



VETERANS FOR PEACE
HUMBOLDT BAY
CHAPTER 56

THE FOGHORN

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2017

“Cutting Through the Fog of War”

Truth Wins Out - A Soldiers Story

By Jon Reisdorf

Army Ranger Rob was not my first call from a recruit in Special Forces. A month earlier a Navy Seal called after being dropped from the program. He was being forced to redo basic training as a seaman. To any reasonable person this was clearly a violation of his original contract. I recommended a civilian lawyer approved by the National Lawyers Guild - an affinity group connected with the GI Rights Hotline. I don't know how that worked out but I suspect poorly. The enlistment contracts are full of loop holes allowing the military to keep or reject recruits according to their needs. Based on his initial call, I assumed Ranger Rob plight was similar to the previous caller. As it turns out I couldn't have been more wrong. Rob's first version of his story seemed to confirm my original assumption. Rob was a recent college graduate with a history degree who didn't want to teach. He was an athlete and a patriot who wanted decent pay and adventure. Recruiters convinced him that the Army Ranger program was a perfect fit. Rob passed the phases of ranger training with relative ease but the Ranger's "water confidence test" proved to be his undoing. Now the Army had dropped him from the program and wanted to start him over on with an airborne infantry speciality at nearby Ft. Benning. His original enlistment contract said Rangers only. Could the Hotline help force the Army to honor that contract or release him? He preferred the latter. Before referring him to the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild I questioned him further to see if there was anything else that might be helpful. Rob mentioned he was being seen by Ft. Benning Behavioral Health for depression. Once again his original version of why he was depressed seemed logical. He was 25 years old with a BA. What would he have in common in basic training with 18 year olds just out of high school? Of course he was depressed.

I zeroed in on the Behavioral Health visits. What was the diagnosis? The right diagnosis might get him out without spending a small fortune on attorneys with little hope for a good result. Rob had not been told his diagnosis and didn't think there was one. As we talked Rob shared some of his symptoms: difficulty sleeping, no interest in anything including food, no motivation and no energy - at times it was a chore just to get out of his bunk and show up for formation. Many of the symptoms he described were a perfect fit for an Entry Level Separation for a failure to adapt to military life. I received permission from Rob to refer him to the Civilian Medical Resources Network (CMRN) for an over the phone evaluation. I explained that often military therapists were hacks pushing the party line: Suck it up and quit whining and you'll be fine. A CMRN eval might make them do their job. I made the referral at the end of my shift and did not give Rob a second thought.

Five days later I received an "urgent must read" email from a CMRN therapist. The initial intake conducted by trained amateurs hadn't revealed much except for major depression but the follow up interview with the licensed and experienced therapist had set off alarm bells. As occasionally happens, Rob had not been completely honest during the intake. But when the professional therapist began to dig in it opened up the flood gates. He admitted to frequent crying jags with persistent thoughts and dreams of death and dying.

CMRN has a policy. Anyone expressing suicidal ideation, no matter how passive, has to receive a daily support call. The CMRN was swamped right now. Would I be willing to help out? For the next month and half Rob and I were in daily communication, phone or email. I became convinced that he was a "budding" conscientious objector (CO). He could have powered through the "Water Confidence Test" but chose not to. He had already realized that he could not pick up a weapon to kill innocent men, women and children. And he didn't trust his leaders to decide who was innocent and who was guilty.

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There are many, who become conscientious objectors while serving in the armed forces. They just don't realize it until they call the Hotline or study the material on our website gighthouse.org. The CO process is lengthy, grueling and often unbelievably stressful. Many hundreds over the last decade have successfully received full honorable discharge (without benefits) as COs (the GI Rights Hotline success rate in those who stick with it is over 90 percent) but many, many hundreds more COs give up before the required interviews and investigation and their final packets are submitted up the chain of command. Few recruits in an entry level status have the time to prepare and complete even the initial application. They are kept frantically busy leaving little time to reflect and examine and then write about their deeply held beliefs. Rob certainly had the intelligence and the tools to do it but not the energy. We would have to go for failure to adapt or what is called or a ODPMC - Other Designated Physical or Mental Conditions - discharge.

