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Hunger Strike, May 1981  
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MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

FBI - investigating

- Bitzer - I just met a vet who  
hasn't eaten in 9

- Michael McCarthy w/ Bitzer

-

Keraveni - I don't even know you guys

-  
Young fellow on the phone  
News

Bitzer - we've got to comp

2. Invest<sup>igation</sup> of Vietnam Rehab programs

3. Reorganization of delay stores sum  
+ Agent Orange  
or service-connected disability

4. Honor + update of I fill as the  
current bill is inadequate

Asked to be spokes woman - leaving this  
afternoon

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

Inter agency work group  
Martin Anderson notifies

Increase in budgeting on Special  
overage

Budget authority  
22.9 - 1981  
24.2 - 1982  
22.2 outlay  
23.5 outlay

Center  
~~State~~  
1.3 billion  
Overall V.A. budget 1981 + 1982.  
Save US Gross/Latta

\$597 million  
authorization

Specific Studies  
Ranchwood study  
VA Epidemiological Study  
VA literature study  
Other Agency

No reduction now  
in D. of M + Surgeon  
on Dept  
of Vets benefits  
personnel

Depth of commitment -  
the President today denigrates

My people  
Get back to me personally  
... office looks forward working w/you in  
structure

Miss Chris Noel  
c/o Green-Siegel  
suite 104  
8350 Santa Monica  
L.A., Cal. 90069

Thank you for taking the time for our long conversation this morning.

I very much appreciate your efforts in behalf of Vietnam veterans.

You expressed a strong interest in the Vietnam Veteran Outreach Centers. I regret that neither the Veterans Administration nor the national media have accurately reflected the true situation regarding these Outreach centers.

Here are the facts:

1) The U.S. Senate did pass a version of a budget resolution which was anticipated to end funding of the Outreach centers. This fact was widely publicized.

2) The President subsequently gave his full support in the House to the Reagan bipartisan budget resolution which restored the overwhelming majority of previously proposed cuts in veterans programs. The battle in the House was the biggest fight of the year, and the President won that fight. The level of funding restored is more than enough to fund the outreach centers.

3) The Senators and Congressmen all understood that the restored funding would keep the Outreach Centers open.

4) The congress has authorized the spending, but it must now pass legislation specifically extending the life of the Outreach centers. This has overwhelming support in both the House and Senate. The president is specifically committed to keeping the Outreach centers/open when Congress authorizes and appropriates funds for this program ~~that~~ by law.

5) The acting director of the Veterans Administration

has been specifically directed by the White HOuse to cease  
proposed  
plans to implement any/reductions in Veterans programs which  
reversed and  
were/restored by the Reagan bipartisan budget resolution which  
has passed the congress. In short, the Outreach centers'  
extension is locked in by overwhelming sentiment in the  
Congress and by the President's commitment mentioned above.

6) In part because of five points listed above, the American  
Legion, the V.F.W., the AMVETS, and the Blinded Veterans  
Association all endorsed the Reagan bipartisan budget resolution  
which restored funding to a level which would permit the  
centers.  
extension of the Outreach/

I only wish that every news reporter covering veterans affairs  
was aware of these facts.

Again, thank you for your continued interest.

Cordially,

Morton C. Blackwell  
Special Assistant to the President  
The White HOuse

523-8231

Under L.A.  
contract

sub contract

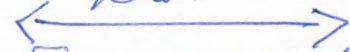
No history

1981 undone

begin

no sense in

new



300,000 to L.A.  
rather sub-contractors





**Veterans  
Administration**

**MAY 27 1981**

MEMORANDUM FOR:


Mr. Morton Blackwell  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500



In accordance with your referral, I am pleased to enclose a suggested draft response to Mr. Ronald Bitzer.

We do not believe it would be appropriate for the President to sign this response and suggest it be signed by a White House official at a lower level.

Mr. Bitzer and his Center for Veteran's Rights have been involved for some time with issues related to Vietnam veterans. He is currently one of the leaders in the "wait-in" at our Wadsworth VA Medical Center. Consequently, any response will undoubtedly receive wide, negative publicity in the southern California area.

  
JOSEPH J. FOLEY  
Acting Executive Assistant  
to the Administrator

Enclosures

Veterans Administration  
Office of the  
Administrator  
of Veterans Affairs  
Washington, D. C. 20420

**MEMORANDUM FOR:**

**MAY 27 1981**

**Mr. Morton Blackwell  
The White House  
Washington, D. C. 20500**

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**JOSEPH J. FOLEY  
Acting Executive Assistant  
to the Administrator**

**Enclosures**



DRAFT

Mr. Ronald Bitzer  
Center for Veterans Rights  
514 West Adams Boulevard  
Los Angeles, California 90007

Dear Mr. Bitzer:

I am pleased to respond to your mailgram posing a series of questions about the Veterans Administration. I apologize for the delay in responding but wanted to allow time for my staff to thoroughly review your concerns. I will respond below to each question:

Delayed Stress Among Vietnam Veterans

1. Mr. Hopkins' case was thoroughly reviewed by a panel of psychiatrists at the Brentwood VA Medical Center, prompted by his demands made at the Wadsworth VA Medical Center. No evidence of a post-traumatic stress disorder was found but he did have psychological symptoms which preceded his military service. The criteria, as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual III, specifically indicate that the symptomatology must occur after a severe stressor during active military service.
2. No treatment was recommended for Mr. Hopkins nor was medication prescribed. The VA assures me that they will be

DRAFT

Mr. Ronald Bitzer

glad to investigate this matter further but some time would be required to obtain the medical records and have them reviewed by their Central Office psychiatrists. The Coroner's Report is not yet available.

3. In March 1980, the Veterans Administration liberalized its method of considering a psychiatric disorder having its onset with a life threatening episode in military service, including being a Prisoner of War.

It established a procedure to be followed in examining veterans which would elicit information to establish a proper diagnosis, which would lead to the grant of service connected compensation for post-traumatic stress disorder. The procedure and grant of benefits were a liberalization, in line with the latest findings of the American Psychiatric Association.

4. The VA has been actively involved in an educational program to acquaint their staff with the characteristic symptomatology of the post-traumatic stress disorder. A resource group composed of VA and non-VA experts has been utilized in this program, especially in the VA's Vietnam Veteran outreach programs. They will continue to stress the importance of recognizing this disorder, as well as any other mental disorder.

DRAFT

Mr. Ronald Bitzer

Health Problems Related to Agent Orange Herbicide Exposure

1. The VA has not failed to instruct its physicians in the diagnosis of chloracne. Two educational conferences for the Environmental Physicians in VA medical centers have dealt with the condition and its diagnosis. In addition, a separate task force was created to prepare a detailed and even more definitive discussion of the diagnosis. It has almost completed its work.

The VA has had no development over the last few weeks that would warrant elaboration of Dr. Shepard's statement of April 27, 1981. No evidence has been brought forward, in fact, that VA physicians are misdiagnosing chloracne or that it has been a pivotal consideration in dealing with the problems of Vietnam veterans.

2. On July 1, 1980, the Veterans Administration wrote to you denying your appeal under the Freedom of Information Act for the names and addresses of Vietnam veterans residing in California and informing you that the agency would consider your request under the authority and requirements of Title 38 United States Code, paragraph 3301. A definitive answer to your

DRAFT

Mr. Ronald Bitzer

request was postponed pending a comprehensive review and evaluation for the former Administrator concerning the general area of name and address disclosures. This review was not completed because of the change in Administrations. Policy options in this area will be presented to the new Administrator upon his appointment.

