let AI loose in the war zone and they're going to base everything on facial recognition and whatnot. The data world is going to be at their fingertips.

Judy:

Will it just be AIs fighting each other and then you don't have people getting killed?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Well, I wish. But the progression of warfare is that it's not a-

Judy:

Yeah, there'll be a lot of people killed in between.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. It's not the unilateral battlefield, it's usually an exploited, oppressed nation against the technological superior nations. One side will have the AIs and one won't.

Brad:

Ethically, or ethic... What am I saying? Ethically inferior nation.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. What a horrible concept, but that's the unfortunate reality, right? So Google, Amazon, those are military industrial complexes also. They're just not being recognized as that, because they're not making bullets and bombs.

Judy:

But they're all involved.

Garett Reppenhagen:

When Russia tried to use a lot of their missiles early on in Ukraine, they found that they weren't targeted properly, because they're all dependent on world position systems and satellites that we control.

Judy:

Oh, that's what happened there.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So there's immense inaccuracy, there's a fear of using air power, because they're blocking all of this stuff, because Western poweXs denied them the satellite-

Judy:

The GPS stuff.

Garett Reppenhagen:

... access that they needed to use those weapon systems.

Brad:

Mm-hmm. What about viruses and worms and stuff?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Cyber warfare, it's something that a lot of things that peace movements talk about, but that's warfare. Russia's made it clear that if there's an attack on their building of large weapons cybernetically, that if we interfere with them, that that's an act of war. And it's just as much, it's just as if we've launched a nuclear weapon at them, if we denied them the building to use their nuclear weapons. So we'll see, because right now a lot of the cyber war is being fought by third parties. It's Anonymous versus... I forgot what the Russian hacking network is, but it's not even-

Judy:

It's not an official thing then. It's more like an underground kind of thing.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Exactly. Yeah. It's wild, the ways technology is being used in this conflict. You've all heard of fourth-generation warfare?

Brad:

No.

Garett Reppenhagen:

No? This is what's starting to emerge. And it's been theory for a long time. But now it's really starting to be the dominant-

Judy:

Be it, yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Fourth-generation warfare.

Brad:

Fourth?

Garett Reppenhagen:

I think it's fourth-generation warfare.

John:

What was third?

Garett Reppenhagen:

I think it's still like conventional war, but it's probably-

John:

Okay. Counter-insurgency or something?

Garett Reppenhagen:

I think third-generation is combined arms conflict. And then I don't know what first and second is. Obviously they're archaic at this point.

Garett Reppenhagen:

But a lot of the fourth-generation warfare, we have troops in the Marine Corps now called littoral units [LOCE, Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment] that have hackers in the actual on-the-ground forces that take the beach with the ability to hack on the ground. So when they meet a threat, like let's say we're storming a beach in China, and they see a threat that's connected to GPS software, then they can do on-the-ground hacking immediately to try to intercept the ability to use those weapon systems. Like it's-

Jeff:

Like Taiwan.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Fourth-generation warfare also has a lot to do with moral high ground, with the use of news and media. Media is considered a whole other battlefield to war. We talk a lot about it in Vets for Peace, I know there's a lot of different opinions about it, but the way this is being covered by the media, the way the Russian media is covering it, is all part of the fourth-generation warfare theory.

Jeff:

You mean the propaganda.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. But you see other crowd sourcing things too. Russia was using crowd sourced intelligence, where they're asking people, using an app or cell phone, asking people to report intelligence for Russian military. So civilians in the Ukraine that was supportive of Russia, was actually helping them target using this third party app. We'll see crazy things, like drone operators that are civilians, that are logging in drone time, where it's just an 18 year old kid in a bedroom, logging into piloting a drone for a couple of hours for a combat group. The future of warfare is really, it's going to be a very strange space. We don't even know how to protest against that, at this point.

Steve:

This is happening in the cities and I've got a question on that. That's for race diversity issues. So the [?], so they're helping in the recruitment for a chap in 27. Besides Will Williams, I don't think we have any other race besides white, but-

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, but from what I could see up there, it hasn't really helped. I didn't see any people of color in the chapter meetings.

Steve:

And Brad did have a gal come to a meeting in March. But that's what happens. Somebody comes once.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Oh.

Judy:

It would've been nice to have Will here.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

At the upper levels of Veterans for Peace, there's obviously been some behavioral issues that we've tried to address.

