

Carter's Pardon: Amnesty's Final Battle

At Safe Return, the concluding stretch of the amnesty campaign was geared to the 1976 presidential run. Having deliberately suspended the sponsorship of returning deserters after Lew Simon's conviction, and then accepting cases that were not at our initiative but thrust upon us by external circumstances – as with Bill Meis - we developed a strategy that depended more directly on targeting mainstream media through ad campaigns and the production of a new round of public service announcements for television. Whatever else was going on around amnesty on Capitol Hill, Congressman Kastenmeier of the House Judiciary had apparently thrown in the towel, writing a letter to Gerald Ford in January 1976, and urging the president to declare an unconditional amnesty.ⁱ

Following the Clemency Board debacle, the word amnesty, no doubt, had left a particularly bitter taste in Ford's mouth. Beyond that, Ford's chances for reelection were considerably improved by the uncritical bipartisan and public support he'd received around the capture of the Mayaguez, a U.S. merchant ship, by the Khmer Rouge in the waters off Cambodia; how the rescue attempt had been totally bungled, leading to the death or wounding of a large number U.S. marines would only be fully revealed long after Ford left the White House. A second event, we editorialized in our final issue of *Amnesty Report*, added to that of the Mayaguez Incident, further dampened the prospects for amnesty. "The hapless opposition to record Pentagon spending", we wrote, with lawmakers having "approved the largest military budget in history... indicates that the consensus necessary for amnesty does not exist." With the approach of presidential elections, however, we would work to diligently ensure that amnesty remained "a subject for national discussion" throughout the electoral season.ⁱⁱ

To stimulate that discussion, we had begun to distribute to a national list of television broadcasters a new set of TV public service announcements produced when I was in Los Angeles in December. The PSA's had been designed by Carl Borack, and consisted of short dialogs between two sets of children. In the .30 second spot, two little girls about five are sitting on the fronts steps of a house playing with their dolls. They have the following exchange:

- 1) My daddy went to Canada because they tried to make him go to Vietnam.
- 2) When's he coming home?
- 1) He's not.
- 2) Why not?
- 1) 'Cause he won't say he's sorry. So if he comes home they'll put him in jail.
- 2) How come he's not sorry?
- 1) 'Cause he didn't want to kill anybody.
- 2) You can share my daddy.
- 1) Thanks. But I wish I had my own.

Superimposed over the fade out: Let the President know what you think about amnesty.
A message from Safe Return.

A layout of the spots, with photos of the young actors and the above dialog, was inserted as the center piece of a new tabloid mailer. This was our first adventure with the tabloid newsprint format, anticipating by a year the GI unionization paper we would put out for the AFGE union drive. Having decided to forego another issue of *Amnesty Report*, very probably because there was little pretense that a dynamic amnesty movement existed to be reported on, we still felt the need for something in print that could serve various purposes, informational or funding. In his round of working with printers and mail houses, Tod had discovered an old web press still operating out of a loft buildings in SoHo, and the nostalgic attraction could not be stifled. There was always a part of Tod that was the print shop owner's son, the *causa prima* to which our materials owed a professional appearance; that this was the subject of endless criticism from the more puritanical wings of our movement merely enhanced our pleasure in the

quality we repeatedly showcased. This wasn't vanity. We took seriously the fact that our materials were vehicles for carrying messages and appeals that competed in a political marketplace.

And, as I said, this tabloid had several purposes. The front page would emphasize that we were still very committed to the struggle for amnesty, displaying our ever-evolving message in the context of topical and political developments. A large facsimile of a 'proclamation' dominated the cover under the headline: **Mr. President SIGN THIS...**

The document (with the drawing of a fountain pen resting across its lower corner, declared, "*I hereby order and declare a full pardon and amnesty unconditionally and without reservation to all and every person who committed certain offences under federal law related to opposition to American activities in Indochina.*" **It's as simple as that!**

On the first inside page we featured photos of all our deserter/resister cases, profiling each man, pointedly omitting Eddie McNally. The heading here was: **Our Successes Were Also Our Failures**, because "their punishment will continue until there is a universal and unconditional amnesty. That is the day we are working for." On the opposite page was a letter signed by Ed Sowders, summarizing his reasons for resistance in the context of his experiences in Vietnam.