3. There is no need at this time to appoint an outside group to examine the VA's handling of "re-entry problems" which may have resulted from Agent Orange exposure. The issues surrounding the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam relate to physical conditions more than to "re-entry." The Veterans Administration is actively pursuing answers to the medical questions related to Agent Orange exposure.

4. Neither the officials at the Veterans Administration nor I can speak for those who picketed the VA Central Office on May 22, 1981. We understand, however, that the approximately 30 individuals who demonstrated there were part of a conference of about 200 veterans who met in Washington to express their concerns regarding claims of disability due to Agent Orange and delayed stress.

DRAFT

Mr. Ronald Bitzer

Budget Cuts in the VA

1. All federal activities have been asked to participate in efforts to control deficit spending. The VA budget, through realignment of existing resources, permits the Veterans Administration to continue to treat a record number of veteran patients with a professional staff of unprecedented quality. I believe that the American people can be confident that the health care of this Nation's veterans is not being neglected.

The Academic Affairs Information Letter which you referred to in your mailgram urged VA facilities to search for methods of cost containment. The letter points out that housestaff save money: "As long as housestaff provide essential patient-care services, the Nation's hospitals could thereby function with fewer practicing physicians resulting in lower operating budgets." There is reference to a private (not VA) hospital where the cost was up to 60 percent more on teaching versus non-teaching floors of the hospital, largely on the basis of more laboratory tests. However, all intensive care patients were admitted to the teaching floor which would require higher costs to deliver the more intensive care.

DRAFT

Mr. Ronald Bitzer

2. There are no planned reductions of physician positions in the VA medical care system now or in the foreseeable future.

I appreciate the opportunity to provide this information.



CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS R BIT  
514 WEST ADAMS BLVD  
LOS ANGELES CA 90007

western union Mailgram® UNITED STATES MAIL

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*Morton Blackwell*

PRESIDENT RONALD REAGAN  
WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON DC 20500

*Scheduling*

VIETNAM VETERANS ARE REQUESTING A MEETING WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES DURING YOUR MEMORIAL DAY VISIT TO SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AT THE SITE OF THE MARCH 14, 1981 PROTEST BY THE LATE JAMES R HOPKINS TO INHUMANE TREATMENT BY VETERANS ADMINISTRATION PERSONNEL TO THE SICK VETERANS OF THE NATION.

THE REASONS FOR THE NECESSITY OF THIS PERSONAL VISIT, WHICH SOME VIETNAM VETERANS AND SUPPORTERS ARE STRESSING BY OUR WAIT-IN THERE, ARE THE FOLLOWING:

DELAYED STRESS AMONG VIETNAM VETERANS

"THERE ARE NO FEATURES, COMPLAINTS OR CLINICAL FINDINGS TO SUPPORT ANY RELATIONSHIP TO AGENT ORANGE, OR THE POST-VIETNAM STRESS SYNDROME, ALTHOUGH THIS WAS SPECIFICALLY EXPLORED" FROM THE APRIL 7-8, 1981 CASE REVIEW OF THE LATE JAMES R HOPKINS AT THE BRENTWOOD V.A. HOSPITAL BY DOCTORS CYRIL BARNERT, RAMZI KIRIAKCS, GERALD MCKENNA AND MANUEL STRAKER.

1. WHY DID THE BRENTWOOD V.A. CASE REVIEW FOR JAMES R HOPKINS COMPLICATE THE CRITERIA FOR A DIAGNOSIS OF DELAYED STRESS BY ADDING SYMPTOMS IN ADDITION TO THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS OF THE AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION (REFER TO SEE DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUALS OF MENTAL DISORDERS, 3RD EDITION)?
2. WILL YOU ORDER AN IMMEDIATE INVESTIGATION INTO THE FAILURE OF WADSWORTH AND BRENTWOOD V.A. HOSPITALS TO PROVIDE EVALUATION AND TREATMENT TO THE LATE JAMES HOPKINS?
3. WHY ARE VIETNAM VETERANS, SPECIFICALLY SWORDS TO FLOWSHARES IN SAN FRANCISCO, QUESTIONING THE MODIFICATION OF THEIR CRITERIA FOR DISABILITY COMPENSATION TO VIETNAM VETERANS FOR DELAYED STRESS BY THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, SO THAT FEWER VETERANS QUALIFY FOR SERVICE-CONNECTED DISABILITY AND REHABILITATION FROM THE GOVERNMENT.
4. WILL YOU ORDER A NATIONAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION PROGRAMS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL COUNSELING FOR VIETNAM VETERANS BY A TEAM OF NON-V.A. EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF DELAYED STRESS?

HEALTH PROBLEMS RELATED TO AGENT ORANGE HERBICIDE EXPOSURE

"IT IS HIGH TIME THAT THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION AND VARIOUS GOVERNMENT AGENCIES BE SHAKEN FROM THEIR LETHARGY TOWARD ALL VETERANS," FROM THE MARCH 19, 1981 STATEMENT OF THE LATE JAMES R HOPKINS FROM THE LOCKED WARD OF THE BRENTWOOD V.A. HOSPITAL.

1. WHY HAS THE V.A. FAILED TO INSTRUCT THEIR EXAMINING PHYSICIANS IN





THE DIAGNOSIS OF CHLORACNE DESPITE THE V.A. SO-CALLED PHYSICAL EXAMINATION FOR AGENT ORANGE THAT THE V.A. HAS ADMINISTERED FOR MORE THAN TWO YEARS AND THE MORE THAN 40,000 VIETNAM VETERANS WHO HAVE REQUESTED SUCH AN EXAMINATION FROM THE V.A. HOSPITALS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY?

WHY IS THE V.A. ONLY ABLE TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS FROM THE CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS CONCERNING THIS IMPORTANT MATTER WITH THE APRIL 27, 1981 STATEMENT FROM DR BARCLAY M SHEPARD THAT "THE TASK FORCE (ON AGENT ORANGE) IS CURRENTLY IN THE PROCESS OF REFINING DIAGNOSTIC PROCEDURES RELATIVE TO CHLORACNE?"

2. WHY HAS THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION CENTRAL OFFICE REFUSED TO ALLOW OR DENY THE MARCH 31, 1980 REQUEST BY THE CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS FOR THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF ALL DISABLED VETERANS OF THE VIETNAM ERA IN CALIFORNIA UNDER 38 U.S.C. SECTION 3301(F) FOR THE PURPOSE OF OUTREACH TO THEM CONCERNING THE AGENT ORANGE SERVICES OF THE VETERANS ADMINISTRATION?

3. WILL YOU APPOINT AN EXPERT PANEL OF NON-V.A. INDIVIDUALS TO EVALUATE THE NEED FOR A NATIONAL DELAYED RE-ENTRY PROGRAM FOR ALL 4.2 MILLION VIETNAM VETERANS WHO HAVE LACKED INFORMATION ABOUT THE VIETNAM RELATED PROBLEMS OF DELAYED STRESS AND USE OF TOXIC HERBICIDES?

