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# Viet Vet Monsoon Tribune

Volume IV Issue No. V

VVA CHAPTER 106

August, 1988

## FROM PATRIOTS TO PARIAHs

Jim Armstrong had returned home from Vietnam, and all he wanted to do was play with guns. He had 13 of them, in all sizes and calibers, and he kept them within reach—in the bathroom under his pillow, beneath the bed. Sometimes Armstrong would tote a rifle up a tree in his backyard, as if he were still in the jungle waiting for the enemy to open fire. He took to gobbling Quaaludes and picking fights in bars. Six years ago something snapped: the former Army squad leader ended an argument with his wife by shooting her in the face. She survived, but Armstrong was sent to Michigan's Jackson State Prison to serve 20 to 40 years for attempted murder. In jail, the former soldier was surprised to meet hundreds of other Vietnam veterans with stories much like his.

Of the 5,500 inmates at Jackson, 1,200 served in Vietnam. Their chapter of Vietnam Veterans of America is 400 strong, the second largest in the country. No one has counted how many Vietnam vets are in prisons nationwide, but it is clear that an alarming number have committed violent crimes. Mental-health experts blame some of the criminal behavior on posttraumatic stress disorder, and many prison vets pass their days trying to understand what transformed them from patriots to pariahs. Are they criminals at heart, or victims of the war? "I guess if we'd spent a year lounging on the beach in the Bahamas instead of in jungles, we might be a lot different," says Phillip Reibel, a soft-spoken ex-Marine who in a fit of rage threw his 16 year-old son headfirst into a chair, partially paralyzing him. "Yeah, the beach wouldn't have made me crazy."

Stress disorders can be treated with therapy and drugs, but most prisoners get neither. At Jackson, the waiting list for psychiatric care is two to three years long. According to VVA, prison administrators act only on the most extreme cases. Even then, the remedy often amounts to the so-called Thorazine Shuffle. "They get treatment all right," says inmate Kenny Linn. "They drug up the severe cases and stick 'em in some padded room somewhere." Nor is the Veterans Administration much help. Though the VA will provide treatment, current rules require the inmate to come to a VA hospital—not an easy task for a convicted felon required to pay for a guard to accompany him on the trip.

At Jackson, the vets try to help themselves. Every Monday night 15 or 20 gather to lend each other support. "Are any of you real criminals?" asks Armstrong, who shares the medically accepted belief that Vietnam vets were whisked too quickly from foxhole to front porch. "We were hired assassins out there," he says. "Then the next day we're supposed to go home to the Ford plant and forget everything. Yeah, right." The veterans tend to be model prisoners whose jailhouse behavior distinguishes them from other inmates. "Other prisoners talk about how they got caught," says Reibel. "We wonder why we ever did such a thing in the first place."

Jackson State is slowly instituting a plan to provide group therapy for war-related problems. Meantime, the VVA is raising money to open a work-release center on a farm in central Michigan where inmates could live with their families. Two local businesses, a high school and a number of psychiatrists have agreed to work with the prisoners. So far, prison officials have balked at the VVA proposal, expressing concern about security and staffing. VVA leaders point out that the Vietnam inmates are not likely to run away from a program that offers a path back to society. "These men are asking for help," says Jackson State Prison official Dan Hawkins. "And we absolutely must give it to them."

## BOARD TALK

Officers reports... Peter Rilea discussed having a fund raising drawing at Raven Raceway. If anyone has any ideas please contact him... Gary Morgan stated that we made \$250 at Raven Raceway selling products and we raised \$60.00 for the Women's Memorial. Way to go Gary!!!... Dan Driscoll has taken over as editor of the "Monsoon Tribune". Lets all help him out by submitting articles to him ON TIME--the deadline for articles is each General Meeting... Chuck Bald-Coulter gave us membership status and emphasized the need for night volunteers at the VA hospital. He also has a list of jobs for people who might need one. If you want to help at the VA Hospital or need a job call Chuck... Dave Croteau said that a group of veterans from Rhode Island have started a POW/MIA flag being sent across the USA. It is presently in Texas and will be arriving at the Arizona border in 4 to 5 weeks. The organizers realize that Arizona is too large to walk the flag across the state so they are asking that we pick up the flag at the border and drive it to California. If anyone is interested in joining a caravan to take the flag across Arizona or have any ideas on how we should do it contact Dave... It was announced that we have access to Raven Raceway to have a Vietnam Veterans night to have a fund raising event such as a raffle. The date is tentatively set for 3 or 4 September. Anyone who has any ideas or would like to volunteer contact Peter Rilea... Legislative Coordinator, Barry Arcala gave a report on his activities. He's been doing a

