



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

DECEMBER
2013

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

The Defining and Enabling Experience of Our “Civilization” -- Genocide and THE THANKSGIVING MYTH

by S. Brian Willson

As we again plan to celebrate what US “Americans” call Thanksgiving, let us pause for a moment of reflection. Let us recognize that accounts of the first Thanksgiving are mythological, and that the holiday is actually a grotesque celebration of our arrogant ethnocentrism built on genocide.

Native Americans in the Caribbean greeted their 1492 European invaders with warm hospitality. They were so innocent that Genoan Cristoforo Colombo wrote in his log, They willingly traded everything they owned . . . They do not bear arms . . . They would make fine servants . . . They could easily be made Christians . . . With fifty men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want. This meeting set in motion a 500+-year plunder of the Western Hemisphere, which then spread to the remainder of the globe. And it has not stopped!

Historian Hans Köning concludes that what sets the West apart is its persistence, its capacity to stop at nothing. Cultural historian Lewis Mumford declared, Wherever Western man went, slavery, land robbery, lawlessness, culture-wrecking, and the outright extermination of both wild beasts and tame men went with him.

Jump 129 years to 1621, year of the supposed “first Thanksgiving.” There is not much documentation of that event, apparently a three-day feast, but surviving Indians do not trust the myth. Natives were already dying like flies thanks to European-borne diseases. The Pequot tribe in today’s Connecticut reportedly numbered 8,000 when the Pilgrims arrived, but disease had reduced their population to 1,500 by 1637, when the first, officially proclaimed, all-Pilgrim “Thanksgiving” took place. At that feast, the whites of New England celebrated their massacre of the Pequots in the Connecticut Valley where the Mystic River meets the sea. The Indians were in fact celebrating their annual green corn dance ceremony. But it was to be their last.

William Bradford, the former Governor of Plymouth and one of the chroniclers of the supposed 1621 feast, was on hand for the unspeakable massacre of 1637. He described it thus in his History of the Plymouth Plantation (@1647): Those that escaped the fire were slain with the sword; some hewed to pieces, others run through with their rapiers, so that they were quickly dispatched and very few escaped. It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire...horrible was the stink and scent thereof, but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave praise thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to enclose their enemies in their hands, and give them so speedy a victory.

The rest of the white folks thought so, too. This day forth shall be a day of celebration and thanksgiving for subduing the Pequots, read Massachusetts Bay Governor John Winthrop’s proclamation. The authentic proclaimed Thanksgiving Day was born. Few Pequots survived.

Most historians believe about 700 Pequots were slaughtered at Mystic. Many prisoners were executed, and surviving women and children sold into slavery in the West Indies. Pequot prisoners that escaped execution were parceled out to Indian tribes allied with the English. The Pequot were thought to have been extinguished as a people.

But, the epitaph was premature. Enough survived such that today the Pequots own the Foxwood Casino and Hotel, in Ledyard, Connecticut, larger in size than the Pentagon, with gaming revenues in the billions.

Moving 158 years further, we discover a ruthless campaign conducted in central New York in 1779 during our “noble” Revolutionary War. The Continental Congress was furious that a majority of the Iroquois Indians (those who coined the Seventh Generation philosophy) were siding with the British against the colonialists who were rapidly settling their lands. The booming capital town of the Seneca Nation was Kanadesaga at the head of Seneca Lake in the Finger Lakes region. In the summer of 1779, the Continental Congress instructed its

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Army's commanding general to take care of the Indian problem. George Washington complied. He ordered General John Sullivan to lay waste . . . that the country . . . be . . . destroyed, instilling terror among the Iroquois Indians in central New York; General Sullivan affirmed that the Indians shall see that there is malice enough in our hearts to destroy everything that contributes to their support. Washington declared, Our future security will be in their inability to injure us...and in the terror with which the severity of the chastisement they receive will inspire them [Richard Drinnon, *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian Hating & Empire Building* (New York: Schocken Books, 1990), pp. 331-32].

The culminating day of "victory" was September 7, 1779. Total destruction of Kanadesaga and the forty other Seneca towns was accomplished by 4,500 troops, nearly one-third of the entire force of the Continental Army. The only major military campaign of that year, it was one of the most vicious scorched-earth campaigns in history. All orchards and food crops were destroyed, all buildings were looted, then burned. Many of the escaping Senecas were scalped and butchered: After the battle . . . Indian warriors . . . were scalped; Lieutenant William Barton amused himself by skinning two Indians from the hips down to make two pairs of leggings, one pair for himself, the other a present for his major [Morris Bishop, "The End of the Iroquois," *American Heritage*, October 1969, p. 78].