4. WHY ARE VIETNAM VETERANS PLANNING TO PICKET THE CENTRAL OFFICE OF THE V.A. IN WASHINGTON DC ON FRIDAY MAY 22, 1981 CONCERNING V.A. LACK OF ACTION ON THE AGENT ORANGE ISSUES?

BUDGET CUTS IN THE V.A.

"I CALL ON PRESIDENT REAGAN TO STOP SPENDING MILLIONS OF DOLLARS ON INAUGURAL BALLS AND TO UTILIZE THE MONEY FOR WHAT THE DEFENDERS OF OUR FINE COUNTRY ARE ENTITLED TO," FROM THE MARCH 19, 1981 STATEMENT OF THE LATE JAMES R HOPKINS.

1. WHY HAS THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF MANAGEMENT AND BUDGET ORDERED A 743 MILLION DOLLAR REDUCTION IN THE NEXT FISCAL YEAR BUDGET OF THE V.A. SYSTEMS WITHOUT ANY EVALUATION OF THE COSTLY MEDICAL SCHOOL AFFILIATION IN THE V.A. SYSTEM WHICH DRAINS UP TO 60 PERCENT OF THE MEDICAL BUDGET INTO TRAINING COSTS (SEE JULY 3 1979 V.A. DEPT OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY LETTER 1L-14-79-4)?

2. HOW WILL V.A. HOSPITALS BE ABLE TO OPERATE AT ALL WITH THE PLANNED REDUCTION OF 20,000 PHYSICIANS IN THE HOSPITAL SYSTEM BY 1986?

PLEASE RESPOND  
 CENTER FOR VETERANS RIGHTS  
 RONALD BITZER  
 TEL 213-746-6315  
 514 WEST ADAMS BLVD  
 LOS ANGELES CA 90007

13:25 EST

MGMCOMP MGM



National and Foreign Report

## Hunger Striking Vets Yield on Key Point

LOS ANGELES (UPI) — A dozen Vietnam-era veterans on a hunger strike hope to resolve the three-week impasse through negotiations with a Veterans Administration lawyer, a spokeswoman said yesterday.

The hunger strikers had vowed to fast until death unless President Reagan met with them at Wadsworth VA Hospital, but there were indications the protesters might be willing to scale down that demand to some contact with the White House.

"We are hopeful the negotiations will continue," said Pat Marinello, a spokeswoman for the hunger strikers. "All the demands still stand and we're hoping the White House will respond."

Asked if the veterans were insisting on a meeting with the president, Marinello said, "All I'm going to say is we are still hoping for a response from the White House."

Representatives of the hunger strikers began meeting with VA General Counsel Robert Coy Thursday.

Ron Bitzer, who has met with Coy as a representative of the 12 hunger strikers and six veterans holding a sit-in in the hospital lobby, was optimistic the dispute could be resolved by today.

"We are serious about resolving this hunger strike," Bitzer said Friday.

However, Coy said there was "still no end in sight. We're still struggling with some extremely difficult and complex issues. We just don't have solutions, but we're still struggling in good faith."

Coy canceled a return flight reservation to Washington to continue the talks.

Neither Coy nor Bitzer would give details of their negotiations.

In addition to a meeting with Rea-

gan, the veterans have demanded an independent investigation of VA hospitals, more research on the effects of Agent Orange and recognition of delayed stress syndrome as a medical problem.

The lawn of Wadsworth hospital has become a tent city as number of veterans and supporters have joined the hunger strikers in their protest. Six veterans, known as the "Inside Six" have occupied the hospital lobby since May 20.

Vietnam  
Veterans

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 17, 1981

TO: LARRY SPEAKES

FROM: MORTON BLACKWELL 

RE: Press inquiries relating to Michael Chapman, California veteran

Bob Coy, Acting General Counsel at the VA, called concerning our request for information on Michael Chapman, the hunger striker who reportedly had a heart attack this morning. The VA doctors have talked to his doctors, and discovered the following:

(1) Chapman, 29, suffered from chest pains this morning and was admitted to Glendale Memorial Hospital at 3:00 A.M.

(2) He has had heart trouble before, for which he was admitted to another hospital in 1979.

(3) There was an irregular heart beat, but no evidence of a heart attack. He has a "metro-valve disease."

(4) He is now in satisfactory condition and doing well. He is being given liquid through an IV but is taking no solid food.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

*Vietnam  
Veterans  
Hunger-  
Strike -  
Agent Orange*

TO: MORT BLACKWELL  
134 EOB  
Attn: Kathy Christiansen

FROM: Admiral Garrick *mg*

DATE: June 10, 1981

Herewith is the material I mentioned to you Kathy





COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERANS AFFAIRS  
PATRIOTIC HALL - 1816 SOUTH FIGUEROA STREET  
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90015

June 5, 1981

ROBERT L. KINGSBURY  
DIRECTOR

WM. A. REYNOLDS  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

Honorable Kenneth Hahn  
Supervisor, Second District  
County of Los Angeles  
866 Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisor Hahn:

Bill Reynolds has advised me of your telephone call on June 1, 1981, concerning the Vietnam Veteran hunger strikers at Wadsworth Hospital; and I have read the newspaper account of your visit to them.

You may recall that Coroner Tom Noguchi stated on May 20, 1981, that he had ordered an investigation into the death of former Marine James Hopkins with regard to his alleged exposure to Agent Orange. I wrote to the Coroner asking for the results of that investigation and his letter of reply is attached.

The release of his findings, I believe, is probably the extent to which this Department and the County should go at this time barring unforeseen circumstances.

Information reaching me from usually reliable sources indicates that the hunger strikers themselves are sincere but perhaps misguided individuals who genuinely believe that what they are doing is appropriate. There is very little support for them from the veterans community as a whole because it is widely believed that two non-striking individuals (Ron Kovic and Ron Bitzer) are manipulating and exploiting the group to serve their own self-seeking purposes. Both of these individuals are very suspect to the veterans community because of their past history of participation in radical protests. Both were associated with the anti-war movement and continue to involve themselves in a variety of anti-establishment causes.

I would at this time respectfully urge that our position be one of extreme caution.

Sincerely,

ROBERT L. KINGSBURY  
Major, USA Ret.  
Director

RLK:mjk



JUN 3 1981



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES  
DEPARTMENT OF CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER-CORONER

1104 NO. MISSION RD., LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90033

(213) 226 8024 OFFICE HOURS

(213) 226 4001 AFTER HOURS

THOMAS T. NOGUCHI, M.D.  
CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER-CORONER

May 28, 1981

Robert L. Kingsbury  
Major, USA Ret.  
Director  
County of Los Angeles  
Department of Military and Veterans Affairs  
Patriotic Hall, 1816 South Figueroa St.  
Los Angeles, CA 90015

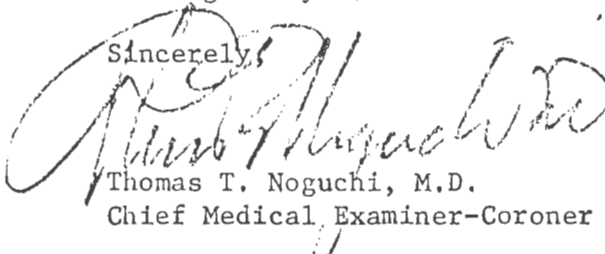
Dear Major Kingsbury:

Thank you for your letter and interest in our investigation into the death of James Hopkins.