Brad:

We have Williams. Oh, we have Shelly Rockett. Is she still... Shelly Rockett.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, the staff is solid. We still have Gail Aquino on staff. But I mean in the board of directors, there's been a lot of conflict around behavioral issues, around how folks are showing up. It's been a challenge. I think that we have a code of conduct, which I think is strong. But it's only as good as we support it. Really, it's not a law. It's not a list of laws. It's a community agreement, so a shared agreement of norms. And it's only as strong as how we respect and enforce it and abide by it. I get a lot of people that write in and say, "Bob violated number five of the code of conduct." It's like, "Well, they're not laws." It's like, treat each other better.

1:12

Garett Reppenhagen:

We started the Transformative Justice Committee on the board to try to research more how to implement transformative justice versus... Really, the only tools the board had before was restriction of membership and expulsion. That's the only two tools they had, because shit, 1985, when we created the organization, there wasn't a lot of conversation about that. If a member does something shitty, you kick him out of your organization. But we're a group pf people, who most of us, served in the US Military and did something really shitty. Somehow there's a pathway to transformation for us.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Dealing with these conflicts of like, "Okay, well. What if we have a racist in the organization? Is there a pathway of transformation?" Are they doing more damage to the organization by being there and us trying to help them through this process in being a better person, versus getting them out of the organization and saying, "Hey, there's a pathway back to the organization, but you can't be in here right now."

Judy:

Right now, yeah. You've got to work your way back.

Larry:

I'm sorry, but I have to interrupt. I do have to leave or I'll get thrown out of my village. I have a mandatory meeting at 3:30. But I am too out of time, but I have two quick questions. One is, do you think you can handle 20 minutes all by yourself on the access hour Monday evening? Not the Monday morning program, it's the Monday evening program.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yes.

Brad:

Okay. That relieves me. We will be seeding questions. Everybody, listen to WORT, 7:00 PM, 89.9, Monday. And call in with questions at the appropriate time, okay? And then second, how do you pronounce your last name, so I can introduce you?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Oh, yeah. Reppenhagen.

Brad:

I was doing it right. All right. I heard it a million times, but I needed that reassurance.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Just like Copenhagen, but-

Tom

One question before I leave. We've got, in the 2016 election, Trump got in by the help of 75% of the military voting for him. What’s the case with the military?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, we all served in the military, we know the mentality, right?

Jeff:

It seems completely different.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, this tough guy bullshit that's pushed through, and the blind nationalism or patriotism, garner some sort of sympathy from the US military and I don't think there's a lot of E-4s and E-3s that actually vote.

Tom::

Yeah, well it's a problem that they're not voting.

Garett Reppenhagen:

The extremism, I think we can address that through better [?] and that will help us find more diverse membership, because I think we have to be there for racial justice. I think we do. What happened in Buffalo is a direct result from our war culture and the same nationalism that props up the wars. The myths, our creation myths, of us as a country and what of the American identity is to most Americans, is not only does it push us into war, conflicts of really other individual making them an enemy, and going on to kill them, is the same process of the nationalization that use extremism, like what we see in racial violence, is violence.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We should be talking about that. We should be talking about how the police is armed, how the police are basically state sponsored terror, just as US is the violent force of the state overseas, the police are the violent force domestically. And we're doing the same thing, basically, to our own people in this country that we're doing to Iraqis and the Afghan.

Steve

The Madison School Board got the education resource officers out of the high schools, but some people still want to bring them back in. And I work at a high school.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Okay.

Steve:

But that's an issue in Madison, that some people want,especially, they want the SROs or EROs, the-

Judy:

Are they armed?

Steve

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yes.

Brad:

Yeah. I mean, the kids are just like, "Whoa. We don't want handguns here." And the one guy, I kind of knew him. We'd meet in the same place in the morning. His office was in the place where I had to wait for the bus to come. So I obviously had [?]…he took an F-35 (flyer?.)

Judy:

Wow, that's good.

John:

The problem though, there in that school, there have been lots of fights.

Judy:

Lots of fights.

John

Lots of fights. And the police get called late. So there's a lot of controversy.

Steve:

My ideas would be, invite parents to become involved. Let parents come into the school and see that stuff. And our principle now, we used to have a older principal that he was saying, he would know somebody's name. The kids that walked around the hall, we could name them by name. The new principal doesn't do that. And I think that's an issue. That's all these intricacies in education that you've got to be careful of.

Garett Reppenhagen:

There's a lot of veterans that are being recruited into hate groups, extremism. And I think there's a space for Veterans for Peace to talk about that. I think if we're going to get into schools, I think having some sort of curriculum around anti-bullying and really setting up... We do counter-recruitment for the military, but I think we could also do counter-recruitment into extremist groups, militias and hate groups. Because there's so many military veterans joining them, that it's a space for us to talk about it and have a seat at the table, that if we start talking about this in our communities and become this trusted voice, that possibly in the future we can still, we can learn the ways to intervene or we can help work on peace between groups where we can be safe spaces for large communities that need help and support.