The centerfold, as noted, was devoted to the new PSA campaign, and, in addition to what I have already described, featured a Work In Progress "Coloring Book," five story board drawings of two six year olds, a boy and a girl, hunched over and drawing in a coloring book set on the floor. This was a spot we were attempting to raise money for. It is described as follows:

A six year old boy and girl each coloring in a coloring book. On the floor, head to head... children color, reach for new crayons, discard old ones, etc. and talk.

Sc. 1 Video: Full shot of kids totally engrossed.

Boy: When I grow up I'm going to have four kids. Two boys and two girls.

Girl: I'm not going to have boys.

Sc. 2 Camera begins to circle slowly, keeping both children in full view.

Boy: Don't you like boys?

Girl: Boys get killed in war and then everybody is unhappy.

Sc. 3 Circling continues drawing to an MCU [medium close-up].

Boy: What if they don't fight in a war?

Girl: Then they go to jail. Or else they run away from home. And then they can't ever come back.

Sc. 4 Full close-up of boy raising himself on his elbows, surveying his coloring... what she has said dawns on him. He looks at her.

Boy: That doesn't make any sense.

Super-[imposed] and VO [Voice Over]

What do you think about amnesty? Write the President.

A public service announcement brought to you by the Safe Return Committee.

This was slick way beyond even our least sober stabs at popularization... and perhaps a bit silly. But it was entirely Carl Borack's baby, if I recall, and we were happy to surrender our own creative control since he was footing the bill at least for whatever services required payment. All the cast and crew had volunteered, probably for the credits, a measure of how hungry and desperate folks can be who are trying to establish themselves in what is popularly known in Hollywood as the Industry. We were certainly grateful for their contributions, and wrote each person individually to say so. On the shoot, I remember thinking, none of these folks has a clue of what this is all about, but I was equally impressed by the seriousness and professionalism with which they undertook their work.

Tucked into one upper quadrant of the tabloid's center fold was the graphic of another ad we were distributing for our first print advertising campaign, limited in distribution to readers of

magazines who were almost entirely in our camp, the very base we needed to remain mobilized. The idea for the design and copy came from a speech U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, had given before that body's General Assembly. This puffed-up product of Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan's one time Irish ghetto, and of middle-brow academia, who migrated to politics, was a self-parodying master of blarney. In this instance, taking the rhetorical high ground seldom assumed by an American representative in the UN, Moynihan offered the delegates the following proposal from the United States, that:

“All governments proclaim an unconditional amnesty by releasing all political prisoners... [who were jailed for] peaceful expressions or beliefs and opinions contrary to their Governments...”

I don't recall the context for this bit of uncharacteristic charity toward political prisoners, least those among our country's many dictatorial allies, but we pinned those words above a photo of the General Assembly, then asked: **What About American War Resisters, Mr.**

Ambassador?

To this was added a bit of our own political boilerplate: “The Ford Administration consistently opposed amnesty for tens of thousands of American...” and we included a coupon for requests of additional information. The graphic would be laid out as camera-ready copy, suitable to run as an ad, and scaled to fit the standard formatting space a given periodical might donate. The interesting thing was that we actually managed to place either this ad (as well as one that was updated following the elections) gratis in the *Nation*, the *Texas Observer*, the *New Age Journal*, while both the *Progressive* – on the inside cover - and *Commonweal* - the bi-monthly liberal Catholic magazine - gave our ad a full page. We filled the last two pages of our tabloid with details on the categories of resisters in need of relief, and here, perhaps for the first time, included Civilian Resisters arrested for antiwar activities. And we inserted a large photo of

Eddie Sowers being arrested on Capitol Hill, followed by a box listing our sponsors. Eight pages offers a lot of space, and we had probably scrambled a bit to fill it all. But Eddie must have been happy, and may have felt more valued by his comrades with all the attention given to his story; while Tod too would have been well pleased with this new medium for Safe Return to expand on our promotional skills.

I suspect this particular mailing was produced before mid-1976, since both the TV spots and the UN ad refer back to activities begun toward the end of the previous year. As for the spots, I don't recall that they were nearly as successful as the first effort featuring involving Burt Lancaster. The one note of negative feedback I've found was from a donor who called the new spots "drippy" and "emotional," and concluded "they do more harm than good. I would expect more from a group boasting the membership of Mr. Chomsky." In some ways, we probably agreed, at least to the degree that we never felt comfortable with the decision to put children in the position as mouthpieces for an issue only adults were competent to understand.

