

# VETERANS Education PROJECT UPDATE

## WW2's Seldom Heard Voices

*A project to preserve stories of the war and America's rights struggles*

VEP recently expanded its programs on World War 2, reaching out to work with more local elders who have important lessons to share about this seminal period of world history. We are encouraging some of those who served in the military, in alternative service as conscientious objectors, or on the home front during WW2 to share their stories at VEP events, and we are working to videotape and permanently preserve their stories for current and future generations of students.

*The Seldom Heard Voices of WW2 Oral History Project* is a VEP collaboration with the Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Assoc. (PVMA) of Deerfield and the Springfield Armory National Historical Site. Educators and historians welcome it as timely and important. WW2 veterans are passing away at a rate of 1,500 per day. VEP has lost several speakers, including Fritz Schnaitaker, a German Jew who fled the Nazis, became a U.S. citizen, joined the Army and went back to Germany to liberate concentration camps, and Anna Russell, who joined the Army and served in England at the height of the war.

As far as we know, their stories were never video taped. Except in the memories of their family, friends, and those lucky to see them in a VEP program, these vital oral histories are lost.

### *Lessons in social change*

In addition to finding, preserving and presenting oral histories, the project

explores some of the significant changes within the society and culture of that era. For the first year, organizers are seeking histories from three subgroups that confronted institutionalized discrimination and limitation in the military, the workplace and the community: African American, female and Jewish American vets and home front workers of WW2.

*Continued on page 4*

## Mending body, mind and spirit

*VEP speakers at conferences on healing wounds of the Iraq and Afghan wars*

Post combat stress—the emotional trauma many soldiers bring home from a war zone—takes many forms, and emerges in different ways. Thanks to VEP speakers, some 400 men and women who work in healing professions better understand the complex strains war trauma place on the minds, bodies and spirits of veterans and their families.

### *Healing wounds of war*

VEP veterans and military family members spoke at six conferences this year, five for social work and medical professionals and one for clergy (see article this issue). Their first person stories complemented conference presentations by professionals expert in treating combat trauma, Traumatic Brain Injury, suicide prevention, treatment of substance abuse, emotional stress experienced by children in military families, and more.

Heather Rudolph talked of the emotionally crippling isolation she experienced soon after return from an Army Reserve tour in Iraq. Jim Munroe described his paralyzing “flashbacks” to the fear he felt the night in Vietnam he was cornered in a fox hole and nearly killed by a Viet Cong grenade. Cayenne Isekson spoke of awakening to her husband’s nightmares of a Marine tour in Afghanistan.

The speakers also discussed their successes at healing the emotional wounds of war that studies indicate affect some 20% to 30% of returning personnel.

Events for the medical and mental health fields took place at the Smith College School for Social Work, Baystate Medical Center (co-sponsored by Physicians for Social Responsibility), and Western New England College (WNEC). The all-day training for area clergy was held at Wesley United Methodist Church.

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## Vets voices reach around region, across sea

Speaking with VEP and on their own projects, this year our veterans reached audiences large and small, young and old, here and in the Middle East.

Speaking to a rapt 6<sup>th</sup> grade audience at Deerfield Elementary School, WW2 Army veteran Ray Elliott shares stories of serving in a segregated military and the struggle for equal rights in America. See accompanying article on this page about WW2 oral history project.



*Courtesy Greenfield Recorder®*



*Courtesy Daily Hampshire Gazette®*

Army vet Don Chevannes talks at a social work conference about his tour in Vietnam and his long struggle with the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress. Don’s symptoms went undiagnosed for more than 20 years. He was one of a series of VEP speakers to present at conferences this past year. Panelist Jaime Perez-Mondalvo is seated. (See accompanying story, this page.)

On a humanitarian mission to the Middle East this summer, Marine vet Tyler Boudreau communicates in sign language while playing chess with a young Iraqi refugee in Jordan. Tyler is now speaking out locally and nationally about refugees displaced by war. See article inside for more information.



