

MINUTES FOR VFP TOM STURTEVANT CHAPTER DECEMBER 28, 2017

PRESENT: Richard Clement, Rita Clement, Jeff Siegfried, Dan Ellis, Peter S. Morgan, Jr., Ginny Schneider, Don Kimball, Doug Rawlings, and Peggy Akers

The meeting began at 7:10pm with a series of comments about how our spirits can be lifted somewhat by the kindness of others. Peggy shared this vignette with us: during her work in the Portland Homeless Teens clinic, she worked with a young woman who had serious head lice. There was no question that she needed to have her head shaved. The crew at the clinic looked far and wide to find someone who might help, but to no avail. Finally, a friend called up one of the fanciest places in town: not only did a young hair stylist volunteer to come to the clinic, but he also came equipped to treat the young teen “like a princess” — a gown and a meticulous haircut that was the envy of the other girls. Everyone was in tears. There is hope!

SECRETARY’S REPORT: The November report, which is on line, was accepted as written.

TREASURER’S REPORT: \$4,107.52 in the Credit Union as of this date. We received \$555.00 in dues and donations this past month. There were only minimal expenditures for supplies (\$46.21). Once again, at the end of the year, we thank Dan Ellis for keeping such great books. We will receive our semi-annual check from MaineShare in January. Don asked where the funds were held (Midcoast Credit Union), and he was pleased that we are not holding funds in Bank of America or Wells Fargo. This question led to a brief discussion about divestment and “clean funds’ (if there is such a thing).

MEMBERSHIP REPORT: We currently have 96 members (11 honorary, 68 regular, 1 life, and 3 donors). Eighty-two of these members are paid up in their dues.

EDUCATION/OUTREACH/MEDIA: Don filled us in on his new radio show “Friendly Fire” on the University of Southern Maine’s station (90.9 on your FM dial or available as a livestream). Don focuses on interviewing veterans. Peggy Akers will be his guest on January 3rd — the show runs every Wednesday night at 8:00pm. His past guests have included veterans from Massachusetts involved in VFP actions. He is right on target when he speculates that this could be a good medium for us to reach out to younger veterans, especially USM students. We appreciate his hard work.

ONGOING AND/OR UPDATED EVENTS:

- Chapter Office Position: After much fanfare and hoopla, Richard made it official — he is stepping down from the presidency as of the first of the year. He has served in this capacity more than admirably for the past five years. His accomplishments are too many to mention in this small space, but suffice it to say that all of us in VFP have benefitted from his leadership. He will be missed in that capacity, but he will continue to serve (he was elected as our new vice-president [Rawlings motion/Akers second.

Unanimous]). Your humble scribe has agreed to serve as Interim President until we can get someone to step into that role. Richard, Dan, and John will meet with Doug over the month to discuss the passing of the formidable powers of the office to our new interim president.