There was a compensatory note of praise, on more technical grounds, from the editor of *ACCESS: The Magazine of Media Reform*: "The spots you've distributed yourselves have been amazingly successful for such a highly emotional subject, and I know lots of people who'd love to know your selling technique." In the months ahead we would attempt to move the print ad with the appeal to Ambassador Moynihan away from the universe of left leaning media. As one letter I wrote to *Television* magazine records, we had begun to lobby the Ad Council, "asking for their opinion on our campaign,' and to solicit their endorsement "for our future spots." That was one nut, however, we could not crack. When the Ad Council responded that our ads lacked "balance," we cited developments like Vernon Jordan's resignation from the Clemency Board

and James Reston's editorial in the *Times* the previous December calling for universal amnesty to argue that support for the issue was moving daily into the mainstream.

We heard little from the competition in these months. There would be an increasing number of pleas from amnesty activists who were unaware or indifferent to the movement's internal squabbles, urging Safe Return, in this final phase of the struggle, to join forces with NCUUA. While most of these appeals seemed genuine, there were instances where it was clear they were partisan zingers simply meant to tweak us. "There is little time left," one kibitzer wrote. "It cannot be squandered in multiple efforts that duplicate each other. You should merge with CCCO and all the others." Another appeal from a member of the old Veterans for Peace group in Chicago even came sugar coated. "We have seen and been impressed by the pioneering work Safe Return has done, and hope you have been cooperating with NCUUA and will work with them on future activities."

If we had not heard, at least not directly, from the coalition, we did hear about how NCUUA managed to "duplicate" another of our fund raising techniques. They mounted an Art Exhibition at the Westbeth Gallery, part of the Greenwich Village artist housing community of the same name, which featured works by an all-star cast, Calder, Johns, Nevelson, Steinberg, Stella, Rauschenberg... and Leon Golub. Clearly NCCUA chieftains at this point had more current contacts in the world of high art than we did, but I suspect they didn't do any better than us as brokers of such works. Around this time the consignment shop we'd given a number of pieces left over from our Art Benefit remitted a check, saying they'd had to heavily discount the last of our lot, a work by Claes Oldenburg.

Our other channels of funding were flowing nicely, not least from brisk sales of the signed Calder poster, now priced at \$100, and stimulated by an ad we had placed in the *Daily*

World. Many of the old commies, if no longer members of the party, were at least loyal to its memory. They were typically a prosperous lot, and we would have been a much poorer outfit without them. And judging from the number of thank-you notes by those in receipt of autographed copies of *Winning Heart and Minds*, the Vietnam Veteran poetry collection in which my own poem appears, donations above \$25 which we considered in the premium range were also doing well. Many notes – including Karl Menninger of the Mayo Clinic - were addressed to me personally, the senders having been touched by my own modest contribution to the collection. One donor wrote to say that many groups asked her for money, but we were the only one who gave her something in return. This, again, was the genius of my partner's business acumen.

The continued flow of in-house donations suggested that a strong current of radical ideology still motivated our supporters politically, but our costs to reach these folks had been hampered by harassment from the postal service refusing to place Safe Return under ATOM's tax exempt umbrella until early in 1976, which meant we were mailing our house list at the bulk rate, around 8 cents per unit, rather than the non-profit rate which had just gone up in the new year from 1.8 to 2 cents. There were still those occasional out-of-the-blue large anonymous gifts, and in this period one materialized from the Provident Bank of Philadelphia for \$1,000, with another grand coming in from our old reliable conduit to the Old Left in the Bay Area, Mal Bernstein. On the debit side, a mail order supplier we had tried to stiff on a large envelope order managed a successful collection to the tune of \$350 – not to mention what it cost us in legal representation to negotiate a settlement. It hurt our hustler's pride more than our pocketbook. There are two other attempts at collection in the files that year, one from the Marshall's office threatening a public auction of our furniture. These we managed to successfully fend off. And, I

can state categorially that none of these legal hassles led us to limit similar ‘rip offs’ in the years ahead. Whenever some lawyer would attempt to sweat us, Tod would lawyer up in return, confident for the most part that most of these large mail order outfits wouldn’t want to incur further expenses trying to collect.