*Courtesy Tyler Boudreau*

Social Responsibility), and Western New England College (WNEC). The all-day training for area clergy was held at Wesley United Methodist Church.

## Speakers reach out to youth, in schools, youth groups and juvenile jails

*VEP delivers a variety of programs that are much in demand*

VEP speakers—ranging in age from 25 year old Iraq veteran Heather Rudolph to 90 year old WW2 vet David Cohen—delivered more 100 hours of programs this year in school classrooms, auditoriums and juvenile detention programs. At times, demand for programs exceeded our capacity to respond. Here are profiles of recent presentations by veterans of Afghanistan and Vietnam, and our violence prevention work. See Page One for coverage of our WW2 programs.

### *Veterans' insights on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Conflicts*

Afghanistan vet Jon Schnauber, one of the recent war veterans speaking with VEP, spoke in English class at Northampton High School last September that was reading *The Kite Runner*. The book, about the impact of two decades of war on Afghani civilians, was turned into an Academy Award winning film. Using a Powerpoint presentation that featured Google Earth satellite photos of the areas where he had served, the Army National Guard vet spoke about his tour, the plight of people in Afghanistan's war zones, and the sometimes deadly consequences for civilians caught in conflicts in western Pakistan, where he was stationed part of the time.

### *The presentation utilized projected Google Earth satellite photos of where Jon had served*

"At night, outside the base perimeter, we'd hear gunfire," the former military policeman told the students. "We were not allowed off the base, so we just sat there and listened. We never knew who it was—the Taliban, bandits, or elements of the Pakistan security forces. I personally felt terrible about this: We had come supposedly to do good, and my job as an MP was to protect people, yet civilians were dying and I was powerless to help them."

*See other articles in this issue for more on Jon's story*

### *Lessons from the Vietnam War*

Vietnam era veterans visited area history and English classrooms, from one end of the Pioneer Valley to the other. Longtime VEP speakers were joined by Ed Cali, Jack Brainard and Don Chevannes, Vietnam vets relatively new to VEP.

In addition to perspectives on the war and the Vietnam era at home, the newer speakers—all residents or former residents of the Soldier On shelter for homeless vets—educated youth about the difficult homecomings many Vietnam veterans experienced.

"A lot of us fought two wars," Army veteran Jack Brainard observed in a class at Hampshire Regional H.S. "One in Vietnam and another one here, after we came home. And that second war can go on and on."

Jack talked of his two tours in the Army in Vietnam, working at a huge ammunition storage facility that often was shelled by the enemy. He told students that there was a similarity between his job and many non-combat assignments in Iraq: danger.

"We never knew when there would be trouble," he remembered. "A lot of it was boring, then hell would break loose. I was there when one of the trucks got hit and the drivers got burned up."

Several in the rapt audience were moved to tears as Jack described the impact of the war on his life. After drinking heavily off duty to relieve stress and boredom, he said he left Vietnam a serious alcoholic. He struggled with drinking for years, eventually estranging himself from his family, losing his job and becoming homeless. After badly burning a foot in a drinking-related accident, his leg was amputated beneath the knee. He said that although PTSD might contribute to his addiction, he took full responsibility.

The former Soldier On resident, now riding in a wheel chair, told students he was in recovery, living in his own Northampton apartment, and that he was in contact with his daughters and grand kids and leading a productive life.

"I can't ever get back all those lost years, but I've got family back," he said. "I can give something to you, I hope, by telling you my story."

### *Prevention programs*

Over the past school year, VEP provided nearly 50 hours of "prevention" programming planned to encourage youth to think critically about the realities and consequences of engaging in violence and substance abuse and opt for safer behaviors. The presentations feature stories by VEP speakers who had "been there and done that" through their personal experiences with war, violence and drugs. VEP often provided a series of men and women speakers who came from a variety of experiences and ethnic backgrounds.