The final CMRN eval was a slam dunk but regulations require that it be confirmed by an approved military therapist and many of them are incompetent or worse. Captain Garza, the Army therapist assigned to Rob was in the latter category. From the beginning he accused Rob of lying about everything he had shared: the sleepless nights, panic attacks, crying jags and constant thoughts of death. Garza told Rob that he if continued to make up such lies to get out of the army he would write him up for malingering. When Rob handed him a copy of the CMRN eval he angrily tossed it in the trash and threatened to charge him under Article 15 of the Uniform Code Of Military Justice (UCMJ) for going outside the chain of command. If a service member fights an Article 15 they face a possible court martial. In reality a court martial is very rare in today's military but the threat is usually enough for a service member to waive their rights and accept non judicial punishment which can be quite severe.

Rob was frantic but calmed a little when I explained that the Department of Defense's military patient Bill of Rights has made it clear that service members have a right to proper evaluations and treatment and can seek a second opinion. The language doesn't state that the second opinion can be done by a civilian. But it doesn't say it can't either. Staff Judge Advocates from the JAG Corps have made it clear they would not recommend a court martial for someone going outside the chain of command seeking a second opinion on medical issues. Still, I was nervous. After all there is a first time for

everything. Rob's case was the first time in my decade of work that a military therapist had threatened a client with an Article 15 for speaking to me or the CMRN. And worse, it was first time someone sharing symptoms was threatened an Article 15 for malingering, a serious offense.

The next couple weeks were hell for Rob. I coached him in how to handle Captain Garza and even arranged for the CMRN therapist to contact Garza to offer to discuss her evaluation, but Garza was having none of it. He made it clear that he would block Rob receiving an ELS and thus force him into regular basic training. My next step was to call Captain Garza's commanding officer, a strategy that occasionally bears fruit if there is a human being at the other end.

Rob made all of this Mishegas moot by taking matter into his own hands. While waiting for a blood test on an unrelated physical condition at the base hospital he went to the Benning ER and shared the sleepless nights, panic attacks, crying jags and constant thoughts of death. He handed the ER doctor the evaluation from CMRN. The doctor read the eval, confirmed it through his own tests and then put Rob under observation for a week in the base hospital at Benning. Captain Garza received a phone call from the top psychiatrist at Ft. Benning, a Colonel, that Rob was to be seen daily by a therapist until he was processed out under Army Regulation 635-200 Chapter 5, for failure to adapt. Captain Garza hemmed and hawed, blustered and bullied but made no concrete attempt to block the discharge. Three weeks later Rob was home with an Entry Level Separation and writing me a heart felt note of thanks. As I wrote back he deserves the credit for standing up for himself and despite threats bravely going outside his chain of command sharing his symptoms to the ER doctor.

NOTE: The real Rob initially gave me permission to openly share his story but later asked that I not use his name or details that might identify him. The real Rob was not in the Army Ranger program attached to Ft. Benning. To my knowledge, the real Captain Garza is still on the job mistreating service members at behavioral health at his base, God help them.

The GI Rights Hotline and the CRMN operates with a skeleton crew of counselors. Some of us are getting a little long in the tooth. Many are like me, part time volunteers retired from our careers. The exceptions are true warriors for peace, full timers like fellow Vietnam era Conscientious Objector. (CO) Bill Gavin and Maria Santelli with the Cen-



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ter on Conscience and War in Washington DC and another CO Steve Woolford and Lenore Yeager with Quaker House in Fayetteville North Carolina. If what we do sounds like something you would be interested in pursuing please call our local Hotline office number: 826-0165. Volunteers are needed for CMRN as well. Both the Hotline and CMRN have donate buttons on our websites girightshotline.org <http://www.civilianmedicalresources.net>

A Lesson from Standing Rock

by Danny Haiphong

There have been very few people's victories under the Obama administration. His corporate policies have prevailed mainly by default, due largely to the failure of progressives to confront the First Black President. "The anti-war movement has been buried in the Democratic Party graveyard throughout the duration of Obama's tenure." The Standing Rock Sioux, however, never wavered in their determination, and faced down Big Energy and the U.S. government.

