

2017 VFP TOM STURTEVANT CHAPTER MINUTES

January 26, 2017

PRESENT: Richard Clement, Brian Clement, Peggy Akers, Bill Leonard, Clarence Smith, Bud Buzzell and Josie, Victor Skorapa, David Larsen, Peter Morgan, Bob Dale, Martha Morrison, LeRoy Lowell, Dan Ellis, Tom Whitney, Joe DeRivera, and Doug Rawlings

We opened the meeting with Bud's description of his physical state and are pleased to say that he is a real trouper and battling on. Doug read his poem "Christmas Morning Sunrise," which appears in the latest issue of PEACE IN OUR TIMES.

The Secretary's Report from the November meeting was accepted as written.

The Treasurer's Report was presented by the inimitable Dan Ellis. As of the meeting we have a balance of \$8,471.65 (we just received our biannual contribution from MaineShare of \$2,915.98).

Richard gave a brief summary of MaineShare's history for those not familiar with our relationship to the organization -- it is a non-profit, workplace giving group based on the United Way model with currently 40 progressive organizations on its rolodex. VFP was a charter member in 1985. Richard is carrying on the good work of Tom Sturtevant as our representative. Kate Cronin is now its able director, taking over from the irreplaceable Hildie Lipson. Our membership means that we do not have to spend time fund-raising, so we are very thankful for this opportunity.

Dan Ellis once again wrested the microphone from Richard to give us his membership report (he is also our membership guru). We currently have 121 members, with 79 currently paid-up in dues (okay, okay, my check is in the mail). He will send out reminders to those who are financially delinquent and will begin to purge the lists next month.

Richard mentioned that Regis's new film "Thirty Seconds to Midnight" is now out, so stay tuned to our web site for show times and places. We agreed that our donations to Regis's work is money well spent.

We recognized the passing of one of our greatest members, Art Whitman. Bill Leonard stood to give an eloquent remembrance of Art: Art was a professor of English at Roberts College in the Bosphorus and at American University in Beirut. Bill met him as a moving force behind the Common Ground Fair and as a teacher in International Relations sponsored by the Christian Science Monitor. In the late 80's, Bill was working as a math teacher designing Artificial Intelligence when Art came on board to write a technical manual. Bob Chute suggested to Bill that he join VFP, during Chris Beam's time as chapter president; when Chris gave up the post, Bill took over, expanding the chapter newsletter and growing the membership. During this time Art was serving as chapter treasurer. It was now that VFP's amazing "Children of War" project took off, with Bill helping a young man from Bosnia to recover from his wounds and become assimilated into American culture and then a young injured girl get into St. Mary's for her healing. All throughout this process, Art was deeply involved. Then Bill mentioned how Art was instrumental in getting our chapter named after William Ladd, the 19th century peace activist from Auburn, Maine who was predominantly involved in helping President McKinley develop his points prior to creating the League of Nations. Bill closed his remarks by relaying how profoundly Art will be missed by him, and, of course, by all of us. There will be two memorial services for Art -- one in Melrose, Massachusetts for family members and one later this spring in Belfast, Maine. Richard led us in a "presente" recognition of Art's contribution to world peace. Richard mentioned that Art's daughter, Beth, was at the Augusta Women's Peace Rally, carrying a VFP flag.

Richard led us in a "presente" recognition of Richard Bamforth, who also recently passed away. Richard also led us in a "presente" recognition of Charlie Liteky, the only person in this country's history to turn in his Congressional Medal of Honor in the 1980's to protest our government's wars in Central America. As a Chaplain in Vietnam, Liteky won the Medal by saving the lives of twenty soldiers while under heavy fire and having been wounded himself. VFP's first field trip was taken to DC to support Charlie and Brian Wilson, George Mizo, and others as they took on a forty day water only fast on the Capitol steps.