In early April we distributed a press release detailing our promotional offer of the new spots to “all 780 television stations” across the United States, and while I’m sure there were takers, I have no accounting of the outcome. Given the response from the editor of ACCESS, and Tod’s comment to a correspondent (taken up below), we may have had better coverage on this than I remember. We further announced the intention to tie our advocacy into the electoral arena by seeking “to insert amnesty ‘planks’ in the campaign platforms of all parties running presidential candidates.” In the real world, our letter to the Democratic Party asking to appear before the Platform Committee was ignored, owing no doubt to Carter’s already well publicized and limited position. But we had been able to assemble and make public the results of our “solicitation of amnesty positions from the various candidates.” Excluding Ford, who stated that his views “had been expressed in setting up the Clemency Board,” and that further discussion of amnesty was not appropriate for upcoming presidential debates, we gathered statements from five Democratic hopefuls:

*Jimmy Carter informed Safe Return that he would “issue a blanket pardon for all those... who did not serve in the armed forces.” Distinguishing amnesty from pardon, he said the former “says what you did was right. Pardon says, whether what you did was right or wrong, you are forgiven.” When Carter official campaign position on amnesty was released three months before the election, he made it crystal clear that he would only deal with deserters ‘case by case.’

*Morris Udall stated “I favor unconditional amnesty... any nation that can pardon Richard Nixon can do no less for its exiled citizens.”

*Senator “Scoop” Jackson said, “I oppose unconditional amnesty... it would not be fair to be excused when others accepted the obligation of service. However we must continue to seek ways... for individuals who refused service to return to this country.”

*Senator Hubert Humphrey, although an avowed non-candidate, stated, “Some form of alternative service to our country should be rendered as a condition for repatriation. Unconditional amnesty would be a disservice to the memory of those who fought and died in Vietnam.”

*Senator Frank Church responded, “I believe in amnesty for those who refused to fight in Vietnam for reasons of conscience. As president I would assure a speedy amnesty for war resisters.”

The other Republican we queried, Ronald Reagan, was the only candidate who failed to reply. All the responses followed the scripts the candidates had been spouting in the run-up to the primary season. And with the exception of the vaguely worded support for unconditional amnesty by Udall – the darkest horse of all - and including Church’s position qualified by use of the term “conscience,” none of them would have embraced the broad category of military resisters we had been defending since Safe Return was founded. Despite the other distractions that deflected our attention during these months, from what I’ve been able to document we were working productively to jumpstart something positive for the final push around an issue to which we remained emotionally connected, and which, for us, continued to embody and imply everything that was necessary to condemn the American invasion and destruction of Vietnam.

It was a heavy slog, however. To break beyond our left-liberal confines we attempted to broaden Safe Return's list of sponsors with names perhaps more congenial to folks who did not inhabit the country's great urban zip codes where antiwar sentiment ran disproportionately higher than in the mythic Middle America, where we always imagined we were beaming our message. If we weren't simply ignored, say by Robert Redford or Meryl Streep, we might receive a polite turn-down, as from Margaret Meade. Muriel Gardiner and Joseph Buttinger also declined, despite the fact that the couple, as individuals, had each donated generously to our work. Buttinger, who was most widely known then as a scholar of South East Asia, wrote that he had included a chapter calling for total amnesty in his latest book. Sometime after that, Buttinger forwarded 340 shares of stock from an investment bank, the Chicago Corporation.

Unknown to us, but not to an older generation of social democrats, was the couple's robust involvement with the anti-fascist underground in Austria and France before coming to the United States in 1941. Gardiner, the heiress of a Chicago meat packing fortune, who trained as a psychiatrist in Vienna, is said to have been the model for the character Julia in Lillian Hellman's *Pentimento*. The couple, apparently widely involved in philanthropy, also subsidized the magazine *Dissent* edited by Irving Howe. Callow youths that we were, I have cause to regret that we never attempted to meet with Buttinger or Gardiner, and that we were so obtusely ignorant of their epic backstory.