Garett Reppenhagen:

If we're doing these things, I think we can get more diverse members interested in joining our organization, because it's probably work that impacts them every single day, whereas talking about anti-militarism somewhere across the world while you're a black woman in a community constantly being oppressed and harassed by your own US police force, or being scared of your neighbors or being scared of Trump voters. That's more oppressing to them-

Judy:

Then this international conflict.

Garett Reppenhagen:

... than this far away issue that, you can talk to them, they'll understand that the money and everything else, and this is how it's impacting your life. She probably just wants to feel safe in her own community. I think if we work on issues like that and find a way that ties to our anti-militarism messaging, where it's not weird that Veterans for Peace is doing this thing. And then I think we can grow and have more diverse membership.

Judy:

That's a great idea.

Garett Reppenhagen:

I talked to Michael Mcpherson about it when they started the Peace at Home, Peace Abroad stuff around Ferguson. And he told me a lot of members quit the organization because-

Phil:

Oh.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. It takes time to change the organization mindset, thinking that this is a space for Veterans for Peace because that's a mission for us. The young people want to talk about these issues. The Gamers for Peace group want to talk about it, because they're constantly talking about extremism in gaming, because they see that all the time. They're in game spaces and they have a recruiter trying to recruit them over here. And the Proud Boys trying to recruit them over here.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. And it's, they're like, "The gaming space could be very, very toxic," because everybody's anonymous, so you can speak your mind, just like the most vitriol things we see on Facebook, are spoken directly to you in these gaming spaces, right? Because you're some anonymous person with a mike on your head. So the misogyny that they hear, the racism that they hear, is just really disgusting. I know young people want to talk about it, but we haven't figured out a real solid program in Veterans for Peace to address this sort of thing.

John:

I have a question here, okay. When Lincoln Grahlf came here to Madison, I remember him coming to the chapter and talking about what they did at the chapter in St. Louis, like having movie nights. A question, is that something we should think about? The other thing is, when I was talking to a guy yesterday, who's a member of the chapter and he never comes to meetings, and he was talking about a book he was reading. And I'm saying, "Hey, maybe we should have a book club." Does anybody ever do that in Veterans for Peace? So there's things like, it seems to me... Pardon me to say this, but there's a certain amount of toxicity to the way we do our meetings. It's just running through this agenda, and they're all good things to talk about. But unless you're committed, you're not going to come back. And so the idea of having the social dinner where we get together, that's a good thing. And I mean things get done, and they don't have to be done in a certain order. We don't have to have a treasurer's report every month, as long as... It seems to me that we should be thinking in terms of restructuring how we meet. And maybe we have a business meeting every three months or something. And the other two months we do something else. I just want to talk about this in our next business meeting.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. A lot of that stuff you can do online, right? You can have a treasury's report on Google Docs, that everybody can look at.

Brad:

Yeah, Brad was saying that-

Garett Reppenhagen:

You don't need to even give a report. If anybody ever wants to look at it, they just go online and see it.

Brad:

Well, Paul goes through it pretty fast.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, okay.

Brad:

He goes through it fast.

Garett Reppenhagen:

But there's certain things that you could probably do online. It's harder to do votes and count hands, but you could-

Steve:

Well, we have a system set up. Fran has a system. I guess Paul was doing it or you were doing it, Brad, for going on something online.

Brad:

It was pretty random, that if I was involved it was just, "Hey, who votes yes, who votes no?"

John

Raise your hand on the screen.

Judy:

It's true, yeah.

Steve:

Fran Wiedenhauf

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah.

Brad:

Does anybody know why she didn't come?

Judy:

A health reason, she said. And family reasons.

Joh :

I don't think so, no. She was frustrated.

Judy:

Oh really?

John:

The one meeting I didn't go to, she left crying because she said, "We need to recruit new people," and she was upset. And her statement was that nobody else cared.

Judy:

Ah, that's too bad.

John:

So it was a question of the chapter, getting new people.

Brad:

She wanted change and we weren't changing, I think.

Garett Reppenhagen:

What did she want to change?

Brad:

She wanted to figure out how to get new people. And so do I. And I don't know, there isn't really people who are willing to commit to that.

Judy:

Yeah, it's tricky.