Tom Whitney spoke to us about his work in support of David Ravelo, the Colombian activist now jailed for eighteen years for his work against the repressive Colombian government. Tom reminded us of the low-intensity warfare that took 250,000 lives with six million people displaced from their land. Of course the U.S. military has been heavily involved in the repression of the Colombian people, so Richard agreed to have our chapter sign off on a letter in support of Ravelo to the Colombian president (there were over 300 signees to that letter which was delivered to the Colombian Consulate in Boston). Tom assured us that Mr. ravelo could not help but be heartened by support like ours. And, of course, thanks to Tom for his good work and for keeping us informed.

Doug then reported on the progress of the Rob Shetterly calendar project. Doug has written two grants -- one for \$500 from the Zinn VFP national fund and one for \$3,000 to the Resist Foundation out of Boston. Rob informed Doug that in order to print 2,000 copies of the 19 page calendar, we would need \$4700. If both grants come through, combined with the \$500 generously donated by our chapter and by the \$700 committed through Rob's AMERICANS WHO TELL THE TRUTH fund, we will have enough to go to the printers in mid-April. We have shifted our publication deadline to early June in order to correspond with Rob's work with Maine teachers at two major conventions. We are still committed to giving away calendars to Maine teachers upon request, but the remainder will be sold to the general public and other peace groups (with VFP's vast membership and Rob's national reputation, this aspiration can be met). Martha suggested we put out a press release and Richard suggested that we keep the calendar template available for future reprinting. He also suggested that we push the calendar to the other MaineShare groups, and Martha promised to push it to the USM Elders group.

Richard then reminded us of the upcoming Zumwalt Twelve trial on February 1st and 2nd (our erstwhile Secretary John Morris was not at the meeting because he was preparing for the trial). We were encouraged to attend an 8:00am rally in front of the Bath Courthouse on Wednesday morning in support of the Twelve. Note: as of this writing (February 4th) all twelve were found guilty and sentenced to perform thirty hours of community service. We are very, very proud of this group and deeply appreciate their commitment to peace.

Richard reminded us that the Blue Angels are coming back in August (8/26-8/27). We will have a presence there protesting their polluting, hyper-militaristic, wasteful show.

Doug updated us on Ginnie Schneider's work through the War Tax Resistance group. We are still planning on having the March 15th workshop and musical presentation take place at the UMA Holocaust Center in Augusta. The chapter graciously provided us funds to help make this a success -- \$500 to be divided this way -- \$200 for the key note performer, Ruth Hill; \$100 as a donation to the Holocaust Center; and \$200 to Ginnie Schneider for her expenses and to pay travel for other performers. More information about the event will be forthcoming.

Richard reminded us of the good showing last year at Portland's GLOBAL DAY AGAINST MILITARY SPENDING at which he spoke eloquently of VFP's work. By a unanimous vote we

appointed Richard to be the spokesperson at this year's gathering. It will take place on April 18th at noon in Monument Square, Portland. Ginnie will be tabling there as well.

Smitty gallantly accepted another three year term on our Board of Directors.

Richard moved, and Bud seconded, a proposal to award our indefatigable, electronically gifted, perspicacious webmaster, Dan Ellis a \$1,000 stipend for his services for the next year. After Peter asked if Dan were happy with his new computer --he is --, we unanimously passed the motion. And, of course, we thank Dan for his dedication to our group.

Richard reported that our chapter awarded \$500 to the Wabanaki in support of their part in Standing Rock. Sherri Mitchell and Chief Francis accepted the check with gratitude. Peter remarked on how great it was to see the VFP flag flying over the stand-off.

Peter also invited us to join him and Women In Black every Friday at 5:00pm in Congress Square across from the Portland Library. Other VFP weekly vigils include Bath Iron Works and Farmington (Fridays at noon in front of the post office -- VFP and Women in Black join forces).

Richard and Regis represented VFP at the Fifth Rally for Unity held in the Capitol Building's Hall of Flags on January 4th. Richard reported that it was well attended and was the first day of the Legislation meeting for 2017.