Sometime in May an episode from September 1974 made a bizarre reappearance. There is a copy of an affidavit in the files that had been sent to our Clemency resister client, Bill Meis, for his signature; whether or not it was actually executed, I cannot say; but I suspect it was. It is a first person statement by Meis, detailing the circumstances in which he came into contact with Safe Return, not available too me when I wrote the earlier chapter about his case. Under

circumstances which are no longer clear, Steve Young, the CBS correspondent we'd been in contact with around the John Herndon case, was – according to a letter Tod had written to Jim Reston – “out of control... making late night calls” accusing us of “feasting on carrion.” Where Jim fit in, I can't say. But Tod wanted him to contact CBS and voice a complaint. If not that point, the affidavit does sort out some of the mystery. The setting is Montreal, early September 1974, and according to the document:

“Steve Young of CBS News... told me [Meis] he was in Canada pursuing a possible news story... on the exiled war resisters... Shortly after Young and I spoke, representatives of the Safe Return Amnesty Committee... contacted me. Steve Young subsequently told me that I should work with Safe Return instead of other political groups that might have sponsored my return. He said they know how to make an effective public presentation. A couple of days later, Michael Uhl and Ed Sowders... flew up to Montreal to talk. I believe Young placed the committee in contact with me.

“Steve Young, Uhl, Sowders and I discussed my plans in Mr. Young's hotel room for several hours. Michael Uhl told me that the committee would sponsor my return if I wished. He also told Steve Young that the committee would not consent to an “exclusive” of my story given... to CBS. I was also opposed to an exclusive... because I wanted my story to be reported as widely as possible. While Young was displeased by this, he could not have reasonably assumed that an exclusive was given.

“On or about September 27, after I arrived in New York City, Steve Young called me... and proceeded to harshly attack the amnesty committee. He protested that he had not been told that I was coming to the U.S. and that they had violated their commitment to him. He also stated that my case would now receive no national publicity.

“The Safe Return committee pledged to assume all my personal travel costs to and in the U.S.; to accompany me during the period of my surrender; to arrange for as much publicity for my case as possible; and to pay for my wife and children’s travel to my home in Illinois. In addition they promised to help with my local attorney’s fees in Illinois. They fulfilled every one of their commitments to my 100% satisfaction. In my opinion they are dedicated and sincere people. The federal indictment against me was eventually dismissed, on technical grounds on motion of the U.S. Attorney. I work as a writer and currently live in Montreal with my wife, Elaine, and two children.”

Given this last line about being a “writer,” and my personal contact with Meis, I don’t believe he would have permitted us to put words in his mouth. I have already shown that he was self-guided, and did not hesitate to change horses – joining with the ACLU Amnesty Project for the Congressional Hearings – when it was expeditious for him to do so. But, I have also shown that Meis was not ungrateful for what Safe Return did for him. There is no hint of what the specific context might have been at this late date, May 1976, for asking him to execute the affidavit. The fact Tod had involved Jim Reston in some fashion echoed back to Paris when we once believed Young had the clout to get the Herndon case on Walter Cronkite’s CBS Evening News. A story did run, but Young’s reporting, although he had developed the story, and to his bitter disappointment, was overshadowed by Peter Kalisher, head of the CBS Paris Bureau.

I know Tod and I had since formed the opinion that Young was a bungler, and couldn’t actually quite picture him as a correspondent for such an important national news outlet; in fact our impression was that he rarely brought anything to the air. Young was clearly pissed about something he alleged we’d done to him now two years after, but in some way still related to, the Meis case. Another mystery, however, is solved. Now I know that I had not only taken the lead

initially on the Meis case, but it was on that trip to Montreal where I entered a pricey boutique and, with uncharacteristic impulsiveness, purchased a full length mahogany colored leather coat. The reason I leave the original account of this event uncorrected as it appears in the Bill Meis chapter, is because it demonstrates how in a record as voluminous as Safe Return's, there can always be discoveries that can expand on, or even challenge, an event or interpretation, even where my earlier intention was to be accurate and objective.