Several non-veterans, such as Sylvia Cruz, spoke in the programs, as did many veterans. Sylvia shared the violence and trauma she experienced as a young teenager in "the war on the streets" that culminated in her abusing drugs, becoming homeless, committing serious crimes and ending up in juvenile jail. She also shared her remarkable recovery, which includes counseling, a happy marriage, children, career and speaking to young people through programs like VEP. After a series of VEP presentations that included Sylvia speaking, a staff member at a juvenile girls' detention program wrote "Our students constantly tell us, 'You don't know what it's like.' Who best to speak to these young women than the VEP volunteers?"

Our thanks to the *Northampton Education Foundation*, the *Gardiner Howland Shaw Foundation*, the *New Visions Foundation*, the *National Storytelling Network*, the *Peace Development Fund*, and the *Susan and Donald Babson Foundation* for their support of our varied programs for teens.



*Residents of the Soldier On shelter for veterans speak to students from the Florence Learning Center visiting their facility in 2006. This past year, (left to right) staff member Willie Ledbetter, ex-resident Jack Brainard and Lennie Costa joined other vets to educate more students about the realities of substance abuse, violence and the challenges homeless vets face.*

*Photo credit: Courtesy of Daily Hampshire Gazette®*

## Veterans and military families share with clergy

*VEP speakers connect with area clergy seeking to help returning veterans*

*By Susan Leary, VEP Program Director*

Inspired by a well attended workshop about the needs of our returning veterans and their families at Wesley United Methodist Church, area clergy requested a program to help them understand and respond to veterans and military families. Many Vietnam veterans in VEP have shared disillusionment with their faith communities, saying they had felt abandoned when they returned home from war. Working closely with a dedicated group from Wesley and elsewhere, we organized two day-long workshops for clergy, which members of Protestant, Jewish, Catholic, Quaker, and Buddhist faiths attended, and a four part Lenten speaker series at Wesley. The events were co-sponsored by the Hadley church and VEP.

Our planning presented a steep learning curve. We learned that for some veterans and family members, a church or synagogue is a very difficult place to speak, and sincere trust building is needed to even begin the conversation. We learned that clergy themselves may carry diverse wounds from Vietnam and other wars, and may have difficulty sharing. Yet we also found a heartfelt desire to learn and to build trust and healing for the veterans and military families in our communities.

The workshops had some positive effects even before they started. Barbara Diamond, a VEP Military Families Connect group with a daughter in her second tour in Iraq, felt trepidation about sharing her experience. That disappeared when she drove into the full church parking lot. She burst into tears, she told us, because it was the first time she felt people actually cared. Some speakers expressed fear their feelings of confusion or anger towards religion and places of worship might offend clergy if shared. We checked with some of clergy planning to attend, and were assured they wanted to hear veterans' true feelings and experiences.

Our first workshop focused mainly on listening, to family members, veterans, and on the struggles some clergy had reconciling a desire to support veterans with a desire to end war. Father Phil Salois, Chief Chaplain for the VA Boston Healthcare System and a Vietnam vet, was the second workshop's keynote speaker. Other workshop sessions focused on Post Traumatic Stress, Traumatic Brain Injury and other wounds that may affect those returning from war. The Lenten series featured a mixture of young veterans recently returned from Iraq and Afghanistan and some Vietnam vets, who may never have shared their story before. The veterans helped us reflect for Lent on the suffering of the world as experienced by those who return home from war.

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**All witnessed the healing power of sharing stories of grief and truth. The Protestant, Jewish, Catholic, Quaker, and Buddhist faiths were represented.**

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Each event held space for deep listening. Especially in the Lenten series, we witnessed the healing power of sharing stories of grief and truth. Many wept as incredibly brave men and women shared stories of "the really bad day", of losing dear friends, of family ruptures, thoughts of suicide, of no one caring, addiction, and the struggle to find a way home. Young, tough looking tattooed men made no apology for tears, just asked us to pass the Kleenex. A Vietnam vet who was not a speaker, witnessing the rapt listening to a fellow Vietnam vet, broke into tears saying this was the first time in 30 years he had ever felt "welcomed home." We were so honored to receive these stories, to explore the spiritual journey home from war together, to recognize our responsibilities as citizens of a country that sends young people to war.