We intend to do all within our ability to attempt to determine the role played by exposure to Agent Orange, realizing that it is a matter of great concern to many Vietnam veterans and their families.

Just as soon as we have closed this case I shall forward our findings to you.

Sincerely,



Thomas T. Noguchi, M.D.  
Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner

TTN:c

# Death of Marine to Be Investigated

By RONALD L. SOBLE, *Times Staff Writer*

Los Angeles County Coroner Thomas T. Noguchi disclosed Tuesday that he has ordered an investigation into whether former Marine James Hopkins died as the result of Agent Orange, a powerful herbicide defoliant used in Vietnam.

"We're looking into the genetic aspects of Agent Orange," Noguchi said in a telephone interview.

A coroner's autopsy Tuesday disclosed no specific cause of death for Hopkins, 32, who died Sunday at his Calabasas home. He was found lying on his bed with a liquor bottle and an empty pill container nearby, sheriff's deputies said.

## Shot Up Hospital Lobby

Last March, dressed in camouflage battle gear, Hopkins drove a Jeep through glass doors of the Wadsworth VA Hospital in West Los Angeles and fired shots into the walls of the lobby. While surrendering to police, he complained that he was suffering from exposure to Agent Orange.

Noguchi said he ordered a medical examination of portions of Hopkin's brain, spinal cord and other organs and tissues to determine whether the herbicide played a role in the veteran's death.

He said the examination would be conducted by the coroner's staff and by a group of "independent medical experts" and not by Veterans Administration officials to avoid any possibility of bias in the investigation.

## Veterans File Class-Action Suits

"I don't want the VA to look at it," Noguchi said. "We will not rely on the VA for scientific support."

Vietnam war veterans—claiming indifferent and cynical treatment by the Veterans Administration—have filed class-action lawsuits demanding that the VA pay closer attention to veterans who believe they are suffering from exposure to Agent Orange.

Suzanne Carey Hopkins, 31, Hopkins' wife of 18 months, said the ex-Marine had suffered from night mares. Hopkins and his wife had returned Friday from a series of Vietnam Veterans Day appearances in Texas.

A group of veterans plans a demonstration today at the Wadsworth VA Hospital to focus attention on veteran's problems.



JOAN M MAIMAN  
300 NORTH STATE ST APT 3409  
CHICAGO IL 60610

western union

Mailgram



4-0510248163 06/12/81 ICS IPMBNGZ CSP OAKB  
3128289563 MGM TDBN CHICAGO IL 242 06-12 0350P EST

PETER TIFFANY  
57 WATER ST  
PITTSBURG CA 94565

VETERANS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE  
(A National Veterans/Citizens Coalition)

PLEASE RELAY TO THE HUNGER STRIKERS-

DEAR VETERANS,

MANY OF US WHO WERE IN VIETNAM ARE DEEPLY CONCERNED TO HEAR OF THE CONTINUING HUNGER STRIKE IN WHICH YOU ARE INVOLVED. WE WHO HAVE SEEN SO MUCH OF DEATH HAVE FOUND THAT ONE OF THE LASTING LEGACIES OF OUR TIME IN VIETNAM IS A PROFOUND REAFFIRMATION OF THE VALUE OF LIFE. IN A SENSE WE WERE HELD HOSTAGE TO THE FUTURE IN THAT WAR AND CAME HOME GRANTED IN SOME CASES TO AN UNTENABLE SITUATION BUT WE DID COME HOME. IT WOULD BE INDEED THE SUPREME IRONY IF THE LOSS OF LIFE WERE THE AVENUE OPEN TO THE ACHIEVEMENT OF A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE FOR YOUR FELLOW VETERANS. WE REJECT THIS NOTION, THERE ARE OTHER OPTIONS. THIS IS NOT TO BE SIMPLISTIC IN OUR BELIEF THAT SUCH SOLUTIONS ARE EASY, OR WILL, IN THE END ACHIEVE ALL THAT WE DESIRE, BUT WE DO HAVE HOPE. IN DEATH THERE IS NO HOPE ONLY THE END OF ANY OPTION. WHILE WE CANNOT IN CONSCIENCE ENDORSE ANY ACT WHICH MAY CAUSE SUFFERING OR LOSS OF LIFE FOR ANY HUMAN BEING THIS IS NOT A CONDEMNATION OF THE ISSUES RAISED OR OF YOUR COURAGE AND COMMITMENT AS INDIVIDUALS FOR TAKING A STAND, RATHER IT IS A STATEMENT OF HOPE THAT YOUR DEVOTION WILL BE CHANNLED INTO AVENUES OF LIFE NOT DEATH.

JOAN M MAIMAN, CHAIRMAN, VETERANS LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

15:50 EST

MGMCOMP MGM

This mailgram was read to the hunger strikers in Santa Rosa California by Mr. Pete Tiffany, Western Regional Director for the Veterans Leadership Conference on June 13, 1981. On Saturday evening after receiving this message the Santa Rosa hunger strikers renounced the hunger strike portion of their efforts to make the public aware and raise the issues of Agent Orange, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and the employment problems of the Vietnam veteran.

# The Stars and Stripes

The Weekly Magazine

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WASHINGTON, DC, THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 1991

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## Chicago Salutes Korean And Vietnam Vets



Timothy Patrick McGeehan, age two and one half, fell in for muster at the Memorial Dedication and managed a snappy salute as the colors were presented.



Joan Malman, head of the Veterans Leadership Conference, and former nurse with the American Red Cross in Vietnam, stands proudly with Joe Ambrose, age 86, WWI veteran of the European Theater, at the Memorial Dedication to Korean and Vietnam Veterans in Chicago, IL on May 15.



# 8 Vietnam Veterans Fast Here To Get Action on Agent Orange

By Leah Y. Latimer  
Washington Post Staff Writer

They are far from the jungles of the Southeast Asia of 15 years ago, yet Gene Dorr, Stephen Androff and John Avalos are scantily clad in green camouflage fatigues, shorts and T-shirts. They fan the stagnant, humid Washington air in the crowded room atop St. Stephen and the Incarnation Church in Northwest Washington where they and five other Vietnam veterans each plan to live on a gallon of water and the juice of one lemon a day until President Reagan agrees to meet with them and hear their demands.

Androff, 33, was an artillery forward observer in the Army in 1967 who went out in the brush and radioed the location of enemy targets to headquarters. He joined the fasting strike 30 days ago and says he will see it through to the end. "I got nothing to lose; I'm dying anyway on the installment plan."

Androff's face, arms and legs are spotted with red lesions that have been carving out holes in his skin for

seven years. "At first I thought it was jungle rot [heat rash]," he said. Now he believes it is the result of exposure to the toxic herbicide Agent Orange, although Veterans Administration doctors disagree. "They give me pills and say it will go away but it doesn't. They say it's not Agent Orange, but they don't say what it is."

The fasters and the California-based Veterans' Coalition they represent want the federal government to finance independent research into the effects on veterans of such herbicides as Agent Orange that were sprayed into the dense jungles of Vietnam.

The American Council on Science and Health, a nonprofit group of scientists specializing in public health issues, announced in April that their studies found that the herbicide did not cause grave illnesses in humans, but stopped short of making any conclusions about the claims of the Vietnam veterans.