Brad:

I think we definitely need to do some sort of recruiting. And I think that, I don't know, we've got to get organized to do this and make a plan with ideas. I don't know, brainstorm, try some things, whatever.

Judy:

Movie night or something?

Brad:

I definitely agree with that thing, like people don't want to come to our meetings. And they're an hour and a half, two hours long, on stuff that they probably don't understand anyways. So yeah. I started talking to somebody about this while I was tabling yesterday, for some reason. This girl that lives in Madison, but she had lived in Portland area, I think. And 15 years ago, she worked with Americor and they set her up, like her job was to find veterans to get into the peace movement. And I was like, "What?"

Judy:

What? Who did this?

Brad:

So I invited her to come to one of our coming meetings, either this month or next month, and tell us about this. And it's just like, we've got to brainstorm. And I bet you there's lots of places we can probably get resources, if we knew where to ask.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Any time you do something, you need to put it through the filter. If you stop before you do it, it's like how is this retaining and recruiting young members into Veterans for Peace, kind of thing?

Garett Reppenhagen:

And everything you do, it's like, "Okay, we're going to the Memorial Mile. What are we doing different this year that's going to help us recruit, retain young members?"

Judy:

We need some young helping, I don't know.

Garett Reppenhagen:

When you... Just like the little things. It's like, "What does our banner look like? How is it going to help recruit, retain young people? Where are we doing this action at? How is this going to help recruit, retain young people?" It's not like we don't do it anymore. You just keep on figuring out how to tweak it and improve it, with that in mind. Because if you come into a chapter meeting and every time decide to do the same thing you've done for years, without having that question-

Judy:

Changing it, yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

... you're doing yourself a disservice, because that means you're not even thinking about it. You're just repeating the stuff, because you're just used to doing it that way.

Jeff:

That's where you need new blood, because they will come up with new ideas.

Garett Reppenhagen:

And then do leadership development, right? Don't like hot potato and be like, "Ah, the new person, you're young, you do it."-

Brad:

That's what they're for.

Garett Reppenhagen:

It's like, "Oh. Mary always does our banners, so Mary is going to do the banner again." No. "Hey Jim. You're brand new. Would you help Mary do the banner?" And it's just like, "I do the treasurer stuff all the time, because I know what I'm doing." Well, now nobody knows how to do treasurer until you die and somebody has to learn all about the treasury.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Make sure you're mentoring people when you're doing leadership development, and coaching along to have other people learn other tasks. And then they feel involved and they feel committed, but they also feel supported. We get, I see even on a national level, it's like, Nyamekye got collected to the national board. He's a young black veteran. He participated the least in any VFP stuff nationally than other candidate and got the most votes. And so, "All right." It's like, "Shit." And then, "You got set up, buddy."

Garett Reppenhagen:

Now we've got to be like, "Hey, this is how you be a board member." And he's got to call me all the time.

"Hey Garett. What is this thing? I've never heard of it?" "Oh, that's been a project of Veterans for Peace for 20 years." But he just doesn't know because he was asked by somebody to run. It's like, "Oh shit. Do you think I can run for the board? Like I'd be a good board member?" So he was propped up and then he got committed to this thing-

Judy:

Without any training.

Garett Reppenhagen:

... and he won easily. And he's like, "Oh, what did I do to myself? I've never even listened to a board meeting before." No matter what it takes, we've got to support our new leaders. We've got to do leadership development. And when we recruit new folks, we don't burden them with everything, but we also don't ignore them. Listen to their ideas, because they probably have a lot of good ideas. But also know that they're just learning about the organization, about activism, about politics.

Garett Reppenhagen:

They haven't read all of Marx and Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky yet. Some of them have. Some of them are way over educated in some of that stuff, but have never been to an action. You've just got to incubate them and You don't put them directly in the chapter meetings, have them do some fun things first. Get them active and get them involved where they can... they feel like they have a part but it's not everything. It's just a little part. Then they go home and they sleep well that night. So they're like, "Fuck, I did this thing. It was new. I actually was involved and I feel like I'm doing something".

Steve

The young girls of it, well, there is guys there too that no F-35 visual, which they did twice, I think this year so far, but over there, they're just so happy to do it. It was contagious. Their-

Brad:

...and they approached us.

Garett Reppenhagen:

That's crazy.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Well, you ask them like, what do you like in the person? And they'll tell you that we like these things. Okay, well, it's lean in more. If they were having fun, how can we make it more fun? Have music. Maybe not play Neil Young. Ask them, what songs should we play.