*Thanks to those who made this work possible, including: Lee Hines, Greg Kline, Louise Minks, Fred Morris, Richard Pearlstein, Pastor Lyle Seger of Wesley Church, Father Phil Salois, Barbara Tiner, and the veterans and family members who spoke.*

## Iraq, Afghanistan vets reach out to help others

Back from war zones, out of the military or on inactive reserve status, veterans are entering civilian jobs or attending college. And many of this latest generation of vets who are involved in VEP are choosing careers or volunteering for projects to help others, including fellow veterans.

As an undergraduate at the University of Massachusetts, Afghanistan vet Jon Schnauber co-founded a student group to help vets adjust from war zone to the classroom. Iraq veteran and former Marine Tyler Boudreau went on a humanitarian mission to the Middle East to assist Iraqi refugees of the war. Heather Rudolph, back from Iraq and out of the Army Reserves, finished college and embarked on a career in human services, working with at-risk and incarcerated teens. And after his return from Iraq, Army Reservist Jaime Perez-Montalvo went to work for the Springfield Vets Center, drawing on his own homecoming experience and social work background to counsel veterans struggling with post combat stress.

As VEP volunteers, the vets speak at conferences and public forums (see Page One article) and in classrooms. "The positive impact these vets are making in their community really stands out," said VEP Executive Director Rob Wilson.

Here are two profiles of VEP veteran speakers and the difference they make in the community. You'll read about other Iraq and Afghanistan vet volunteers in this and future newsletters.

### *A hard journey back home*

Coming home can be a struggle for a veteran says Jon Schnauber, a Desert Storm vet and father of two children deployed eight times with the National Guard in the years after 9-11. Back from Afghanistan, his partner announced she was seeking a divorce. Jon struggled for months with heavy drinking, extreme depression and other symptoms of post traumatic stress.

"I eventually confronted my problems, but I learned the hard way it's a very difficult process coming home and transitioning to 'normal' life," he said. "There needs to be more empathy and support for veterans and their issues."

Now a UMass graduate, Jon still works on campus with the group he co-founded, Veterans and Military Service Members Assoc. (VASMA). He also works to help veterans and their families through a group started by *Congregation B'nai Israel* (Northampton) that includes the VEP.

Jon does all this, speaks in VEP programs, works in a residential program for people in mental health crisis and, with his new partner, parents his daughter and his children by previous marriage. A source of strength in his life, he says, is the satisfaction of educating youth about the realities of war and veterans' issues through his VEP presentations, and helping others, especially other vets, through his career and volunteerism.

### *Marine reaches out to Iraqi civilians*

While leading missions in Iraq as a Marine captain in 2004,

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***In addition to war, these veterans and ex-home front workers faced huge challenges in the military and the workplace.***

Some of the men and women participating in the project—all now in their 80s and 90s— will be filmed making classroom presentations and interviewed by an oral history specialist. These stories will be made available to the public on the internet and distributed to area classrooms in DVD and CD format for future generations of students.

***Breaking two barriers***

One woman interviewed on video for the project, 94-year-old, Ruth Loving, moved to Springfield during the war with her husband and children. Mrs. Loving served on the home front as a Civil Defense volunteer. On weekends the one-time professional dancer and singer—who briefly worked in the 1930s at the famous Cotton Club in Harlem—entertained at USO shows for troops.

She also was enlisted in the Army, working in an important military communications center, housed in a nondescript house in downtown Springfield and kept secret from the public. There Mrs. Loving, who is African American, worked with white soldiers, a rarity in an Army that was then segregated. In doing so, she not only broke a race barrier enforced by military convention, she also worked a job often reserved for men, challenging a gender barrier.