Meanwhile, the Environmental Protection Agency has halted its efforts to ban 2,4,5-T, the controversial her-

See STRIKERS, D4, Col. 3



# Veterans Fast to Gain Agent Orange Action

STRIKERS, From D1

bicide that is a component of Agent Orange, and has started negotiations over the domestic use of it. Several studies are under way on the effects of low doses of 2,4,5-T and Agent Orange on human beings.

The eight men are protesters who have brought their cause from across the country in a time-honored fashion of people who have a grievance — come to Washington to lay your demands at the doorstep of government. The eight Vietnam veterans plan to camp — two at a time — in a tent at Lafayette Park across from the White House, while the rest of them stay at the church.

Most of the fasters claim to have some side effects from Agent Orange but Androff, a Los Angeles artist, is the most dramatic example. Because of Agent Orange, he says, he has not been able to father a child since he returned to the U.S. in 1969.

The eight veterans came to Washington last week, leaving four other fasters behind, including Michael Chapman, 29, who suffered a heart attack in Wadsworth, Calif. The strikers also want a nongovernmental investigation into the May 16 death of James R. Hopkins, a veteran who died from a drug overdose after becoming a cause celebre in California for his efforts to get the Veterans Administration to certify his hearing loss as service related.

Hopkins' death ignited a torch in the heart of the fasters that their supporters say they will carry until the federal government also approves a civilian readjustment program for Vietnam veterans to help those who suffer from alcoholism, drug addiction and emotional problems. The sum of such problems among Vietnam veterans recently has been diagnosed as delayed stress or post-Vietnam syndrome.

"I want to be able to know that when I'm feeling suicidal or homicidal I can get help before I do something I don't want to do," Gene Dorr says calmly, as the long legs on his 6-foot-4 frame stretch over a lumpy red couch. "And I want to do the things delayed stress robbed me of."

Dorr, 34, says he has had 48 jobs and has been arrested 67 times — mostly for drug and alcohol offenses — since he was handed a general discharge from the Marine Corps 13 years ago. He was in the San Diego County jail on a drunk driving charge when the fasting started last month.

He joined the fast 27 days ago and though his weight is down from 203 to 184 pounds, his humor has not diminished. "Three weeks of fasting and you bring me Lite Beer?" he asked as he was handed his daily ration of bottled water. Others on the fast sipped cups of hot her... that they admit



Viet veteran John Michel takes drink of water as fellow hunger strikers Steve Androff and John Alvalos rest in Lafayette Square.

they allow themselves twice daily if they wish.

Dorr enlisted in Torrence, Calif., in 1964 when he was 17 and became a sniper in military zones where "anything that moved was killed. I lost a lot of friends out there. I lost a lot of me," Dorr says, referring to the memory lapses he started having while still in the service.

He calls them emotional blackouts, lapses that came 20 to 30 times a day, "sometimes for weeks at a time." It was during these times that he says he would wander from city to city, state to state, get drunk, get in fights and usually wind up in jail. Now Dorr's blackouts are minor and occur only once or twice a day, but the nightmares that take him back to the jungles of Vietnam remain.

John Alvalos, a 34-year-old former Marine machine gunner, recently reluctantly separated from his wife and two children because he could not afford to support them. They now live with her parents in Glendale, Calif., their hometown.

Alvalos, nicknamed Gunner, was hit by a mortar shell in the legs and back in 1967 during a raid and later was awarded a Purple Heart. He still has pain from the shelling and, combined

with pain from arthritis in his spine, is unable to work. Alvalos has been unemployed since last year and his only income is a \$59 weekly check from his state's Social Security office. Because of the arthritis, Alvalos says the Veterans Administration has judged his condition as nonduty related.

"I was a patriotic fool. I enlisted on the Marine Corps birthday. I was a Boy Scout, and a Woodcraft Ranger. Now I tell people I have disabilities and the government won't pay and they don't know what to think," Alvalos says, hunching his broad shoulders.

Alvalos, who is 5-foot-11, started the fasting weighing 220 pounds. His muscular chest, arms and legs seem unaffected so far by the loss of 20 pounds in 30 days.

The 5-foot-11 Androff is another matter. He has lost 14 pounds and now weighs 154. His ribs almost poke out of his back. His gray eyes float in a pool of pink that should be white.

"My mother called to tell me to take care of myself and to keep my chin up," he says laughing. "She says wear clean underwear. You never know when you'll have to go to the hospital."





June 25, 1981

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Affiliations noted for  
purposes of identification only

Morton Blackwell  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Blackwell:

We have just been informed that the Vietnam Veterans on a hunger strike in Washington have been granted permission to have their hunger strike on the site for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

The purpose of this letter is to let you know that we have absolutely no affiliation with this group of Vietnam veterans, nor did they consult with us regarding their decision to take their hunger strike to the site for the memorial.

I have also attached an update on the design for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. A recent article printed in the Wall Street Journal implied that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial would not be identified as the memorial to those who served in that war. As you can see from the enclosure, the Wall Street Journal editorial was inaccurate.

We continue to make excellent process with our program. I believe we will be able to dedicate the memorial in November 1982. Needless to say we could not have come this far without the support you have given us.

Sincerely,

Jan C. Scruggs  
President

JCS/crc

Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Inc.

1110 Vermont Avenue, N.W., Suite 308, Washington, D.C. 20005 (202) 659-2490

MONDAY, MAY 18, 1981

# The New York Times

## Remembering Vietnam

Commemorating war dead in art is a rite as old as memory and mourning, so it was inevitable that there would be a competition for a Vietnam War Memorial in Washington. The winning design, by Maya Ying Lin, a Yale architecture student, is for a low, angled wall inscribed with names, to be built between the Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument. The horizontal lines, the simple geometry and the somber stone create a mood that is sober and eternal.

The Vietnam war is not easy to memorialize; even the competition was protested by some who also protested against the war, and the monument is likely to remain a controversial site for some time to come.

But the controversy reflects more than bitterness left over from the war. It used to be much simpler to build a monument. The roll of honor on bronze tablets, or the statue of the fallen warrior holding a flag ap-

peared predictably on the village green. Anonymous generals and unknown soldiers furnish innumerable traffic islands. Forgotten heroes dot the nation's parks. The uniforms change, the heroes sit or stand or occasionally ride a horse, but the message remains the same: a noble cause well served.

Nowadays, though, patriotism is a complicated matter. Ideas about heroism, or art, for that matter, are no longer what they were before Vietnam. And there is certainly no consensus yet about what cause might have been served by the Vietnam War.

But perhaps that is why the V-shaped, black granite lines merging gently with the sloping earth make the winning design seem a lasting and appropriate image of dignity and sadness. It conveys the only point about the war on which people may agree: that those who died should be remembered.

## VIETNAM VETERANS MEMORIAL DESIGN

The purpose of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund is to establish a permanent national memorial in Washington, D.C. to all Americans who served in the armed forces in the Vietnam War--those who returned, those who were wounded, those who gave their lives and those who are still unaccounted for. The memorial design, in its setting of green lawns, stately trees, pleasant walkways, and modest landscaping will be an eloquent tribute.

To obtain a design for the memorial, VVMF conducted a nationwide competition, which was open to all Americans over 18 years old.