"It was the uncompromising stance of the Standing Sioux Tribe that inspired support from broad sections of the left, including thousands of US veterans."

The Standing Rock Sioux won a significant victory on December 4th when the US Army Corps of Engineers denied the planned route for the Dakota Access Pipeline. The decision came after Attorney General Loretta Lynch was compelled to send a video message to protesters urging them to refrain from violence. But the violence had already arrived, courtesy of the state. In prior encounters, law enforcement attacked protesters with rubber bullets, flash bang grenades, and water cannons. US veterans made their way to Standing on December 5th, setting the stage for a bloodbath between the broad coalition of water protectors and the agents of the state. The steadfast resistance of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and its allies forced the Obama Administration to concede to the movement instead.

The Obama Administration wanted nothing more than to walk out of the White House on January 20th with its mythical legacy intact. For two-terms, the Obama Administration has managed to escape blame for the intensified exploitation of the working class and oppressed. The Democratic Party's marketing apparatus spent two terms conditioning the people to believe that the Obama Administration was being obstructed at every turn and that it was Obama himself who achieved what few positive develop-

ments occurred since 2008. Things like Obamacare and the increase in the median household income have been advertised as part and parcel of Obama's greatness. An attack on US veterans would have made Obama's legacy irredeemable to the ruling class.

"For two-terms, the Obama Administration has managed to escape blame for the intensified exploitation of the working class and oppressed."

Obama's mythical legacy as an agent of progress completely contradicts historical record. The struggle at Standing Rock threatened to expose this record for all to see. Under Obama, the oppressed saw their conditions worsen. Obama intensified exploitation through draconian austerity cuts on the people and bailouts for the very banks responsible for the 2008 economic collapse. The updated numbers released by the Census Bureau on unemployment and median income are misleading at best and outright lies at worst. They do not account for those who have given up their search for work or the fact that the majority of workers are struggling to meet basic needs in a low-wage economy.

While the deteriorating condition of the working class cannot be ignored by those who experience it, the expansion of war around the world has been relatively hidden from the masses. Obama greatly expanded Bush's wars in the Middle East. He also created new ones in Libya, Ukraine, and Syria that have been met with little popular protest. The anti-war movement has been buried in the Democratic Party

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Next VFP56 meeting will be held on Thursday, January 5th at 7:00 PM. Meeting will be held at 24 Unitarian Fellowship Way, Bayside, Jacoby Creek Road. Veterans and non-veterans are more than welcome to come and help us dialogue about what we together can do to bring about peace in this complex world.



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graveyard throughout the duration of Obama's tenure. This has paved the way for the unmitigated growth of US warfare around the planet.

Let the movement against the Dakota Access pipeline be a useful lesson to the the incapacitated US anti-war movement. For one, there was never a doubt that the leaders of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe would waver from their commitment to stopping the pipeline's construction. Indigenous resistance forced the hand of the state to make a decision. Either the state would brutally crush the resistance and tarnish Obama's mythical legacy or concede, albeit temporarily, to the will of the protesters. In addition, it was the uncompromising stance of the Standing Sioux Tribe that inspired support from broad sections of the left, including thousands of US veterans.

"Obama intensified exploitation through draconian austerity cuts on the people and bailouts for the very banks responsible for the 2008 economic collapse."

The anti-imperialist movement in the US often has a difficult time taking consistent, principled positions on war. Many individuals and organizations that claim an "anti-war" stance only protest certain kinds of wars, mainly those waged by Republicans. A Democrat in office gives many on the left the permission to support war. When Libya's socialist head of state Muammar Gaddafi was butchered by the Obama-Clinton alliance, some leftist groups celebrated the death of a so-called "dictator." The immense suffering that Libya's destruction imposed on the majority of Africans across the northern part of the continent was nothing more than an afterthought.