Jump 162 years to 1941, when I was born in Kanadesaga, renamed Geneva by our European ancestors. As a young boy I blissfully collected hundreds of Seneca arrowheads, storing them in a special protected box in my bedroom. A chapter in my seventh grade history textbook taught that, The Iroquois were the Indian Masters of the State, but due to their destructive attacks on the frontier settlements, George Washington decided to send an army to crush the Indians . . . The Six Nations never recovered from this blow. Europeans onward and upward!

The New Republic was formed in 1789, its 1787 Constitutional Convention having been conducted in enforced secrecy, never submitted to a popular vote. The third U.S. President, Thomas Jefferson (1801-1809) described his vision of an "empire of liberty," with expanded commercial enterprises and territory. And without any Constitutional authority he quickly doubled the area of the young country by acquiring vast Louisiana from France's Napoleon for \$15 million.

In 1807 he advocated preventive war: If the English do not give us the satisfaction we demand, we will take Canada, which wants to enter the Union; and when, together with Canada, we shall have the Floridas, we shall no longer have any difficulties with our neighbors; and it is the only way of preventing them [William Appleman Williams, *The Contours of American History* (Cleveland: The World Publishing Company, 1961), p. 192]. Others openly talked of expansion into Spanish America and Canada for planter and mer-

chant prosperity in new markets, saying that the patriotic and virtuous "wise framers" of the Constitution had "too much wisdom to restrict Congress to defensive war" [Ibid., p. 194].

After moving to Humboldt County in northern California in the early 2000s, I carefully examined its history as well. The 1849 gold rush brought a large influx of white miners and settlers to California, leading to near virtual wipeout of California Indians by 1865-70. Between 1853 and 1861 there were at least fourteen wars waged against the Indians of California, with paramilitary campaigns continuing into the late 1860s. The population, once thought to have been as high as 700,000, was estimated to be 100,000 in 1849 partly due to grueling enslavement in the Catholic Missions starting in 1769. From 1849 to 1860 the population decreased by 65 percent to 35,000, due to systematic killings [Russell Thornton, *American Indian Holocaust and Survival: A Population History Since 1492* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987), p. 109]; a detailed list of atrocities committed against Indians in California, including many in what is now Humboldt County, can be found in Sherburne F. Cook's *The Conflict Between the California Indian and White Civilization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976)].

From 1857 to 1860, U.S. author/poet Bret Harte wrote for the *Northern Californian* and the *Humboldt Times*. Bret was privy to the white massacre of 188 Wiyot Indians on Indian Island in Humboldt Bay near Eureka on February 25, 1860, in which it was reported only one Wiyot child survived. Harte's story, entitled "Indiscriminate Massacre of Indians, Women and Children Butchered," included this account: "Little children and old women were mercilessly stabbed and their skulls crushed by axes. When the bodies were landed in Union [present day Arcata] a more shocking and revolting spectacle never was exhibited to the eyes of a Christian and civilized people. Old women, wrinkled and decrepit, lay weltering in blood, their brains dashed out and dabbed with long grey hair. Infants scarce a span long, with their faces cloven with hatchets and their bodies ghastly wounds. . . ." [Northern Californian, Vol. 2, Issue 9 (February 29, 1960), p. 1]. Barte fled as whites sought to lynch him.

In California as elsewhere, hordes of white frontier settlers, speculators, surveyors and other opportunists were establishing permanent settlements as they moved westward from the Atlantic Coast colonies, especially following cessation of the Seven Years War in 1763. Thousands of murders of Indigenous were proudly admitted by settlers and investors/speculators engaged in activities the equivalent of today's paramilitary death squads operating outside "official" channels, i.e., acting parallel to or outside the jurisdiction of federal troops.

Preventive war using terror against civilians as ordered by the government carried out by young male troops or paramilitary forces are "all-American" values. Such policies have been witnessed time and again in U.S. history, rationalized by our sense of being "exceptional" people. We remain in denial about our arrogant, racist

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and genocidal origins. More redeeming values have been exhibited, such as civil disobedience and waves of progressive political movements. But the prevailing political and economic structures remain intransigently oligarchic. In simple terms, we remain a white male supremacy society of plutocrats supported by massive numbers of obedient consumers and laborers.