A total of 2573 individuals and design teams registered, making the competition the largest ever held for an actual project in the United States--and perhaps the world. Actual design entries in the competition total 1421, which were judged anonymously by a jury of eight internationally known architects, landscape architects, and sculptors.

All eight jurors were personally interviewed by the VVMF to ascertain, among other things, their sensitivity to the nation's need to provide appropriate recognition to the men and women who served in Vietnam. All jurors were required to read extensively from the most current literature about the war authored by Vietnam veterans.

VVMF and the design competition winner are now engaged in the development phase of the winning design concept. During this phase, which is taking place concurrently with the engineering of the project, all appropriate details and refinements will be considered and decided upon.

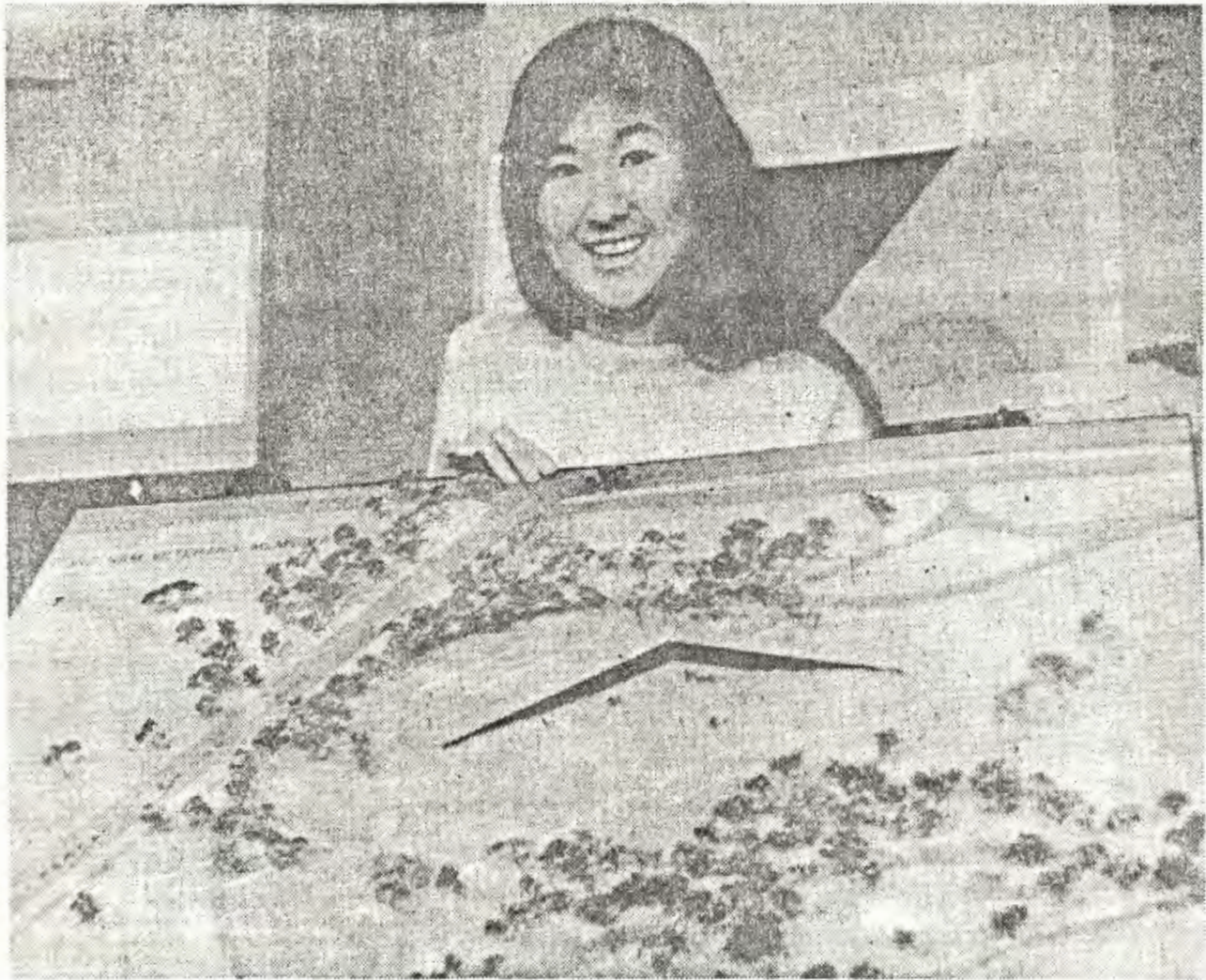
Among the questions to be considered are safety, access for the handicapped, appropriate inscriptions and identification of the memorial, drainage and size of lettering. While final details are yet to be worked out, all of the following criteria will be met for the memorial.

- It will be appropriately identified as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.
- It will be fully accessible to the handicapped.
- Adequate drainage will be provided.
- All safety needs will be met.

VVMF was founded and is directed and managed by Vietnam veterans, who undertook the effort for the memorial to insure that their comrades who died, as well as all others who served, receive fitting and proper honor and recognition from American society. The memorial, extending over 400 feet in length in the most prominent of locations, will be among the most beautiful and magnificent ever built in the Nation's Capitol.



# Vietnam War Memorial Captures Anguish of a Decade of Doubt



United Press International

Maya Ying Lin with her design for the national memorial to Vietnam War veterans, to be built in Washington

By PAUL GOLDBERGER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON — There was quite a flutter here recently when the winner of the nationwide competition to design a memorial to veterans of the Vietnam War was announced. The competition, the largest design competition ever held in the United States, was won not by a nationally known architect, or even by a practicing architect at all, but by a 21-year-old architectural student from Yale University.

So it was perhaps no surprise that the winner, Maya Yang Lin, became something of an instant celebrity. Someone without an architectural degree had come in first in a field of 1,420 entries. The jury, as in all architectural competitions, had made its choice on the basis of the design alone. Its members had no idea who had designed the winning entry until the decision was complete.

The surprise of having a 21-year-old winner naturally focused a lot of attention on Miss Lin, so that the winning design itself tended to be obscured somewhat by its creator's shadow. But time will surely change all of that, for Miss Lin's design appears to be one of the most subtle and sophisticated pieces of public architecture to have been proposed for Washington in many years.

#### On the Mall in Washington

The memorial is to be built in Constitution Gardens, an expansive lawn at the west end of the mall, near the Lincoln Memorial. Miss Lin's idea is simple and dignified: She proposed a pair of 200-foot-long black granite walls, set to form two sides of an oblique triangle. Within the triangle, the ground slopes gently down, so that the walls are 10 feet high at the apex. On the walls, in letters three-quarters of an inch high, will be carved the names of the 57,692 Americans killed in Vietnam from 1963 to 1973.

That is all there is. The memorial will not be a building, and it will not contain any sculpture or other decoration. Although the walls will be covered with the names of the dead, it will still be, in a sense, a tabula rasa, a blank slate; for this memorial's special gift to us will be its capacity for being interpreted in many ways.

The memorial is to be dark in a city of white buildings. To visit it, one will gently descend in a city in which other memorials gently ascend. Thus, it differs from the rest of Washington in

much more than architectural style. It is not haughty in the manner of so much of official Washington architecture; rather, it is discreet and quiet.