Libya is just one example where the anti-imperialist movement's subservience to the Democratic Party left it unable to render any resistance to imperialist war. There are many other examples, both domestic and international. It was not until the 2014 police murder of Michael Brown that protests emerged against the Obama Administration's record breaking transfers of military equipment to local police departments. The Black Lives Matter movement exposed the racist crimes of the state with particular focus on the daily lynching of Black Americans by militarized police. But it wasn't until the Democratic Party lost a humiliating election in 2016 that the graveyard of social movements suffered a severe blow of legitimacy.

"The people won the battle, but the war rages on."

A bloodbath at Standing Rock would have further damaged

the legitimacy of the Democratic Party. However, the struggle against the Dakota Access Pipeline has yet to end. The corporate interests that spearheaded the decision to build the pipeline through indigenous territory have already indicated plans to continue construction uninterrupted. The people won a battle, but the war rages on. Imperialism's primary interest is profit and the rulers of the system will stop at nothing to accumulate it.

Just as the resistance at Standing Rock will need to continue to build strength against the pipeline, so too will a movement against imperialism need to stake out a strong, principled stance in the age of Trump. The Obama period is coming to end. Democratic Party wars will become Republican Party wars. This time, however, the uniformity among the ruling class as to which wars are necessary right now has been eroded by Trump's ascendancy. Trump has claimed to be both pro-Russia and anti-China and Iran. This contradiction cannot be reconciled by the war-machine without internal conflict. Such division among the ruling classes presents an opportunity to strike.

Danny Haiphong is an Asian activist and political analyst in the Boston area. He can be reached at wakeuprise-up1990@gmail.com.

VETERANS FOR PEACE AT STANDING ROCK

Author Unknown

One activist is on his way home from North Dakota after spending nearly two weeks protesting the \$3.7 billion pipeline. He stopped in Toledo on his way to his home in New York.

Tarak Kauff is an army veteran who's now been to standing rock not once, but three times to help stop the 1,170-mile Dakota Access Pipeline.

He's a part of Veterans for Peace and went in hopes of justice.

"It's profit over people and profit over land, and we can't have that," said Kauff, a member of the board of directors at Veterans for Peace. "It's up to everybody to stand up for this. That's why there were 10,000 people there. There were 10,000 people, you should have seen it, it was amazing."

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His first visit lasted six days and ended when he was arrested on charges of unlawful trespassing and rioting. Kauff spent the night in jail, but it wouldn't keep him from fighting.

He again visited Standing Rock, delivering 15,000 pounds of firewood, and his third visit was in conjunction with 2,000 to 3,000 veterans to stand in solidarity with the first nation people.

"I've seen this, so I know this is the truth," said Kauff. "It's non-violent and it's prayerful and it's done as a ceremony, which is amazing. Even the pipeline people are not their enemies, they don't want them to be their enemies. They want the pipeline to stop, but they don't want to make enemies and have hatred towards them."

Through snowstorms and temperatures well below zero he and other "water protectors," as they refer to themselves, were excited about the Army Corps of Engineers decision to not approve an easement.

"It was considered a victory," said Kauff. "I mean people were jubilant about it even though they realized that this is not the end of the struggle. This was just one small victory, but still the very fact that the Army Corps of Engineers did that was significant."

While he says, they do fear how the President-elect will handle the situation he is going to look to the wisdom and guidance of the first nation people.

Kauff does have to return to North Dakota a fourth time for his trial in the future.

Proceeding According to Hoyle: A Female Soldier's Story

By Jon Reisdorf

It's very rare but it does happen. Occasionally the story of a caller on the GI Rights Hotline is so compelling that everyone recognizes that a member needs to be out of the service. Rarer still is to have all parties working toward that end. That happened with Amy, an active duty specialist serving at Ft. Carson, Colorado.

When Amy called me I didn't suspect her case would be any different than a hundred others: involving a long strug-

gle towards an uncertain end. Normally, I don't celebrate until the guy or gal is safe at home but I will take a chance at jinxing Amy's case and share what promises to be a positive outcome though she is for the time being stuck at Ft. Carson.

When Amy called a month and a half ago she posed a tough question. Amy had been drilling once a month in the Army reserves for the better part of two years when she decided to transfer to active duty. Though she had finished basic training and technical school for her military occupational speciality (MOS) some time ago, she had only been on active duty for a bit over a month before she began to experience serious problems and called the Hotline. "Can I get an entry level separation (ELS) as someone on active duty for less than 180 days or am I stuck?" Amy asked.