Lots of us attended various Women's marches this past month -- Portland, Augusta, Brunswick, Washington, DC. Richard, Rita, Bob Lezer, Doug, and others were sited in Augusta. Dan was in Brunswick carrying the VFP flag among 400 people. Peter was in Portland. Peggy went to DC and then read a beautiful piece she has written about her experiences there (hey, Peggy, you promised to send it to us, remember?).

Martha reminded us of the non-violence training to be held on February 19th, led by Larry Dansinger and supported by ROSC. She also filled us in about a course offered at USM entitled "Ethics in the Military." After Martha looked more closely into the course, she decided to withdraw (the professor has no military experience). Then what happens? Since she was registered for the course, she suddenly gets contacted by a recruiter from Boston. Hmmmm.

Peggy spoke about the need for boots for refugees in Portland. After a quick conversation, it was moved and seconded that we donate \$500 to Peggy to use at her discretion to buy boots from Goodwill or some sporting goods store for the refugees. We also considered perhaps resurrecting our past practice of honoring stores with a special VFP plaque recognizing their service to others.

Doug mentioned the opening of the Maine Historical Society Museum show "Veterans' Voices" starting February 4th and going through to mid-April. The museum is located on Congress Street in Portland next to the Public Library. He has been working with the staff to help get a section of the show dedicated to our Memorial Day letter writing campaign. They did it beautifully. Doug's entry is below. Veterans are admitted for free. Visit the show and submit a letter if you can.

NEXT MEETING IS FEBRUARY 23rd at the UMA HOLOCAUST CENTER if we can get it. See the website for updated information.

DOUG RAWLINGS, Chesterville



Doug Rawlings at the Vietnam Memorial, Washington DC, 2003

I was drafted in the Army in the fall of 1968 while I was in graduate school at Ohio State. I ended up in the central highlands (on the Bong Son River) of Vietnam in July of 1969 with the 7/15th artillery attached to the 173rd. I spent 411 days and nights at LZ Uphill and Firebase Two Bits (who thinks up these names?). Over the years the faces of the village children come back to haunt me, especially since I have children and grandchildren of my own.

On occasion the iconic picture of Kim would cross into my consciousness at odd times - a magazine picture in the dentist's office or buried amongst other pictures in some history text - but just recently I found out she was nine at that horrific moment captured for eternity. My oldest granddaughter just turned ten. Click. All Nam vets have a Ridge Road in their psyches. Blacks have committed suicide than were killed in combat, and the single car suicide is a preferred method; but maybe, just maybe, some degree of forgiveness is at hand if we earn it by working for peace. Then we can come home.



Doug Rawlings Vietnam, 1969

THE GIRL IN THE PICTURE
For Phan Thi Kim Phuc

"Whatever you run from becomes your shadow"
- traditional

If you're a nameless, a survivor of sorts,
she'll come for you across the decades
casting a shadow in the dying light of your dreams,
naked and nine, terror in her eyes.

Of course you will have to ignore her -
if you wish to survive over the years -
but then your daughters will turn nine
and then your granddaughters nine.

As the shadows lengthen,

So, you will have no choice on that one night
screaming down the Ridge Road, lights off,
under a full moon, she standing in the middle of the road,
still naked and nine, terror in her eyes.

Now you must stop to pick her up, to carry her back
home to where she came from, to that gentle
village where the forgiving and the forgiven
gather at high noon. There are no shadows.

- Doug Rawlings
Veterans For Peace



Phan Thi Kim Phuc
Photographer: Frank Ong
April 30, 1972 (AP Photo, June 5, 1972)

Doug Rawlings
Veterans For Peace

Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it. -- Bertolt Brecht

I refuse to live in a country like this, and I'm not leaving. -- Michael Moore

American politics is the entertainment wing of the military industrial complex -- Frank Zappa

I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be... -- Martin Luther King, Jr.