lot of writing to a lot of people--Give 'em hell Barry!!... There was a presentation by Carl Holden and Bill Nally from the Pop Warner football league in Tucson. They were requesting a sponsorship from the chapter. It was voted to donate \$200.00 to the league... The following announcements were made... New bill before the house HR 4632, Missing Persons Act lets all give our representatives a call and voice our opinion... The VA has been made a cabinet position. The VVA has been fighting for this issue for several years and it was due directly to **OUR** efforts that it was done... Harold Leigh may have to resign as treasurer due to the situation at IBM. Any volunteers for the position??? We hope he doesn't have to go--We'll miss him... It was announced that Don Howard will be unable to chair the Homeless Committee. Again, any volunteers??... The chapter was made an offer by VFW Post 549 that we could use their facilities to have meetings, etc. While the board appreciates their generous offer we feel that DAV 18 has been really great to us and don't feel that a move is warranted at this time. What's your opinion? Let us know... September is national POW week. The chapter may be having a door-to-door campaign to bring the POW issue to the community... Tucson Cable Channel has offered us air time at their TV studio. Anyone have any ideas on what to do? Anyone want to volunteer to head up the project or help out?... The students at CDO High School who saw our presentation have sent letters to their congressmen asking about the POW/MIA issue. Way to go kids!!!

Till next month.....

YOUR BOARD

### \*\*\*\*\*EDUCATION COMMITTEE UPDATE\*\*\*\*\*

The Education Committee of V.V.A. #106 has been busy, with presentations to various junior high, high school and college classes. Four presentations have been made since May.

Our purpose is to give those too young to remember a personal history of the war in South-east Asia, during the 1960's and early 1970's. Informing our audiences of veterans issues and the P.O.W./M.I.A. program are included.

All chapter members are invited to participate and tell his or her side of the story. We try to show all who are interested (especially those who don't remember) that Vietnam Veterans have earned a special place in history and society. We served when it was unpopular to do so. Every veteran, wife or next of kin has a story that should be told. Share your story. Many thanks to those who have.

John K. Paulus

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Agent Orange aid for Vets by '89

"Vietnam veterans who say they were harmed by exposure to the herbicide Agent Orange could begin to receive cash and other assistance from a \$240 million settlement fund by early next year, according to a plan released yesterday.

U.S. District Judge Jack B. Weinstein set into motion the allocation of the settlement money after the U.S. Supreme Court last week removed the last legal obstacle in the lengthy Agent Orange litigation.

The class-action suit, initiated in 1978, was settled in May 1984 when seven chemical companies that manufactured Agent Orange agreed to pay \$180 million. The fund had grown to \$240 million through interest during the appeals process.

The distribution plan has two major components: a \$170 million program to provide cash benefits to long-term, totally disabled veterans and to the families of veterans whose deaths were believed to have been linked to Agent Orange; and a \$52 million program to fund social service projects that benefit veterans and their families.

Veterans can receive information about the settlement fund by calling a toll-free number, 1-800-645-1355."

The Arizona Daily Star

\*\*\*\*\*ANNOUNCEMENTS\*\*\*\*\*

U.S. Congressman Jim Kolbe (State of Arizona) will be attending our General Meeting August 25th (Thursday) 1988. Congressman Kolbe is a member of V.V.A. Chapter 106. This is a great chance to meet and talk with Congressman Kolbe.

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P.O.W./M.I.A. Recognition Day will be held on September 16th 1988 at Davis Monthan Air Force Base.

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All card holding members of V.V.A. #106 and their immediate family have been invited to Raven Raceway 12500 S. Houghton Road, Sept. 3rd and 4th 1988 (Labor Day Weekend). Race warm-ups: 7:00 P.M. Races start: 8:00 P.M. Let's have a real good turnout to show our appreciation. Your V.V.A. membership card is your ticket to attend.

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It is no longer required that you display a State issued license plate on the front of your vehicle. V.V.A. #106 has available special license plates which read "VETERAN VIETNAM WAR". They may be seen at all Board and General Membership meetings and are for sale.

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"NAM JAM 88" is scheduled for November 12th at Reid Park. More information to follow at a later date.

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## HANOI JANE: AN INDICTMENT

During the late Viet-Nam conflict, Jane Fonda did, in fact, make a trip to Hanoi. Of that, there is no question. It was well documented, filmed and presented to a World audience. What is at question and is certainly subject to interpretation; were her actions while there.

Was Jane Fonda in Hanoi as an emissary of peace (as she contends), or was she committing an act of perfidy so heinous that it clearly constituted treason?

If we examine her acts as recently displayed on public television, we can clearly see two complete and disparate acts.