Project participant Ray Elliott was in a segregated unit, with white officers who called him "boy." In Mississippi, on leave while in uniform, he was chased by an angry white mob at a bus stop for refusing a white man's order to step into the gutter. "As I ran for my life, I experienced the incredible fear that black people had lived with for generations in the south," he often tells students.



Courtesy of the Daily Hampshire Gazette®

Speaking as part of VEP's WW2 oral history project, Army vet Dave Cohen shares a story at Smith Vocational H.S. in Northampton

Ray and many of his comrades joined the "Double V" movement, an effort in the black community to achieve a double victory—one over the fascism of Japan and Germany and one over racism within the U.S.A. After contributing to the first victory serving in the Pacific, he and other black vets returned home to work for the second. Ray went

to college, entered a career as a chemist and became an organizer in the NAACP. He now serves as President of that organization's Pioneer Valley Chapter, as well as a VEP Board member.

"Stories like these help to tell a vital part of America's story," said Timothy Neumann, PVMA's Executive Director. "The project already has revealed very compelling personal accounts of some of the small struggles and advances that many historians say paved the way for the tremendous social and cultural changes of the 50s and 60s."

***Exposing the "gentlemen's agreement"***

Another "seldom heard" voice of WW2 in the project is that of Navy veteran Paul Slater, who shares stories of serving on a destroyer escort in the North Atlantic and Mediterranean. The VEP member is a self-described "Jewish kid from Brooklyn who, like my shipmates, grew up during the Depression." Working in the new project, he will speak of his experiences confronting the kinds of overt and subtle anti-Semitism that inspired the makers of the 1947 Oscar-winner for Best Picture, "Gentlemen's Agreement," starring Gregory Peck and John Garfield.

***Videos of the veterans' stories will be made available on the internet and in CD and DVD format, for future generations.***

The project is reaching out to other Jewish American WW2 veterans, with the help of synagogues like Congregation B'nai Israel (Northampton) and the Jewish Community of Amherst, and organizations such as the Jewish Community Center in Springfield. Longtime VEP speaker David Cohen, an Army vet who participated in the Liberation of the Ordurf and Buchenwald concentration camps, has already been filmed. We hope to film at least one of his presentations to high school students at the Hatkivah Holocaust Education Center in Springfield. Many of the compelling photos he took in the camps will be digitized and made available on the website.

***Bringing the home front to life***

As part of its live events, the project offers "living history" presentations in local schools that feature a PVMA educator dressed in WW2 women's work clothes, reenacting the role of "Rosy the Riveter" and teaching about the home front. Springfield Armory workers also will share stories. A leading home front industry, the Armory was one of area employers that broke long-standing taboos on hiring women and African Americans for manufacturing jobs reserved for white men.

The *Mass Humanities Foundation* has supported the "Double V" portion of project, and the Smith College African American Studies Dept. will assist in project research and possibly host an event. The interviews and presentations with Jewish veterans are funded in part by the *Harold Grinspoon Foundation*. We are seeking additional support from area foundations and businesses for this year and plan to continue the project into the next school year.

The project is presenting in schools in all three Pioneer Valley counties and we are planning public events. Email the VEP at [vep@crocker.com](mailto:vep@crocker.com) if you want to arrange a presentation in your community or school, or if you know someone who might like to be interviewed for this project and who served in WW2 in the military, Merchant Marine, Red Cross or alternative service during, or who worked on the home front.

Continued from "Mending body, mind and spirit" page 1

### Lessons from Vietnam

Vietnam era veteran Don Chevannes provided historical perspective on the diagnosis and treatment of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Speaking with other VEP vets on a panel, Don told an international audience of 175 therapists at the Smith College conference that he had returned from Vietnam with both arms and both legs and thought he was ok. "But my mind wasn't right; I just didn't realize it."

### Events included a national conference on combat stress at the Smith College School for Social Work and an all-day training for area clergy at Wesley United Methodist Church

His problems started when he was "blindsided" by a panic attack on a rush hour subway commute to his job in New York. After that, the stress symptoms persisted and grew.