Brad:

I think it was the young girl. She was motivated, the one that organized it, and her dad was whatever, woke and involved with certain things.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. That's so interesting. Well, people are amazing, right? We're so different in so many ways. Yet we're all the same. I don't know. It's a challenge. And like at the national level I'm looking at all these chapters struggling. I don't know what to make of it.

Judy:

Have you seen one stand out that's really doing it? And how they're doing it? Any chapters around that?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Not really.

Judy:

Well, you said there was that one with the radio show.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, Nashville. Nashville has Tina Meli the young, post-9/11 veteran now as the president. And she's bringing a lot of new ideas-

Judy:

Yeah. That's something to look to, maybe. Some chapter like that, see what they're up to.

Garett Reppenhagen:

But they're not big yet. They're not. I think they have the potential to grow and she's out there, she's getting them to do Pride Fest this year. I think that's a really interesting thing where they're going to be younger people that are involved in diverse issues. And-

Judy:

Well, I know the chapter in Portland, Oregon's in the same spot. They are all old and wondering how to get new people involved. They're really desperately looking for that, too.

Brad:

Is there any guidance out there from chapters as to how to deal with this? That bring the chapters together?

Garett Reppenhagen:

No, but I think it's a good idea to get some chapter heads or elected people to be involved in it, maybe come together and work on it.

Brad:

So I mentioned it and now it's my job.

Judy:

Yeah. That's the thing, isn't it?

Garett Reppenhagen:

I mean I could bring the chapters together. You just might have to be the representative for the Madison chapter and have that.

Brad:

I think it'd be useful.

Judy:

If there's any chapter you ever see that's doing something really good, then they should be on or helping the other groups that would-

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. If you look at our big chapters, Minneapolis is one of our stronger chapters in the organization New York, San Diego, and Boston is all right. They're starting to get smaller, as well.

Judy:

They're getting younger?

Garett Reppenhagen:

No. They're-

Judy:

Oh, none of these are? Okay.

Garett Reppenhagen:

But a few of them have a couple of younger members that are starting to put some things together I think.

Judy:

That would be a good thing to watch for.

Jeff:

If there’s a war, that brings people into it.

Garett Reppenhagen:

It's true.

Jeff:

...and like you were saying in 2003, they were really-

Judy:

Oh, we were really-

Brad:

It really grew.

Judy:

Yeah. And IVAW was so active then.

Brad:

I wasn't around then but you were talking about when you went into Iraq and how it grew. It's just sad that it takes war to get people to use it.

Steve

Well, the racial justice aspect, I like that here. You said that. I mean the groups like Proud boys. Yeah. I really hated when Trump said, "Oh, we have good people on both sides". What? What the heck was that for a President to say that? Somebody died, and he was saying that's oh, that was okay. What the heck was that? Then Al Sharpton, he recently said that, too. That was really bad when Trump said that. He was on the news show saying that.

Garett Reppenhagen:

It sounds like All Lives Matter when you hear it.

Brad:

He's all PR. That must be fourth generation warfare.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We also have a draft of a strategic plan that is really important. I don't know if y'all are familiar with that, we’re going through a database transition right now. We have two databases, one database of record, which is called E Tapestry. And one that we used for most of our digital stuff called Salsa. And there was just a lot. I don't know how it got to this way, but Shelly has to convert information from one to the other manually, and do bulk uploads to get information shared.

Garett Reppenhagen:

It's a mess. And we're paying for two separate databases. So we're merging it all down to one called Every Action. That's going to streamline a lot, automate a lot of stuff, but it's going to take some time to learn it and there's going to be some... you probably won't get a chapter roster for a couple months until we figure everything out, get it tweaked the way that it's… I want to improve those. I want to make sure they're coming out in Excel spreadsheets and you can divide them up in different ways to sort data better.

Brad:

This last one was a PDF and I don't think I could even grab the text.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We're not going to send out PDFs in the future, but yeah, hopefully that gets improved, but after the database gets updated, which should be in a couple weeks, I'm going to try to get out the draft strategic plan to every single member. It's going to come out first as a survey and to get feedback on it. It's going to take a long time to get through to like plan on having a half an hour, go through it, and comment. Imagine yourself at a strategic planning meeting. A weekend retreat where you've got to give feedback on this strategic plan. Ultimately, this strategic planning committee is going to take all this information from all the members, and we're going to do focus groups with young veterans, with BIPOC veterans, with women and non-binary veterans, with associate members, with other focus groups to try to get select information, to hear what they envision and to see if it's different than what the majority of the organization is looking at. To make sure we're not missing any pieces to it. But it's just in draft form now. So I'm relying on everybody to kind of give us feedback that can comb through and improve the strategic plan and make it better. From what I've seen, I've talked to past directors, I've talked a lot to Michael McPherson, to past presidents and they've sent me documents of old strategic plans, and none of them are strategic plans, in my opinion. They're all just different ways of expressing who Veterans For Peace is. A lot of them just throw everything in the kitchen sink in it. And it's like, this is all the stuff we do. Like that's not strategic planning. I need a way to focus our resources to have success into something. And it doesn't mean that we're not going to do all the other stuff. It just means that a lot of our resources are going to be focused in this one area to see if we can achieve some success. But I'm going to want, eventually, quantifiable goals out of it. Clear outputs and clear impacts. Impacts are like what the changes you want to see in the world are. The outputs is what you're doing to try to achieve them.