For the first part, she did nothing but tour bombed-out buildings, injured people and the general horrors of war. However, for the second part, she did cross that magic line and sit at the controls of a machine whose purpose was the destruction of our own aircraft. She did so willingly, without coercion or threat, and quite clearly displayed her enjoyment of the experience.

As a Viet-Nam Veteran and a citizen of this country, I can honestly find no fault with her showing the horrors of war. Certainly, war is horrible. Equally, I can find no fault with her plea for peace. We did, as members of the military, take an oath to uphold her right to make that plea.

But, there my understanding ends: When Jane Fonda took up arms against me and my brethren, she was not asking for peace; but, rather, she was taking the part of my enemy. As such, she should be charged with treason.

In the end, based on the factual evidence, I firmly believe that Jane Fonda should be charged with treason and let the courts decide her guilt or innocence.

Rod J. Lamkin  
United States Army Ret.

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It has come to my attention that many "significant others" (wives, girlfriends, family, friends, etc.) of Vietnam (Era) Veterans feel that our organization is only for the vet. This is not true! This organization is for the family of Nam (Era) Vets; for all Nam (Era) Vets feel as though we belong to one family. And that family of Veterans is inclusive of all those that are close to a Nam (Era) Vet. We miss families at our meetings.

In relationship to having "significant others" come to meetings with their Veteran, let me assure you that anyone close to a Nam (Era) Vet that wants to make a difference in our society, and for the Nam (Era) Vet, can become a member in his or her own right. Associate membership is open to all!

We know that those close to a Nam (Era) Vet are also still fighting the war of survival and need our support as we need yours. Please become a member with us to achieve all those goal that we strive for!

Frank L. Thompson  
President  
Vietnam Veterans of America  
Chapter #106, Tucson, Az

# POW/MIA

## ON CLOSING THE POW/MIA ISSUE

In view of recent events, it is time to take an honest look at the POW/MIA issue. Are there live POWs or MIAs still in captivity? Senator John McCain says there are. In fact, live sighting reports are received on an almost daily basis.

If there are live POWs, why haven't they either escaped or been returned? Why haven't these simple, basic questions been answered?

In 1973, then president, Richard Nixon, faithfully promised the people of the United States that all of the living POWs were returned. Why, then, did some of those same returned POWs say that there were hundreds of live POWs still being held captive?

These and many other dark and dire questions must be honestly and irrevocably answered. The people of the United States, and especially the families of the prisoners in question, deserve nothing less.

Has anyone thought about the POWs themselves? To them, certainly, there is no political issue involved. They have no axe to grind with any government. They are only common men and women who are middle-aged and whose only desire is to be returned to their families. Most of them have grandchildren. Don't the grandchildren have the right to know their grandparent as something other than a vague memory held by their parents?

In truth, this is not a political issue. Who cares what government runs Viet-Nam, Cambodia or Laos? We have our own troubles to worry about. The only real issue is an issue of basic human rights. It's been long enough, let's bring our people home!

#####EDITOR'S NOTES#####  
I take much pride in becoming Editor of our "Viet Vet Monsoon Tribune". It will be my goal to put out a paper we all can be proud of. Much thanks to those who submitted articles for this edition. The support of our membership will be very much appreciated.

Dan Driscoll

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# VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA

Membership in Vietnam Veterans of America, Inc. is open to Vietnam Era Veterans  
Associate Membership to the Public at Large

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

\$20.00 Annual Dues Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Copy of DD Form 214 Enclosed \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form to

• VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA •

Tucson Chapter 106, P.O. Box 40907, Tucson, Arizona 85717

- I am a Vietnam era veteran and would like to be a Member. (Enclose DD Form 214)
- I am not a Vietnam era veteran, but would like to be an Associate Member.

Your Local Chapter No. \_\_\_\_\_

I want to give more. Enclosed is my check for  \$20,  \$50,  \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(All contributions are tax deductible.)

New Member or  Renewal

Membership Card No. \_\_\_\_\_

## A CONGRESSIONALLY CHARTERED VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION

VIETNAM VETERANS OF AMERICA Tucson Chapter 106  
P.O. Box 40903 Tucson, Arizona 85717 (602) 790-7602

### GOVERNING BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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AUG. 11th - BOARD MEETING: Thursday at D.A.V. 18 4656 E. 1st ST.  
at 7:30 PM

AUG. 25th - GENERAL MEETING: Thursday at D.A.V. 18 4656 E. 1st ST.  
at 7:30 PM

SEPT. 8th - BOARD MEETING: Thursday at D.A.V. 18 4656 E. 1st ST.  
at 7:30 PM

SEPT. 22nd - GENERAL MEETING: Thursday at D.A.V. 18 4656 E. 1st ST.  
at 7:30 PM

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