By revealing our social secrets (an oligarchy committed to selfish exploitation) and realizing that those secrets have masked our social myth (a democracy committed to equal justice), we can help catalyze a revolution of consciousness. Recognizing that obedience to our system is killing us and the Planet's capacity to host us, is a grand initial step for triggering the imaginative forces necessary to enable rapid movement toward a society based on mutual aid in which sustainable communities are built and nourished at the local level.

We have yet to come to grips with the original holocaust that continues to serve as the defining and enabling experience of our "civilization." Embracing this "shadow" can ironically enable sudden and radical shifts as we are freed from expending the incredible unconscious energy needed to conceal our shame. Sharing our grief for what we have done to others, and ultimately to ourselves, will be experienced as tremendous relief.

The Eleventh Day of the Eleventh Month

By Chip Sharpe

Originally intended as grateful appreciation for the Armistice that officially ended WWI and as heartfelt appreciation for what all veterans of that war had suffered, Armistice Day was declared to be honored on the eleventh day of the eleventh month. Furthermore, citizens were encouraged to pray for lasting peace in a moment of silence during the eleventh minute of the eleventh hour. I regret that, with the change of the name to "Veterans' Day", many seem to have forgotten to honor all, civilians and uniformed, who have suffered from war and to work and pray for a world that will generate no more war veterans.

And I am deeply saddened that we do not discuss the true origins of freedom of speech, of the press, of religion and conscience, of assembly and the right to petition. Not one of these were won by military action; each was secured by courageous individuals who insisted, sometimes even unto death, to speak their conscience, to write, print, and distribute "seditious" materials, to worship as they were inwardly moved, and to gather in public places to petition the authorities. Let's remember to honor not just Mary Dyer, Peter Zenger, and others whose names are in our history books, but also the unsung multitudes who spoke truth to power, read and circulated seditious ideas, and refused to shut up. We can honor them by being activists, trouble-makers, and whistle-blowers. Stir it up!

When I Was in Vietnam, I Was No Hero

By Arnold Oliver

More than a few veterans, myself included, are troubled by the way Americans observe Veterans Day. Originally called Armistice Day, and intended by Congress in 1926 to "perpetuate peace through good will and mutual understanding between nations," the holiday has devolved into a hyper-nationalistic worship service of militarism.

We're directed to believe that the day's purpose is to honor the heroes who have sacrificed to defend our peace and freedom. Criticism, or even discussion, of the merits of the embedded assumption of veteran heroism is dismissed as being beyond the pale.

Well, I have to tell you that when I was in Vietnam, I was no hero and I didn't witness any heroism during the year I spent there, first as a U.S. Army private and then as a sergeant.

Yes, there was heroism in the Vietnam War. On both sides of the conflict there were notable acts of self-sacrifice and bravery. Troops in my unit wondered how the North Vietnamese troops could persevere for years in the face of daunting U.S. firepower. U.S. medical corpsmen performed incredible acts of valor rescuing the wounded under fire.

But I also witnessed a considerable amount of bad behavior, some of it my own. There were widespread incidents of disrespect and abuse of Vietnamese civilians including more than a few war crimes. Further, all units had, and still have, their share of criminals, sexual predators and thugs. Most unheroic of all were the U.S. military and civilian leaders who planned and orchestrated this avoidable war.

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Next VFP56 meeting will be held
on Thursday, December 5th at
7:00 PM.
Meeting will be held in the
Commons Room at 550 Union
Street in Arcata.
Veterans and non-veterans are
more than welcome to come and
help us dialogue about what we to-
gether can do to bring about peace
in this complex world.



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The cold truth is that the U.S. invasion and occupation of Vietnam had next to nothing to do with our own peace and freedom. On the contrary, the Vietnam War bitterly divided the United States. We fought it to forestall Vietnamese independence, not defend it.

Unfortunately, Vietnam wasn't an isolated example. Many American wars — including the 1846 Mexican-American War, the Spanish-American War in 1898, and the Iraq War (this list is by no means exhaustive) — were waged under false pretexts against countries that didn't threaten the United States. It's hard to see how, if a war is unjust, it can be heroic to wage it. So it's flat-out preposterous to claim that everyone who has ever been in the U.S. military is a hero.

But if the vast majority were anything but heroic, have there been any actual heroes out there defending peace and freedom? And if so, who are they?