Whatever it was, Young's grievance with us was likely related to the amnesty issue, and not the political subsidiaries, Portugal and the GI Union, we'd also been devoting attention to over the past year. Amnesty remained at the core of Safe Return's public identity. That we continued to perceive the issue in the context of our opposition to militarism is demonstrated in a mid-June letter to a man in Decatur, Illinois who had apparently complained about our politics and the duplicates in our mail solicitations. The writer had "raised some important questions," which Tod, in reply, said he would "like to answer. I can only assume that Tod was addressing actual questions, since I don't find a copy of the Decatur man's letter; but Tod's response positions how we saw ourselves in the radical political arena, and explains the very limited funding options available for the activities we had taken on.

Tod explained "first the nature of our work since 1969. Documenting and exposing war crimes in Indochina, support for American war resisters, and now (as amnesty work continues), work on the issue of unionization of the armed forces, makes it unlikely that major sources of funds – foundations, churches, and the like – will act to help us. In fact, despite many hours spent writing proposals, contacting officials, we've not received one cent in the past two years from any of them. I don't think that is because we are not capable of quality work – because we are – but because they'd rather find more compliant, less uncompromising "horses" to ride. A

couple of more candid foundation officers as much as told us this. So, we can either ask for \$5, \$10 & \$25 checks or we can go out of business. It's really that simple."

The fact that many people had sent us checks in those amounts, and were continuing to do so, was the implicit conclusion Tod left his correspondent to draw for himself. Tod went further, but along a more technical plane, to detail the essential elements of direct mail fund raising. I suspect he did this because it was an area of expertise he now mastered, and, moreover because he had a need to show that off for his own pleasure, regardless of whether his reader was persuaded or not. It's almost as if I can see him raising his head a moment from the typewriter keys, composing his thoughts, before launching into his second paragraph.

It begins on a forbearing, pedagogic note. "Now, when one decides to seek mail donations for an issue such as universal amnesty he finds that there are only a hundred lists or so which can bring back at least or close to costs. There are probably between 1.2 and 1.5 million names (many duplicates) if these lists are totaled. The only means to remove "dupes" is to match every list through a computer process known as "merge/purge." Of course, every list must be on a compatible computer file and only names and addresses that are exactly alike will be removed. This is a fairly expensive processing system. At least a quarter of the lists we use are not on computer at all – hence they are out. Finally at least six to eight weeks advance processing time is required for this [merge/purge] and we can't plan all lists that far ahead. I present the above in hopes it will give you an insight into some of the problems behind this whole situation; we don't believe there is any option. Thanks for your ear,"

A month later, responding to a letter from CCCO asking "for information as to our amnesty work in 1976-77," Tod again provides the source for capturing our thinking and the roll out of our activities. If the letter to the irritated contributor suggested a hint of condescension,

this missive strikes a note of ironic contempt. The query had come from Steve Gulick, an employee slightly higher on the group's pecking order, I believe, than our erstwhile correspondent there, John Judge. Gulick appears to be asking us to justify our work, in the context of the unresolved issue regarding an exchange of lists, a proposal CCCO had resisted. We generally respected CCCO's involvement with GIs, but had no desire to emulate it. But, as I have written elsewhere, each of our lists, not just theirs, was vulnerable to attracting support from the others. CCCO wished to hoard this resource, and we were willing to go head to head with them in the direct mail market on the strength of our own track record.

"As best we can predict," Tod explained to Mr. Gulick, "it appears that our main emphasis will continue to be on our public service advertising campaign for TV and radio. 120 stations" had received the spots "in the last two months," Tod wrote. "We had particular success... with southern states and more rural stations. In a word this campaign gets information to the 'un-convinced' and helps us avoid just talking to ourselves which the amnesty movement has always had to contend with. Our work with the candidates," Tod went on, "particularly the Democrats, has intensified... We've been in contact with a good percentage of elected delegates and have been helping with the minority plank movement for amnesty.

"We recently circulated a letter to the editor [which Tod enclosed] to over 800 hometown newspapers, with heavy emphasis on Black papers throughout the country," to emphasize the disproportionate number of minorities with bad discharges. Next Tod briefly summarized our efforts to get New York's Governor Hugh Carey to veto a new law prohibiting state employment for those with "dishonorable discharges (?)." The CCCO staff would have easily tracked the question mark to the ignorance of the bill's authors in compressing the other types of less-than-honorable discharges issued by the armed forces, and which we assumed were the legislators'

broader target, under the category “dishonorable discharge.” The law, my partner observed, would “set a dangerous precedent.” Tod then made clear an ill-concealed distain for his correspondent with the prosaic blandness of his parting comment, ensuring that Gulick get the true thrust of his letter. “We are eager to explain our work to anyone interested; if you have further questions, don’t hesitate to call. We’d like a September or October (mid-month) mail date if possible.” I’m fairly certain, the large mailing we were assembling, went out under the signature of Studs Terkel.