All branches of the U. S. armed services tell recruits that once they show up at basic training their asses belong to the military. It's an age old "reality". A service member is a GI - government issue, like a flak jacket or humvee. This "reality" is not necessarily true as counselors on the GI Rights Hotline prove every day. It is not even true for those on active duty status though once you are assigned to your permanent duty station it is MUCH tougher to get out with a good result - but as Amy is showing it is not impossible.

As I initially explained to Amy that there is no simple answer to her question. Technically once the army has invested in training you on your MOS and assigned you to a slot they want to get their money's worth. However, she was on active duty for less than 180 days, technically still in Entry Level Status. The regulations on this are written to be deliberately ambiguous. This provides leeway for command to keep the service members they want and discard those no longer useful in fulfilling the mission. Often the task of the counselor and the caller is to convince command that the soldier, sailor, airman, or Marine is not worth the effort to keep. The trickiest part is to accomplish this without the service member's future employment and life opportunities being compromised.

After establishing trust and rapport with Amy she shared that she was experiencing almost daily panic attacks, difficulty eating and sleeping and an inability to concentrate or focus. I then asked the question that I always ask in such cases. Had she experienced suicidal ideation? There are many ways to get at that question but I found the right words thanks to the invaluable training provided by David Schaffer and Rebecca Porteous at their HSU sponsored workshop on Suicide

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Intervention in 2007. Amy admitted that she had had such thoughts constituting suicidal ideation but no plan or attempt. Passive suicidal ideation.

I then made a referral to the Civilian Medical Resources Network. The CMRN is a godsend for the GI Rights Hotline. In March, 2005 Howard Waitskin, a Vietnam era conscientious objector and an associate member of Veterans For Peace, recognized the good work being done by the Hotline and offered to help. Like the Hotline, CMRN operates on a shoestring by a dedicated band of volunteers led by Waitskin. I submitted the request for help on the CMRN's confidential website and offered to do the intake interview.

Howard Waitskin has developed a beautiful intake instrument which - independent of anything else - produces a validated psychological instrument that has to be taken seriously by any behavioral health specialist. Additionally the three part intake interview can be done by a trained amateur such as myself. On top of that, the intake interview is followed up by a phone or Skype interview with the client by a health care professional. This volunteer, supervised by Howard Waitskin can give the Hotline counselor the exact right document to use in requesting intervention from congressional offices, the chain of command or therapists in behavioral health working for the Department of Defense.

I completed the intake which revealed PTSD, major depression, panic attacks and suicidal ideation. From what Amy shared, it seemed likely to me that her PTSD and other symptoms was related to the four suicides at Ft. Carson that has occurred since Amy arrived at her post. One of them was from a barracks mate. Amy hadn't seen the actual suicide but knew all the gruesome details and had seen the body being taken away. As so happens, my original assumptions were wrong.

The skype interview was conducted by a true hero of the CMRN, Nicole Baltrushes, MD. Nicky works with survivors of torture and sexual trauma who have been lucky enough to be accepted for immigration under the present Obama administration policies. She also volunteers for the Hotline.

I will not share what Nicky found during the interview. Previous to her interview with Nicky Amy had never shared her childhood trauma. Since then it became the linchpin in my strategy to get Amy out. It was indeed a game changer. Everyone who heard the details understood why Amy could

no longer be in the army and was determined to do what they could to bring her home. Thanks to Amy's bravery in sharing her trauma with her first sergeant, command, and behavioral health all were determined to help her.

Amy's First Sergeant gave her his cell number and told her to text him day or night. He personally escorted her to the ER when she had a really bad weekend. The ER doctor read Nicky's evaluation and expressed to Amy how impressed he was by Nicky's credentials and the quality of her eval. He quickly verified her findings and signed off on them. Her commanding officer met with her and told her he was recommending an immediate administrative discharge for failure to adapt, a full honorable discharge. Everyone talks in terms of getting Amy home where she can heal. She would be able to get immediate help from the VA once she was out. Her doctor placed her on a medical profile that would ensure she would not have to train with weapons. Most important she was placed on a non-deployment status. Her unit was scheduled to deploy January 6.