The memorial makes it clear that, because of the national controversy over the Vietnam War, the struggle could not be commemorated with the unwavering certainty depicted in most of our other monuments. But the design does those who served in Vietnam no



dishonor. Indeed, its extreme dignity and restraint honors these veterans with more poignancy, surely, than most more conventional monuments.

The design is "minimalist," in a literal sense. But it is not the minimalism of a cube idly dropped onto a lawn. It is the minimalism of the gifted artist able to use simple means to achieve a complex end. That is not easy. Much minimalism comes off merely as emptiness, but this design seems able to capture all of the feelings of ambiguity and anguish that the Vietnam War evoked in this nation.

From Miss Lin's competition drawings and a preliminary model made quickly after her victory was announced, one senses that this will be a place in which nature and architecture come into balance. The strength of the granite wall and the softness of the green lawn will contrast so as to provide the contemplative setting that such a monument requires.

From the Vietnam Veterans Memorial there will be views of the nearby Lincoln Memorial and the Washington Monument, and not the least of the virtues of this design is that it does not try to upstage its neighbors, reflecting an understanding of the differing purposes of the monuments.

By its huge size alone, this competition would have ranked as a significant event in current architectural circles. The competition in 1970 for the design of the Pompidou Center, the new museum in Paris, brought 681 entries, fewer than half the number that this competition attracted.

This competition was also unusual in that it did not require that entrants produce an actual building; in fact, they were encouraged not to. The task given to the contestants called for a memorial that was "contemplative and reflective in character" and "not a political statement." Beyond that, the designers were on their own.

It was a particularly difficult challenge, because there is so little sense right now of an appropriate style for memorials. The equestrian figure that so filled the nation's parks and public squares in the late 19th century holds little power now. But modern architecture has not done well at producing a memorial style suitable to replace it.

A number of entries in this competition did try to return in some way to classical precedent, thus echoing the memorials now in Washington and following the current and, it would appear, growing fashion for classicism.

But the jury of architects and landscape architects, which included Pietro Belluschi, Grady Clay, Garrett Eckbo, Richard H. Hunt, Constantino Nivola, James Rosati, Hideo Sasaki and Harry M. Weese, had little interest in these efforts and conferred second prizes and honorable mentions on a group of designs that, like Miss Lin's, were fairly abstract in nature. Many involved platforms, groups of trees or arrangements of stark stone walls.

None of the runners-up were so subtle or so generally strong as Miss Lin's design, although some were quite provocative. The architects Abner B. Cohen and Winthrop W. Faulkner proposed a memorial that would have appeared to be a great American flag set on the ground, its stars made up of trees and its stripes made up of stone. Mark J. Loftus, a sculptor, suggested a sculpture made up of 57,000 10-inch-high carved figures, each representing one of the war dead, set into a great inclined stone wall.

It will cost perhaps as much as \$7 million to build the memorial, according to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, the nonprofit, Washington-based organization that was authorized by Congress in 1980 to establish the memorial. Funds will be raised privately, and the group has thus far obtained about \$1 million. There is as yet no starting date for construction of the winning design.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

June 16, 1981

To: Frank Ursomorso  
From: Morton Blackwell *MB*  
Re: Wadsworth V.A. Hospital Demonstration

Should anyone ask the President about the status of the demonstration at the Wadsworth V.A. Hospital, I suggest he make the following points:

-- This was a Veterans Administration matter, which I believe was well handled.

-- The V.A. worked with the original hunger strikers and explained to them what our Administration is doing regarding Agent Orange research and other issues of importance to Vietnam veterans. On May 28, the original hunger strikers voluntarily broke their fast and went home.

-- On June 9, when it was determined that continuation of the demonstration was interfering with patient care, the V. A. peacefully evicted the remaining demonstrators from the hospital property. We have had had no further communication from this group.

Frank, on another matter, I strongly suggest inviting Acting Administrator Dr. Donald Custis, nominee for Administrator Robert Nimmo, nominee for Deputy Administrator Allen Clark, Jr. and Nick Longworth of the V.A. Clark is a West Point grad who lost both legs in Vietnam. Inviting these V.A. leaders will strengthen the ties they are building with the veterans group leaders.





June 17, 1981



MEMORANDUM FOR:

Mr. Morton Blackwell  
Special Assistant to The  
President for Membership Groups  
The White House

We have been advised that Michael Chapman, age 29, who allegedly is one of the second group of Vietnam veteran "hunger strikers" that participated in the recent Wadsworth VA Medical Center demonstration, suffered chest pains early this morning (June 17) and was admitted at 3:00 a.m. to the Glendale Memorial Hospital. It is understood that he had a previous history of heart disease, and had been treated in 1979 at the Long Beach VAMC. Upon admission at Glendale, he was suffering from an irregular heart beat, but further examination revealed no evidence of a heart attack. The heart rhythm is now essentially normal, and the patient is in satisfactory condition and doing well. He has received IV fluids and has taken other liquids by mouth, but has refused solid foods. He remains in the hospital under observation.

4:30 p.m.

June 17, 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Mr. Morton Blackwell  
Special Assistant to The  
President for Membership Groups  
The White House

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4:30 p.m.

# Vietnam Veterans Win Aid Promise, Continue Strike

By Jay Mathews  
Washington Post Staff Writer

LOS ANGELES, June 6— Twelve hunger strikers outside a Veterans Administration hospital here have won promises of expanded medical treatment for Vietnam veterans but are still insisting on official White House attention to a broad range of veterans' complaints.

Thom Parish, who served with the Navy in the Tonkin Gulf and is supporting the protesters, said Friday the White House has so far refused to send a representative and so the hunger strike, entering its third week for some of the 12, will continue.

There was indication that the protesters might accept contact with the White House rather than a personal meeting with President Reagan, as they had demanded, and talks between the veterans and a VA attorney were continuing today.

The hunger strikers and a few dozen supporters are camped out in the lobby and in colorful tents on the outside lawn of the huge VA hospital complex in West Los Angeles.

They are asking for more research into the long-range effects of toxic herbicides like Agent Orange, used to remove jungle cover during the Vietnam war, and medical examinations for all veterans who served in Vietnam to identify lingering health problems, particularly the "delayed stress" syndrome.

Two VA officials from Washington told the protesters Wednesday that a team of outside doctors would look into complaints of inadequate care at the VA hospitals here and would investigate the case of ex-Marine James Hopkins, whose apparent suicide May 17 set off the protest.

Hopkins drove a jeep through the West Los Angeles hospital's glass doors and fired shots in the lobby two months before his death, blaming his outburst on the hospital's failure to treat deafness, which he said was caused by contact with Agent Orange.

"Professionally and personally, we are all concerned about our vets, concerned about Agent Orange, concerned about delayed stress," said Nick Longworth, special assistant to acting VA administrator Donald Custis and one of the officials who spoke to the veterans this week. "We don't want any of those young men to hurt themselves out there."

Longworth also said the VA would expand doctor education and examinations of patients complaining of "delayed stress" syndrome.

Gene Dorr, 34, one of the veterans supporting the protest, said he has been arrested 66 times in the past several years for drunkenness and drug use and is unable to hold a job for more than a few months at a time. He blamed stress associated with his service in the Marine Corps in Vietnam in the mid-'60s.