Well, there are many, from Jesus down to the present. I'd put Gandhi, Tolstoy, and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. on the list along with many Quakers and Mennonites. And don't forget General Smedley Butler, and even Robert McNamara who came around in the end.

In Vietnam, Warrant Officer Hugh Thompson stopped the My Lai massacre from being even worse. The real heroes are those who resist war and militarism, often at great personal cost.

Another candidate is former U.S. Army specialist Josh Stieber who sent this message for the people of Iraq: "Our heavy hearts still hold hope that we can restore inside our country the acknowledgment of your humanity, that we were taught to deny." Ponder a million Iraqi deaths.

Because militarism has been around for such a long time, at least since Gilgamesh came up with his protection racket in Sumeria going on 5,000 years ago, people argue that it will always be with us.

But many also thought that slavery and the subjugation of women would last forever, and they're being proven wrong. We understand that while militarism will not disappear overnight, disappear it must if we are to avoid economic as well as moral bankruptcy.

As Civil War General W.T. Sherman said at West Point, "I confess without shame that I am tired and sick of war." I'm with you, bro.

Arnold "Skip" Oliver is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Heidelberg University in Tiffin, Ohio. A Vietnam veteran, he belongs to Veterans For Peace, and can be reached at soliver@heidelberg.edu.

Five Reasons to Ban Depleted Uranium

Submitted by Peter Aronson, Co-Chair DU/WMD Committee

The following information is credited to one of the best DU resources in the world, the International Coalition to Ban Depleted Uranium (ICBUW), www.bandedpleteduranium.org

Given all that is known about DU and the typical response from the public to the thought of using radioactive and chemically toxic materials in conventional weapons it seems strange to have to list five reasons why states shouldn't. Nevertheless, here are five that the users of the weapons have seemed keen to avoid discussing during debates on their acceptability:

1. DU is radioactive and chemically toxic. An increasing number of laboratory studies have shown that as a material it is genotoxic – it can damage DNA – potentially leading to cancers and other health problems. The generation of DU dusts and the contamination of soils and groundwater ensure that realistic pathways exist for DU to get into civilians

2. Users of DU have been unwilling to make data available on where DU has been fired and in what quantities. This lack of transparency makes assessing the risks its use poses to civilians very difficult. It also impedes post-conflict assessment and clearance.

3. States recovering from conflict find effectively dealing with DU contaminated sites extremely challenging. Huge volumes of contaminated scrap metal, soils and building materials must be dealt with. The radiation does not simply disappear and contaminated materials must be identified, separated and stored indefinitely. This places a huge financial and logistical burden on affected states.

4. Research from Iraq and the Balkans has demonstrated that DU munitions have been used against non-armored targets. The US and UK have always argued that DU is only for use against armored vehicles but the reality from conflict zones shows that the use of DU by aircraft and armored fighting vehicles results in buildings and other civilian infrastructure being targeted. The implications for civilian exposure to DU residues are clear.

5. Systems to monitor civilian health and exposure to environmental contaminants after conflict are usually absent, which allows states to dismiss or ignore reports from medical professionals on the ground. It is clear that DU exposure is a potential risk factor for post-conflict health problems and precaution dictates that it should not be used.

This time last year, 155 countries supported a UN General

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Assembly resolution that recognized the potential risks from DU. Just four states opposed the text – the US, UK, France and Israel. It called for users to transfer targeting and usage data to affected states when requested to do so. Crucially it requested that states adopt a precautionary approach to the use of DU munitions. ICBUW's research has shown that DU's indiscriminate nature and the persistent failure to adequately manage its post-conflict legacy have demonstrated that its use is wholly incompatible with any definition of precaution.

What would the response from the authorities look like if large quantities of DU were dispersed in London, Washington, Paris, ~~Moscow, Islamabad or Beijing?~~ Would it still be acceptable, would it still be harmless? Would we still delay action while we waited for more research to contamination in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Canberra, Ottawa or Madrid?

A Trail of Tears

By Ann Jones, Tom Dispatch

In 2010, I began to follow U.S. soldiers down a long trail of waste and sorrow that led from the battle spaces of Afghanistan to the emergency room of the trauma hospital at Bagram Air Base, where their catastrophic wounds were surgically treated and their condition stabilized. Then I accompanied some of them by cargo plane to Ramstein Air Base in Germany for more surgeries at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, or LRMC (pronounced Larm-See), the largest American hospital outside the United States.