Judy:

Oh, I can hardly wait to fill this out. This will be fun.

Garett Reppenhagen:

So if we're trying to stop the F-35s, we think we're going to vigil outside the front gate 100 times, that's going to help. The output is vigiling 100 times. That's quantifiable. And the impact has to be something clear too, right? A reduction of-X amount of F-35s, right? A reduction of the military budget. Something that's quantifiable, that's impacting the measure as well. So a lot of the impact output stuff's not going to be in this first survey just a kind of overview, like are we going in the right direction in general. Because what we don't have is a theory for change, all right? We have a great mission statement, which is, this is what we're taking a stand on, but there's no real clear pathway of how we do it. If you look at the mission statement and you pull out every verb in the mission statement, that's kind of like the best examples we have of a theory for change, right? Actions that we're taking to fill the mission statement. But, it's too vague. It's not very clear. We need something that-I want clear senses of, we're going to do X by doing X, right? And that needs to be like our future elevator pitch. It's who is Veterans For Peace? We do X by doing X. And that's what we're going to concentrate on the next three or four years to see if we could actually make a dent in militarism. And I really think if we focus our energy and resources into it, that we can have something achievable. Because if you have quantifiable measurements like that, you can actually start celebrating successes. Because right now we're like, we got to stop the war. And holy shit, right? That's what we've been trying to do, the peace movement for how many years, right? But if we break it down in some achievable steps, right, we can actually start going, yeah, we accomplished goal X, right? We accomplished goal Y. And that's going to be appealing to other people outside of our Veterans for Peace. Because, they're going to go, "holy shit, Veteran's for Peace is doing something. Even if it's small things.

Daryl: It might invigorate the community we have too, to finally feel we've got something we can celebrate.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. It's so defeating to be part of the peace movement sometimes. You just feel like you're just losing, losing. Stuff we're up against is... seems impossible to work on.

Brad:

I tell people I don't take on any goal that is actually achievable. I always bang my head against the wall. War, money in politics.

Steve:

The money out of politics. That's a big thing there.

Judy:

I never hear a big politician speaking peace either, or anybody. I was a Bernie person and he really... that isn't his main focus, it's more this other stuff. Who's this Barbara, Barbara from California?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Lee

Judy:

But there really aren't many big voices that say-

Brad:

It was a dude from Minnesota, wasn't there? An Indian dude or something?

Judy:

Who?

Garett Reppenhagen:

I don't know.

Judy:

See, we can't even think of anybody.

Brad:

There was another guy in the progressive caucus. Well, Mark Pocan is okay but he's so much talk.

Judy:

Yes.

Brad:

They're all talk.

Judy:

We need leadership there, too, I know.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We got to keep them. I think we got to do campaign development. We don't don't do campaigns, we do one-off things, right? And if we learn how to build a campaign and start doing that, then those achievable goals become more apparent. Because your goal to end the F-35, is this the highest step, right? But there's steps along the way to get there. And you got to define what those steps are. So if you figure out what they are and then you look at, okay, what's our weakness and why can't we make that next step? It's because we don't have members, it's because we don't have money, it's because we don't have spokespeople, right? So then you start doing actions just to build those other things, right? And then there you start interconnecting it. So, you do a vigil to draw people to the webinar. You do the webinar to draw people to the action. You do the action to draw media influence, right? And you figure out what those stair steps are. So each thing isn't just this random event that you're doing, it's actually a step for the design to eventually eliminate the F-35 program.

Brad:

It's a plan.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. Right? And we have not followed a plan. We've got really passionate people out there doing amazing things. But, it seems like we argue mostly about what the slogan is on the banner.