"But back then they hadn't even created the term 'PTSD,'" he said. After some thirty years of anger, addiction, jail and homelessness, Don's problems finally were diagnosed and treated. He described his on-going healing, through VA counseling, a fervent commitment to working to help homeless vets, and community service that includes sharing his story with VEP.

Added perspective from the Vietnam era came from Red Cross veteran Cherie Rankin, whose compelling story of war and coming home revealed how constant danger and devastating loss of life can affect women who have supposedly non-combat assignments within a war zone. Dorrin Exford, a co-founder of the VEP military family group and the ex-wife of a Vietnam veteran, spoke of the emergence of her husband's PTSD and the ways it tore apart her family.

"I didn't understand what was happening," she remembered. "I tended to blame myself for his problems. I say to veterans' wives today "This is not your fault.'"

### Different roads to healing

Speaking at events at Smith, WNEC, and Baystate, therapist Jaime Perez-Mondalvo shared stories of combat stress emerging after his two tours in Iraq with the Army Reserves, counseling soldiers in the field. In a non-combat job, he was in harm's way, sometimes "in places where I was not supposed to be, seeing horrible things I was not prepared for."

He was overcome by a flood of emotions after coming home the first time. The insensitive question "How many terrorists did you kill?" angered and alienated him. Slow traffic generated panic; in Iraq that was when you were most vulnerable to roadside bombs. And mundane things at home—such as the sniffing and barking family dog—drove him into a rage.

"The therapist part of me recognized my symptoms, but I still had trouble dealing with these emotions," he remembered. Initially afraid that seeking counseling might jeopardize his career, he sought help at the local V.A. Vets Center only when his wife threatened to order him out of the house. He continued therapy there and they eventually hired him to counsel other Iraq and Afghan veterans.

"The people we hurt the most are our families," observed Jaime about soldiers dealing with post combat stress.

Afghanistan veteran Jon Schnauber and Iraq vet Heather Rudolph shared their respective healing journeys at events at Baystate Medical Center and WNEC. Both experienced combat stress. Each ascribed the validation achieved through their volunteer activities and human service career choices as integral to their emotional healing. (see related article)

### Learning from a tragedy

Joyce and Kevin Lucey shared the story of their son, Jeff, who was overcome by PTSD and took his life less than a year after returning from Iraq with the Marine Reserves. Speaking at a WNEC event, they described Jeff's symptoms of PTSD, such as depression, alienation and heavy drinking, that emerged and grew worse. The parents also described their frustrations at not knowing the resources that might be available to help Jeff, and what they feel was a lack of adequate response to Jeff's problems from the Marines and the VA. Their hope in sharing their story, they said, was to educate the public and those providing first-hand care to veterans, to inspire changes in the military and V.A. systems, and to encourage better services to Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.



VEP speakers pose after a WNEC event. Clockwise, from left: Jon Schnauber, Heather Rudolph, Cayenne Isekson, Rob Wilson, Jack Brainard, Don Chevannes

Photo credit: Courtesy of WNEC

### Accolades for VEP's work

The events garnered high praise. At the WNEC conferences, everyone responding to a written evaluation gave the VEP-organized panels the highest possible rank. Dr. Andrew Pomerantz, a psychiatrist nationally known for his work with veterans and a keynote speaker at the Baystate conference commented: "Whenever I'm at a presentation that includes panels like that, I find myself feeling irrelevant by the time they are done. The conference was really well designed and was the best I've been to."

Our thanks go to Smith Social Work School, WNEC Continuing Education, Physicians for Social Responsibility and Wesley Church for inviting us to work with them on these issues. Email us at [vep@crocker.com](mailto:vep@crocker.com) if you would like to be put on our mailing list for future events.