- Militarization in Maine High Schools: Ginny Schneider joined us to discuss the work that the Maine War Tax Resistance Center is doing via Rosalie Paul's "Youth and Military Project." Over the last year she and a few of her colleagues have worked on projects such as the Maine VFP Rob Shetterly calendar (Morgana researched and put together two pages of alternative resources for high school graduates to consider rather than military service or college); she and Morgana are working on a list of high school teachers who may want to invite speakers into their schools; she has enlisted the help of Rob Shetterly, Anna Treverrow from Portland's School Board, and others to help resurrect the "opt out" alternative for students to withhold information from military recruiters as well as to control the use of ASVAB testing in schools. She has also set up a monthly table at SMCC and a slot in UNE's Career Day (March 1st). Doug said that he would see if he could dig up material from a workshop he attended at our San Diego VFP Convention three years ago focusing on the work that Los Angeles and Chicago activists have done in schools. Our chapter should also see if we can set up a Speakers Bureau for teachers to use for guest speakers from VFP.
- Aegis Nine Report: The court date has been set for 8:30am on January 4th in West Bath. This will be the jury selection stage.
- VFP Sound System: Once again we continued the discussion of whether or not to buy a new system (about \$700) or begin renting a system as demand requires (\$75 per use from a local Brunswick dealer. Dan has been doing much research into this. He told us that for \$700 we could purchase our own Fender Passport System that we could possibly store at Bruce's (Dan will ask Bruce about this). Arguments against the purchase: Rita brought up the point that we have only used a system a few times so paying to rent one is more cost effective than purchasing one. Doug thinks that renting equipment comes with a problem — we might be getting damaged goods and we will also be on someone else's timetable (i.e., the renter). Doug thinks that if we purchase our own system we would be more than likely to use it more than just a few times; plus we could loan it to other groups and ask for donations. We should get an insurance policy on it though. Dan also pointed out that the purchased item is one piece and easier to transport; the rental system has multiple pieces to it. In any event, we will make our final decision at the next meeting in January. Meanwhile, Dan will be doing more research.
- Letter to Maine Legislature About General Dynamics Request for T\$60 million in tax relief: We had previously decided to ask Bruce to write a letter on our chapter's behalf since he is most knowledgeable about the situation. We also posted the need to write letters to our list-serve. Over 356 letters have been written so far. We weren't sure off

a letter on our behalf had been written. Ginny volunteered to write a Letter to the Editor for Bruce to check out if he wishes to. Peter sent Will Griffin's video to legislators that featured actions at BIW; he also went with the Conservative Voters activists to Senator Collins's office Portland.

- My Lai Memorial Project: Doug reported that Mac MacDevitt from Chicago is the driving force behind this project (it is a multi-dimensional proactive display that encourages viewers to engage with images from the massacre). So far he has raised \$20,000 and is taking it for a 2018 national tour (right now it is in San Francisco); it will be in Portland, Maine at the end of August/early September. We need to find a place for it (USM? College of Art?) and also need to put up veterans who are working on the display when it shows up.

NEW EVENTS:

- Dud Hendrick requested that we help out the activist Carolyn Coe on her political actions in Kabul and in Honduras (she is working with Kathy Kelly's Peace Group Voices in the Wilderness). Carolyn has been a strong supporter of VFP over the years and works at the WERU radio station on the coast. We agreed to donate \$500 to her efforts. Dan will contact Dud about sending out a check. (Doug made the motion; Don seconded it; unanimous)
- Winter Issue of PEACE IN OUR TIMES: Dan has ordered two bundles of the paper for delivery by mid-January. Members are encouraged to pick up copies at the next meeting to distribute.
- Our VFP Chapter and the NYC Veterans Day Parade: Don is encouraging us to attend this event on Armistice Day this year (he is anticipating 2,000 to 4,000 veterans to be there and is willing to work as our chapter's liaison with the national VFP office. Two of the veterans most active in this action have already appeared on Don's show. Don also mentioned Ann Wright's request that we really focus on the notion of Armistice Day this coming November.
- Sixth Annual Alliance For the Common Good rally of Unity on January 3rd at the Augusta State House Hall of Flags (9:00am to 1:00pm). Jim Freeman is this year's emcee. There will be lots of speakers and banners. Richard will be there.
- Peggy requested that we ask National for a list of Maine members whom we might contact to bring into the group. Doug agreed to do that.

CLOSING: As per usually, Richard brought the meeting to a close right on time, with a few minutes to spare (that won't happen again for awhile). In the closing moments, Jeff asked if any of us were Christians and how VFP felt about the message of Jesus Christ. We answered that none of us identify as such but we still hold to many of the teachings of Jesus in terms of

compassion for others and the need for activism in the cause of peace. Doug reminded others that when we formed VFP, we did so with no intention of affiliating with any religious perspective. He also reminded us of the on-going debate within the ranks of VFP about absolute pacifism vs conditional pacifism. We will probably be arguing that point forever.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00pm (temperature was below zero).

NEXT MEETING: JANUARY 25TH IN BRUNSWICK