Judy:

We just did that at The Network for Peace and Justice. Somebody didn't want War is Not the Answer. They wanted something else on it. And, oh boy, that caused a fury.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. You're eventually going to satisfy a handful of people with having the right words on the banner. I was thinking about some of the damages. If you actually made the newspaper-

Judy:

Well, it was this Ukraine thing, because some people are saying they have the right to defend themselves. So we can't say war is not the answer because then we're saying that Ukraine shouldn't seek independence or something.

Brad:

I'm so glad I'm not in that.

Judy:

Oh, oh this is so-

Garett Reppenhagen:

That's something we could go around-

Judy:

Go around and round. Everyone's going to have their own thing.

Brad:

The CIA is not the answer.

Judy:

Yeah. I know. One thing I know for sure though, that everyone I've talked to in the peace community, is glad we have you Garrett. And I am, too. Because you're very clear spoken, and you're younger, and really I think you're organized in your head. And you get everyone agreeing with you. So whatever that is that you've got, I hear this from so many places how fortunate we are to have you right now at this time.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Oh, thank you.

Judy:

That's what I want to say.

Brad:

We need to be focused and on a mission and that definitely will help us get there. What you're talking about.

Judy:

We're ready. We're ready.

Garett Reppenhagen:

It's hard.

Judy:

It is hard. You've got a lot on your shoulders.

Garett Reppenhagen:

It's big talk. Until you sit there and actually are like, okay, we're going to do this. We're going to do this plan to follow a plan. Everybody's so used to doing the same things. And it's like, man, it'd just be easy to just follow the playbook that we've been doing for 10 years. But you can do those events you just figure out, well, what is it that's powerful enough that's there, right? And how do we maximize that and pull something else, other elements into it.

Brad:

And keep on getting the machine going on and not changing too much. But it's a balance.

Garett Reppenhagen:

We did the march around the lake with Women Against Military Madness. And there wasn't that many people out the lake to see us, we walked around a path. People really didn't see us from the road. So really just people at the lake saw us if we happened to pass by them. We walked halfway around the lake, came back, and that was it. But people were happy to be out, to be outside, and be together.

Judy:

This, we did Friday night, there were five of us who walked across with our peace bannerss and you know, who knows?

Brad:

But on both of those, there was a ton of people who read about it, saw it was happening, and knew it was happening-

Garett Reppenhagen:

But I asked them, I was like, "hey, everybody's excited to be together and to do this thing. Maybe the strength on it isn't that we're being seen by people. But the strength of it is that we're coming together as a community. This should have been a party. It should have been a barbecue. It should have been a party. There should have been music. It should have been fun. We should have been dancing along the path. It should have been a blast. We should have maximized the community building aspect of it just like the family reunion of the convention, right? It should have been that. Yeah.

Judy:

So it's really joyful to go to then. And then-

Brad:

Well, I was on the walk last week and I loved the solidarity of it. Being with people that I relate to.

Garett Reppenhagen:

How do you maximize those things? You look at those things and you figure out what were the strengths of it and then you turn those up to 11. And you still have to do the other things. People wanted to get out and they wanted to be seen and do the march. So I'm not saying don't do that also. But you just figure out the other things that are like, if this is a community event, let's make it that. If this is a street action, let's make it that. You just take every opportunity to grow, to build power. And you know, that's the kind of things that I don't think we're thinking about when we do a lot of our events as a chapter. Because we're not talking about how we're building power. How do we come out of this as a stronger chapter?

Judy:

Right. I have to go. But I'd like to say one thing too, about this Memorial Mile, that yesterday as I was leaving, I saw a dad and his two small children looking at this literature, and the dad was pointing out, why are these things here, to these kids? And I think this happens now all week with this setup, that there're going to be kids asking, well, why are those things up there? And there are going to be people trying to explain to them why. And so I'd like to also see I'm thanking you and I'm thanking this committee for putting that up. Because it took a lot of... it takes a lot of effort. But I think it is worth that effort in terms of the people that it touches. It's very visual. And a lot of people do stop by. I been there last year and there was a Vet came up and he was almost weeping. He wasn't in our chapter, but you know, it's a place for people to come and talk about it. I'm glad we still do that. But I agree. We've got to get some-

Jeff:

It brings it out to the front.

Judy:

Yeah. We've got to think about how to reach these younger kids.

Garett Reppenhagen:

I don't need to keep you all here all night.

John0:

No, we're-

Garett Reppenhagen:

I also want you to get the money's worth out of me. So I'm here until you all want to leave.

Brad:

I signed up for both Twitch and what's the other one? Dethrowned?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Discord.