Once stabilized again, those critical patients who survived would be taken by ambulance a short distance back to Ramstein, where a C-17 waited to fly them across the Atlantic to Dover Air Base in Delaware. There, tall, multilayered ambulances awaited the wounded for the last leg of their many-thousand-mile journey to Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington D.C. or the Naval Hospital at Bethesda, Maryland, where, depending upon their injuries, they might remain for a year or two, or more.

Now, we are in Germany, halfway home. This evening, the ambulance from LRMC heading for the flight line at Ramstein will be full of critical-care patients, so I leave the hospital early and board the plane to watch the medical teams bring them aboard. They've done this drill many times a week since the start of the Afghan War. They are practiced, efficient, and fast, and so we are soon in the air again. This time, with a full load.

Two rows of double bunks flank an aisle down the center of the C-17, all occupied by men tucked under homemade patchwork quilts emblazoned with flags and eagles, the handiwork of patriotic American women. Along the walls of the fuselage, on straight-backed seats of nylon mesh, sit the ambulatory casualties from the Contingency Aeromedical Staging Facility (CASF), the holding ward for noncritical patients just off the flight line at Ramstein.

At the back of the plane, slung between stanchions, are four litters with critical care patients, and there among them is the same three-man CCAT (Critical Care Air Transport) team I accompanied on the flight from Afghanistan. They've been back and forth to Bagram again since then, but here they are in fresh brown insulated coveralls, clean shaven, calm, cordial, the doctor busy making notes on a clipboard, the nurse and the respiratory therapist checking the monitors and machines on the SMEEDs. (A SMEED, or Special Medical Emergency Evacuation Device, is a raised aluminum table affixed to a patient's gurney.) Designed to bridge the patient's lower legs, a SMEED is now often used in the evacuation of soldiers who don't have any.

Here again is Marine Sergeant Wilkins, just as he was on the flight from Afghanistan: unconscious, sedated, intubated, and encased in a vacuum spine board. The doctor tells me that the staff at LRMC removed Wilkins's breathing tube, but they had to put it back. He remains in cold storage, like some pod-person in a sci-fi film. You can hardly see him in there, inside the black plastic pod. You can't determine if he is alive or dead without looking at the little needles on the dials of the machines on the SMEED. Are they wavering? Hard to tell.

Flight Risk

The CCAT team has three other critical patients to think about. They are covered with white sheets and blankets, but it's easy to see that the second patient is missing both legs. His right hand is swathed in thick bandages, almost as fat as a football. His face is ripped and torn so that his features appear to be not quite where they belong, but pushed up and to one side -- his nose split and turned askew. He's sedated and on a ventilator meant to assist his breathing, but his chest convulses as he struggles with the job.

The respiratory therapist hovers, checking monitors, adjusting a breathing tube, and the man quiets. But not for long. The IED blast that took off both his legs above the knee bypassed his pelvis to slam into his chest. He must have been doubled over, crouching, when he walked onto the bomb. The impact damaged his lungs in ways not yet fully understood, so that now when he breathes on his own, every breath costs him more than he has to give.

The CCAT team confers. To stop the convulsive effort to breathe, the doctor can paralyze him and let the ventilator do the work of respiration, but that means removing from his intestine the feeding tube pumping in the calories he needs to heal these catastrophic wounds. It's a fine line, and the team walks it for the next hour until it's clear the man needs rest more than nourishment. Then the doctor administers a drug, the body grows still as stone, and the soldier inside sleeps softly while the ventilator steadily breathes in and breathes out.

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Patient number three is breathing on his own and fast asleep, a saline drip feeding into his arm. He looks okay, but for the flattening of the blanket under the SMEED. He's lost both legs, but both below the knee. He has his hands. He has his junk. Of these four patients, he's the one the military and the media will call "lucky." But the doctor doesn't call him that. He says, "You can't assess his injuries in comparison to those of other soldiers who happen to be on the same plane. You have to assess them in comparison to who he was before." He is a boy who used to have legs and now he doesn't.

The fourth CCAT patient is a darkly handsome kid who lost both legs to an IED. His right arm ends in a bulbous bandage, but something about its shape suggests the hand might still be all there. He's conscious and breathing on his own, vaguely gazing at a thin woman in blond boots and a light jacket who stands next to his litter and clutches at the rail as if to hold herself upright.