Chuck Bass, who has been on a diet of fruit juice and vitamins for the last 16 days, said, "I'm going to be here for the duration, until the problem is solved." Bass weighed about 270 pounds at the beginning of the protest and has lost more than 20 pounds. He was briefly hospitalized earlier in the week when he apparently fainted along with another protester. Both have returned to the protest.



11/11/81  
*Morton Blackwell*  
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20986

RMS HONORABLE RONALD REAGAN  
WHITE HOUSE DC

20986

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I HAVE A COPY OF A TELEGRAM SENT TO YOU ON MAY 20, 1981 BY  
A GROUP OF VIETNAM VETERANS ENGAGED IN A DEMONSTRATION AT THE  
WADSWORTH VA MEDICAL CENTER IN LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. A  
NUMBER OF OTHER VIETNAM VETERANS, WHO HAVE GATHERED OUTSIDE THAT  
MEDICAL CENTER, HAVE VOWED TO CARRY ON A FAST UNTIL THE  
DEMONSTRATORS RECEIVE A RESPONSE TO THEIR MAY 20 TELEGRAM.  
I HAVE SEEN THE LIST OF CONCERNS WHICH HAVE LED THE VIETNAM  
VETERANS TO SIT IN AT WADSWORTH AND TO CONDUCT THE FAST.  
OBVIOUSLY, THE VETERANS ARE SERIOUSLY CONCERNED WITH THESE

COMPLAINTS AND GRIVANCES AND SHOULD BE DEALT WITH FULLY AND  
SYMPATHETICALLY BY OUR GOVERNMENT. THE PROBLEMS OF THESE  
VETERANS ARE CONTINUING SYMPTOMS OF THE TERRIBLE HERITAGE OF  
THE VIETNAM WAR, MR. PRESIDENT. I URGE THAT YOU DO EVERYTHING  
POSSIBLE TO PROVIDE A REPLY TO THE VIETNAM VETERANS WHO HAVE  
CONTACTED YOU IN ORDER THAT YOUR ADMINISTRATION MAY OPEN  
A MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WITH THEM IN CONNECTION WITH THEIR CONCERNS.  
WITH WARM REGARDS.

CORDIALLY

ALAN CRANSTON

NNNN

VETERANS ADMINISTRATION

**REFERENCE SLIP**

TO (Name or title—Mail routing symbol)	INITIALS—DATE
1. Morton Blackwell	
2. Special Asst. to the President for Public Liaison	
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4.	
5.	

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REMARKS

RE: Wadsworth VA Medical Center

<p>FROM</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Nick Longworth Spec. Assistant, VACO</p>	<p>DATE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">6/9/81</p> <p>TEL. EXT.</p>
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# News Release

June 9, 1981

LOS ANGELES — After 18 days of sit-ins, hunger strikes and sleep-ins, VA officials at the Wadsworth VA Medical Center ordered those participating in such demonstrations to vacate the premises.

The order, issued by Wadsworth Director William K. Anderson at 5:30 a.m. today, advised the demonstrators to leave or face arrest by VA police.

Most of the demonstrators who were in tents on the hospital grounds complied with the order. However, seven of the demonstrators who were sleep-ins in the hospital lobby did not comply and were removed by VA police to another location for processing.

Robert Coy, Acting VA General Counsel, chief spokesman for the VA, held repeated meetings with the leaders of the demonstrators in an effort to review their complaints. As a result of these discussions, two letters addressing their concerns were transmitted to spokesmen for the demonstrators from Acting VA Administrator, Dr. Donald L. Custis. These responses were rejected by the demonstrators.

The continued presence of the demonstrators inside and on hospital grounds began to adversely affect patient care and other hospital operations. It was at this point the decision was made to notify the demonstrators that they must leave.

"We regret being forced to take such action, but despite this," said Coy, "the Veterans Administration intends to fulfill all of the commitments set forth in the Custis letters, which were designed to address some of the real concerns of the Vietnam veteran. I feel a national VA workshop, which has been announced, will be an important forum where these concerns can be explored further."

£ £ £ £



The hospital director said he made the decision to evict the demonstrators after a number of incidents were reported that were causing an adverse effect on patient morale and employee productivity.

While it is expected that most of the protestors, inside and out, will either leave peaceably or offer only passive resistance, assistance from law enforcement officials has been arranged, if needed, Anderson said.

"The more than 500 veterans who are patients in Wadsworth and the four to five hundred who come here daily for outpatient care have a right to expect the full attention of management to our primary job of providing high quality hospital care," Anderson said. "This demonstration has monopolized our attention far too long."

# # #

June 9, 1981





# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Demonstrators who have occupied the Wadsworth Veterans Administration Hospital in Los Angeles for 18 days were ordered this morning to leave or face arrest.

Hospital Director William C. Anderson said the continued presence of the two groups -- one in the lobby and one on the hospital grounds -- had become a serious threat to the quality of patient care.

He issued the order after leadership in the two groups became so fragmented that further discussions with them became impossible.

Anderson and his staff as well as Robert Coy, VA General Counsel from Washington, have held marathon discussions with the groups' various leaders since May 30.

VA's Acting Administrator Dr. Donald Custis has sent two letters to the protestors addressing the original demands of the group which first occupied the hospital lobby on May 20. As the crowd outside the hospital was joined by sympathizers and onlookers, demands grew more obscure and the continuing dialogue with VA officials deteriorated.

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

July 6, 1981

TO: ELIZABETH H. DOLE

FROM: MORTON BLACKWELL

RE: Demonstrators demanding to see the President

Although there continues to be media coverage of the demonstrators, some of whom are Vietnam Veterans, who are demanding to see the President, I strongly recommend that dealings with these people continue to be through the Veterans Administration. A meeting with the President for these people would only aggravate the situation and give encouragement to a tiny handful of experienced agitators.

We made the decision at the time of the original hunger strike at Wadsworth Veterans Administration Hospital in California that the Veterans Administration would be tasked with all direct dealings with these people. The letter to the original hunger strikers, which we drafted for Acting Veterans Administrator Dr. Donald Custis on May 28, caused the original five hunger strikers to break their fast and leave satisfied.

Subsequently, on June 9, the Veterans Administration evicted the remaining demonstrators from the VA Hospital facility. Then a group of these demonstrators flew to Washington and are camping out each day in Lafayette Park. Others of this group are starting in California with the intention of driving across the country in an effort to obtain additional publicity for their demands to meet with the President.

The leaders of this group include those who ran a similar sit-in demonstration in 1974 at Long Beach VA Hospital. The Veterans Administration informs us that several of the "followers" involved have records of psychiatric problems.

In my judgment the President will serve neither the interests of the protestors themselves nor the cause of the Vietnam veterans by granting these demonstrators an opportunity for increased publicity and a confrontation.

It is most important that we remember that the issues they are raising, namely increased study of the effects of herbicide Agent Orange, better health care for veterans, and the determination that delayed stress syndrome is a service related illness, have all ready been addressed by this Administration, specifically in Dr. Custis' letter of May 28.

Mr. Robert Nimmo and the leaders of the American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, and virtually every other Veterans group including Bobby Muller's Vietnam Veterans of America all agree that a Presidential meeting with these protestors would be counterproductive. To date I think that the Veterans Administration has done an excellent job and can be relied upon to handle this matter best for the President.

*File  
Hunger  
Strike*