December is a tough month to get anything done in any branch. The military has what has been called Christmas exodus. Not much but the minimum gets done and no administrative discharge paperwork will be processed. But we have high hopes that once Amy returns from her Christmas leave the paperwork can begin. There is no one standing in Amy's way. My current job is relatively simple with Amy. I call her up daily and reassure her that things are unwinding in a timely manner - as my dad used to say - proceeding according to Hoyle.

Why is Amy's case an exception to the rule? I have discussed this with Amy and she agrees with my assessment: The big reason is that the army can not be blamed for her condition. There was no way for them to know what she had experienced. Amy had buried it and it only came out because it was triggered by the army environment. And the army has only a minimal investment in Amy. Additionally, Ft. Carson was under review for its history of suicides and homicide and the command was very sensitive to ensure that every case was being treated seriously. All the stars were aligned and everything came together for Amy. It couldn't happen to a more deserving person.

Notes: Except for Nicole Baltrushes I changed the names and duty station. Amy was not at Ft. Carson. I chose Carson because of its infamous history of suicides and homicides. Her real duty station did experience several suicides

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and they were examining their policy and taking steps to improve their responses. The real Amy has made herself a resource to other of my female clients struggling with similar diagnosis. It is good for her and for her fellow service members.

The GI Rights Hotline and the CRMN operates with a skeleton crew of counselors. Some of us are getting a little long in the tooth. Many are like me, part time volunteers retired from our careers. The exceptions are warriors for peace, full timers like Bill Gavin and Maria Santelli with the Center on Conscience and War and Steve Woolford and Lenore Yeager with Quaker House. If what we do sounds like something you would be interested in pursuing please call our local Hotline office number: 826-0165. Volunteers are needed for CMRN as well. Both the Hotline and CMRN have donate buttons on our websites girightshotline.org <http://www.civilianmedicalresources.net>

Veterans Take Action Against Nuclear Weapons

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is visiting Pearl Harbor at the end of this month, marking this the first time that a Japanese political leader has traveled there since the end of World War II. This visit coincides President Obama's visit to Hiroshima earlier this year

Veterans For Peace is heartened to see the steps made towards friendly diplomacy and the focus on nuclear disarmament. As military veterans who have trained for and/or fought in wars, we know that any step, even small ones, make a difference in efforts to reduce violence and death. However, we continue to be dismayed at the lack of accountability that the U.S. has taken towards unleashing the most devastating attack the world has ever seen. The U.S. remains the only country in the world that has used nuclear weapons, of which the side effects are still being felt today. <See Our Full Statement>

So while we commend the steps President Obama has taken thus far to foment a friendship with Japan, we know that the foundation for any true friendship is one of trust and accountability. Veterans For Peace calls on President Obama to publicly apologize for the usage of nuclear weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to take responsibility for the horrific outcomes those bombs had

on Japan.

We ask that veterans join us by sending this letter to President Obama and to stand with us for a nuclear free world.

Veterans For Peace issued this apology earlier this year in May, after President Obama visited Hiroshima. It was the first visit by a sitting U.S. president. VFP members continue to carry this message of apology to the people of Japan.

Veterans For Peace expresses our deepest condolences to all those who were killed and maimed, and to their families. We apologize to the Hibakusha, the survivors of the nuclear bombings, and we thank them for their courageous, continuing witness.

We apologize to all the Japanese people and to all the people of the world. This hugely atrocious crime against humanity should never have happened. As military veterans who have come to see the tragic futility of war, we promise that we will continue working for peace and disarmament. We want to see nuclear disarmament in our lifetime.

Contact Us

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**There is a LIGHT in this world. A healing spirit more powerful than any darkness we may encounter. We sometime lose sight of this force when there is suffering, and too much pain. Then suddenly, the spirit will emerge through the lives of ordinary people who hear a call and answer in extraordinary ways." ~
Richard Attenborough**





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Chapter 56**

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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 turtldncer@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.



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