She was called to LRMC because her son was close to death, but she is now taking him home, what's left of him, alive. In the dim light, she looks dazed, but she leans over him and speaks into his ear and soon he sleeps. The doctor tells me that the boy, a Marine, lost one leg below the knee, and the other very high up -- too high for him to wear a prosthetic leg.

"He'll be in a wheel chair," the doctor says. "It's doubtful he'll ever walk. His right arm is all there, but the hand is blasted. He'll probably lose his fingers at least, but he may have enough of a hand left to power a wheel chair on his own. It's hard to say. He lost one testicle, too, and part of the penis and urethra. But he could still be fertile. There's a chance."

The cavernous plane is very cold. There's a blanket on each of the seats along the wall. I wrap myself up and sit down next to my military minder Sergeant Julian, mainly to stay out of the way of the CASF nurses who are busy checking on their patients, getting those on the bunks well settled for the long flight. The mother of the handsome kid has also sunk into a seat next to her son's litter, but she leans forward, still clutching the bedrail as if to hang on to her boy. She has thrown a blanket around her like a cape, but even at a distance I can see that she's cold. I pick up a spare blanket and take it to her. She looks up as I hold it out to her wordlessly in the deafening plane. "I'm fine," she says, loudly enough for me to hear.

"Your son?"

"He's fine." She looks at him and changes tense. "He's going to be fine."

"That's good," I say.

"He's alive. He almost wasn't, but he's alive. He's fine."

I offer the blanket again. "Take it. Keep warm."

Later I notice that she has made a cocoon of the blankets and slumped over the adjacent seat to sleep. Only toward the end of the flight, when she must be feeling some relief that her son is going to survive it, does she begin to tell me about him. She got word of his injury when he was still in the field hospital in Helmand Province, and she arrived at LRMC from southern California the same day he was brought in from Bagram. Three days later, miraculously, she is bringing him home. Well, not home really, but to the States anyway, to the Naval hospital at Bethesda, Maryland.

Her son has an older brother who deployed once to Iraq and once to Afghanistan and now is safe at home in California. But this boy, a Marine, had a training accident that left him with a head injury requiring brain surgery. He was medically discharged, but reenlisted and was deployed to Afghanistan. He had been there two months when his unit was assigned to clean up an area another unit had officially cleared of Taliban. You remember the policy: clear, hold, and build. They were doing the hold part when he stepped on the IED. The other Marine, the one who can't breathe, was hit by the same blast, or maybe another one at the same time. "They told me how it happened," she says, "but I don't think I heard."

Months later, I will call her in California to see how her son is getting along. He's still in the hospital. They're still working on his wounds. He's not doing any rehab yet. But the military moved him to San Diego so she and her husband can visit him often. She says he's doing "fine," though it will still be many months before he can come home.

In the meantime, her contractor husband has enlisted his friends to help widen doorways, lower light switches, build ramps, and reconstruct a bathroom on the ground floor for a boy in a wheelchair. It's a weekend and I can hear them hammering as we talk on the phone. "They say he'll always be in a wheelchair," she says, her voice shaking. "I was in our pool this morning, and I realized that he'll never be able to get into it by himself. He loves the pool." I stay on the line, listening to her cry. She says, "He's a beautiful swimmer."

"Everything Still Hurts..."

On the plane I talk to some of the ambulatory patients sitting along the walls, wrapped in blankets like so many Pashtuns. Most are hurt just enough to have to be out of action for a while. One boy got a boot caught in the door of an armored vehicle, an MRAP, that wasn't moving at the time. It's a long way down from the passenger seat. He broke his arm. He blurts this out, then tells me he worries about what he's going to say back at his home base. "I can't tell them I just fell out."

Another kid dropped a barbell in the gym and broke some bones in his foot. Two others hadn't recovered from chronic back pain

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and muscle spasms induced by carrying too much weight. Doctors sent them back downrange to their units two or three times and each time they broke down again. The painkillers had only left them dazed. One says, "Everything still hurts, and you can't remember what you're doing, so it makes you nervous. So now they're sending me home because I guess maybe the pain doesn't make you so nervous in the U.S. of A."

One young man collapsed while jogging at a base in the Persian Gulf. "I need a new valve in my heart," he says, "so they're sending me home to get it done there. I'm really lucky they found it. The Army saved my life." His wife sits beside him, wearing a brand new Frankfurt sweatshirt and a bracelet dripping with gnomes. While the doctors at LRMC assessed her husband's cardiac function, she went shopping. She tells me confidentially, "I for sure didn't want to sit around any old hospital."