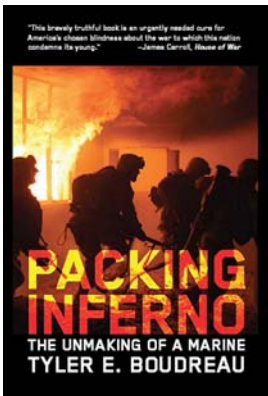
Continued from page 3

Tyler Boudreau was bothered by seeing many Iraqi civilians displaced by the war or scared off by extremist death threats.

Last summer, as the displaced total reached 5 million, Tyler—who now lives in Northampton and speaks with VEP—acted. Accompanied by an Army veteran of Iraq and members of the international media, he flew to Jordan, now home to 750,000 Iraqis. The group visited refugees to assess how best to help. They also met with Jordanian and U.S. officials who told them political strife prevented effective aid distribution.

The project delivered some material aid to the refugees, generated publicity and awareness in Congress of the issues, and sparked follow-up projects to help displaced Iraqis. In Northampton, Tyler and other activists worked with the city Recreation Dept. on a skateboard competition, the proceeds from entry fees supporting projects aiding refugees. In Troy, NY, he and members of Northampton's *Iraqi Children's Art Project* participated with Troy activists and artists in a day of making art and community building with that city's Iraqi refugees.

This summer, Tyler is organizing a bicycle tour across the U.S., visiting communities along the way and sharing the kinds of eye-opening stories and insights he presents in VEP programs. In his words, the tour's aim is to "develop a deeper conversation across America about the realities and the natural consequences of war." For more information, visit [www.tylerboudreau.com](http://www.tylerboudreau.com).



This fall, Tyler's memoir of his tour in Iraq, *Packing Inferno*, was published to praise by authors and experts such as former Sen. and Vietnam veteran Max Cleland, Scott Ritter and Daniel Ellsberg. Visit his website or go to Amazon.com for information and purchase. Tyler's book is the "real deal" says Cleland.

## VEP sponsored project gets national acclaim

It's 35 portraits and counting for **Matt Mitchell's** *100 Faces of War* project. The Amherst MA artist is painting portraits of US veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan and displaying them next to their printed first-person stories. Matt's work is exhibited locally and nationally. It has been embraced by peace groups and some in the military, and nominated for a prestigious National Portrait Gallery



award. The two portraits above are of Afghanistan vet Margaret Oglesby, of Springfield, and Rick Yarosh, a soldier badly



burned in an IED explosion in Iraq who Matt met in a military hospital. "I'm lucky and blessed to be here, I'm able to share my story with others," Rick wrote in the testimony with his portrait. We all are blessed to be able to read Rick's story and all the other stories, and to reflect on the words and the powerful portraits Matt presents.

## Updates on VEP Board and staff

VEP has three new Board members. **Don Chevannes**, very active as a VEP speaker (see articles this issue), is an Army veteran of Vietnam. Don is very involved in the community and in supporting homeless vets. **Kip Fonsh** is a former Amherst Regional H.S. social studies teacher now at Smith Vocational H.S. We welcome Kip's extensive classroom experience. Former Board member **Tom Seymore**, who left three years ago due to work responsibilities, returned to our Board. Tom is a Vietnam era Marine veteran who served in Japan and stayed there to live and work for 20 years after leaving the Marines. He now is a consultant based in Amherst.

In addition to welcoming our new Board, we announce the hiring of **Legrand Hines Jr.** as a grant-funded consultant for VEP's "Double V Project," an oral history project funded by a grant from *Mass. Humanities* that focuses on African American veterans of WW2 (see Page 1 article). Lee is retired from management at Digital Corp., serves on the Board of M.L.K., Jr., Family Services in Springfield, and is pursuing a Masters Degree in non-profit management. A veteran of the Air Force, Lee piloted both plane and helicopter missions in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos in the early 1970s.

### Please donate to help VEP continue its work!

The war in Iraq continues, problems such as youth violence are on the rise, and the need for VEP grows. Your end-of-year gift will support our programs in the New Year.

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