Brad:

Discord. And I had so much in my hands already I couldn't learn anymore at that time, but-

Garett Reppenhagen:

I hear you. It's a lot. The Discord is so chaotic in there to me that, if I didn't see it grow from a little thing to the big thing it is now, and I came in there right now, I would be overwhelmed. So-

Brad:

Everything takes a little learning.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah, so I would say if you go in there and just be very patient with yourself and just poke around, ask a lot of questions, be open to the community and folks will guide you.

Brad:

Yeah.

Garett Reppenhagen:

If you're posting in the wrong spot about something, somebody will say, "hey, this would be good to say in this other place". "Oh, I didn't know there was this other place". So, just finding your way around there, I think the best way to do it is to be active, and to not be embarrassed that you don't know something.

Brad:

Sure.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Just use the space and the people in there. Because all they want to do is help anybody who shows up. Because they're always looking for young people, right? They show up in the space and are like, "hey, I'm about to graduate high school". And folks are looking for somebody like that to talk to, to navigate away from the military. That if you're just a VFP member showing up in the space brand new and just say, "hey, I'm with VFP chapter such and such. Garrett told me I should come in here and check it out. I don't know what the hell I'm doing".

Brad:

Nonthreatening.

Garett Reppenhagen:

You'll probably have two or three people just like, "awesome, you're here. This is really cool. Why don't you introduce yourself in the intro channel? And let everybody know what projects you're interested in". And maybe tell folks what your military history is. Or if you have military family members or something like that you'll get integrated into it slowly. But, I think most people will go there and just go, "holy shit. There's a lot here though. I don't even know what I'm looking at"

John:

So the best way to get knowledgeable about this is to jump in head first, I guess.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah.

John:

Because I don't really understand... I mean, you said one of these is like a TV channel or something?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. So, the Discord is like a community that just talks to each other and Twitch is like a TV channel.

John:

So when you say you talk to each other, so is it visual or is it just text?

Garett Reppenhagen:

It's just text. There's video rooms and other things that aren't really used much. But yeah, pretty much just text. So, conversations are happening there and then the Twitch TV... mostly when you go to the Twitch TV, there's just going to be an archive of all say the videos that we have. But if you're in the Discord or you look at the schedule on Twitch you can see when they have actual programs and then you just tune in. Friday at 7.00 There's a thing. I'm going to go check it out.

John:

Okay. So this morning when I was sitting at the Memorial Mile, there was the card. I got my cell phone out, the QR code and click and it went there and it had like four people offline, offline, offline. But sometimes they'll be online.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. You can look on the Twitch site and there's a button for the calendar, the schedule. And you can see when there's scheduled events and then you'll know. So, if somebody's going to grab a card, you can look at the calendar and say, "oh, there's a program at 7.00 Tonight".

John:

Okay. So when I clicked on that, is it on my cell phone now? I'm sort of-

Garett Reppenhagen:

Can be.

John:

So I have to save that? I have to save the link to it if I want to not have to click the QR code every time?

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. You can do that, too.

John:

Okay.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yeah. You can save the link. There's a Twitch app.

John:

Okay. Okay. Understand

Garett Reppenhagen:

That way you don't even need to go through your browser or Safari or whatever to get there. You just have that.

John:

So just go to download the Twitch app. Okay.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Same with Discord. Just download the app.

Brad:

But you can go either way, like through a browser or through the app.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Yep. If you're logged in through your browser usually you'll get logged off. So it usually just recognizes you with your account. You, have an account same with any other app or service. With an app I've never been locked out. Or if you're on your computer, I don't even have the app on my computer. I just have the browser. I just have the bookmark on the tabs.

Steve:

So, the chapter 27 guys take you out places to go for supper sometimes?

Garett Reppenhagen:

I got there late at night, two nights ago. And Mike McDonald took me out to the baseball bar to meet Dave. Had a couple beers with them and then the next night, our meeting was in the evening and they just got pizzas.

Brad:

Okay. Well, yeah. I was wondering what you're doing the rest of the day again? If you just wanted to relax the rest of the day or you know if you wanted to... y'all want to take a bike ride? Do the post meeting somewhere, somewhere on an eerie.

Garett Reppenhagen:

Sure. I can eat dinner.

Brad:

What time is it?

Brad:

About five past four. According to the clock on the wall.

Garett Reppenhagen:

5.00 Eastern Time.

Garett Reppenhagen:

I'm in Maine. Been there for a year, Lincolnville. I wouldn't even call it a city. There's no stoplights. It's halfway between Portland and the national park there.

I'm sure you'll take me to a good one. I'm not too picky.