An older Army officer calls me over and gestures toward the empty seat by his side. He sits ramrod straight, wrapped in his blanket, and speaks through tight lips as if he fears what might come out of his mouth. "I've been in the Army twenty-six years," he says, "and I can tell you it's a con."

He has been an adviser to the chief counterterrorism officer in Iraq. It's hard even to imagine what's involved in work like that, but his version of his job description evidently failed to match the official checklist of his boss. He doesn't think much of military bosses or politicians or Americans in general who send the lowliest 1% to fight wars that make the other 1%, on the high end, "monu-fuckin'-mentally rich."

He says he's going home for "psych reasons" caused by "life," and he is never going to deploy again. He has two sons, 21 and 23, in college, "They won't have to serve," he says. "Before that happens, I'll shoot them myself."

I ask if he has any particular reason to dislike the military so intensely. "War is absurd," he says. "Boys don't know any better. But for a grown man to be trapped in stupid wars -- it's embarrassing, it's humiliating, it's absurd."

GOLDEN RULE REPORT

by Chuck DeWitt

It's starting to look a lot like winter, wind, wetness and colder, but the sun was shining on the 28th. of October for a visit from VFP Nationals Mr. Elliott Adams and VFP member Sherri Maurin from San Francisco chap. 69. They were able to see how much we've accomplished since Elliott's last visit back in 2011. As I reported last month the bulkheads are in and have been faired, primed, and painted a glossy white. The inside of the cabin has also been painted white enamel. The fiber glassing of the cabin and decks is complete except for final sanding, fairing and one more coat of

epoxy resin. The big, messy job of actually piecing the glass with resin was accomplished mostly by Dean Anderson with assistance from the Dutchman, Mike and myself. Now the rains can come, all of the bare wood is protected by either glass or paint.

We are now beginning to earnestly work on the interior. Bill Eastwood is drawing plans for the folding table which he hopes to get built in Garberville and then brought up and installed. I've added a bit of framing under the floor to reinforce the footing for the table. What we really need most is some one that is good at cabinet making. I'll be working on this but my skill level is very slow. Mike is working on the third skiff and this one promises to out shine the first two by having all natural finish with four different types of exotic wood showing through. As soon as Mike is finished with that project he'll come help me inside the boat.

The Dutchman will be filling in for me for the next few weeks as I will be out back in the desert and completely off line. Money for materials has dried up and donations are coming in very slowly. We need a big fix right now to get the boat ready for launching in 2014.

*Respectfully submitted by Chuck DeWitt, restoration coordinator
The Golden Rule Project*

Independent Observer Program

by Nezzie Wade

Invite IOP members to make a brief presentation to your organization at a regular meeting, or call us or visit our website to become a participant!

Our role as IOP volunteers is to be present at events such as protests, demonstrations and rallies and to serve as witnesses of the actions and behavior of all parties present at the event. The attendance of trained observers provides unbiased witnesses should there be any form of escalation. The presence of neutral observers often has a calming effect on participants at an event.

The Independent Observer Program of Humboldt County is modeled after neutral observer programs at the University of Oregon, University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Colorado at Boulder. Observers are trained to make observations, not value judgments or interpretations. In the event a situation arises presenting potential harm to people or property, the observers document what they see.

If you have any questions or comments about the program, or want observers to speak to your organization, or to be present at an event, please contact the IOP at (707) 440-9355 or email at iophumboldt@gmail.com.





**Veterans For Peace
Chapter 56**

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WE'RE ON THE WEB:
<http://www.vfp56.org>

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LET US HEAR FROM YOU!

If you would like to submit an article, opinion, comment or response to anything you have read which might interest the members of VFP-56, please e-mail it to turtldnccer@aol.com, in word format, or mail to Jim Sorter at 1762 Buttermilk Lane, Arcata, CA 95521. Submissions will be included on a first come basis until the newsletter is full. Late arriving submissions will be archived for future issues.

From: Sherri Maurin, Subject: Re: Progress report for the Golden Rule, November 4th, 2013.

Dear Chuck and friends of the Golden Rule-- I have been watching this project with great interest since it's inception, and was absolutely delighted to visit and to see the progress that has been made. We really enjoyed our time with you, and I am attaching one of the many photos I took for your files. I look forward to the launching!

In peace and solidarity---
Sherri Maurin



Elliott Adams, Chuck Dewitt & Breckin Van Veldhuizen as Elliott visits the Golden Rule

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