Tod had not mentioned a parallel endeavor we had little need to share, that we were meeting with the Advertising Council, a non-profit that “produced, distributed and promoted public service announcements,” seeking their stamp of approval on a new idea for a spot we’d been kicking around with Carl Borack in LA. This was a drawn out affair which had been initially encouraged by a Safe Return supporter, an Upper East Side Manhattanite named George Daly. George was an elderly gent with close contacts in city government and Democratic Party circles. He struck me as a familiar New York type, the political fixer, a kind of latter day more polished version of the old Tammany Hall ward heeler. George seemed to know everyone in New York’s mainstream political and professional circles, from City Hall to Wall Street to Madison Avenue. George compared Safe Return’s work favorably to whatever other examples of radical agitation he had been exposed to over the years of Vietnam War opposition, a war he too genuinely opposed. He and I became pretty friendly. I’d sometimes meet him for a drink in the evening, and he would always try to convince me that Safe Return should soften its message. He set up a couple of meetings for us with the Ad Council, an account of which appeared in *Advertising Age*, a trade paper serving the Mad Ave establishment.

While Tod was off on his African adventure in early August, I met with a reporter from Ad Age, and explained what we hoped to build on from our two preliminary contacts with the Ad Council execs. Mindful that a public service announcement could not speak to support legislative activity, I stressed that our objective was to design a spot to “equally represent opposing sides” of the amnesty issue. It thus appeared, as noted by the reporter, that “Mr. Uhl said Safe Return has asked the Young Americans for Freedom and the American Legion, both of which are opposed to amnesty, to furnish it with anti-amnesty arguments for inclusion in a brochure to coincide with the upcoming Presidential election.”ⁱⁱⁱ

It’s possible we were contemplating such an approach, but I find no evidence that we ever attempted to contact either the YAFers or the Legion. More likely we were concerned primarily with the legitimacy we might gain for our cause simply in being taken seriously by the semi-official organ of the advertising industry. At this late date, with the November elections quickly closing in, we may in fact have been willing to produce the proposed campaign if we could have gained the approval of the Ad Council. A spot like that might have made a real splash throughout broadcasting, and might even potentially influence the leading Democratic candidate, Jimmy Carter, move him beyond pardon toward amnesty. But, given all the other demands on our time, we could hardly devote the hours necessary to the lengthy courtship that, with very low odds, might convince the Ad Council to help us place a Trojan Horse on a national political stage. As for me personally, I was also likely trying to accommodate George Daly in the hope he might open direct routes to funding sources among those I imagined to be his legions of affluent liberal New York cronies; he never did. George saw that we had a certain flair and talent for campaigns and promotion that might eventually lead us to the mainstream when we grew up; we never did.

What would be our very last case in defense of a Vietnam era war resister dropped out of the sky – almost literally - on the 15th of August, when Sam Israel, en route from a European vacation to Vancouver, Canada – where he'd been making his home since 1969 – landed in transit at JFK airport in New York, and was promptly arrested. Naively, Sam, along with his wife Brenda, thought they could meet with Sam's parents – our long term FORA supporters, Ben and Kay Israel – in the transit lounge before going on to Vancouver. Unfortunately, they were required to pass through customs first, and the outstanding FBI warrant for Sam was promptly flagged by the agent. After having been arraigned in Federal Court, Sam was released in his own recognizance, and returned to Atlantic City with Ben and Kay, while Brenda, about to begin a new term as a teacher, traveled back to their Canadian home alone. This was, by now, a familiar story.

Presidential front runner Jimmy Carter's promise to issue a pardon if elected appeared to lift the political taboo from acknowledging at least the draft evader category of Vietnam resistance, and signal that, if and when Carter assumed the position of Chief Magistrate, the government would have no further interest in prosecutions for this offense – an offense, moreover, that could no longer be committed. In the interim there remained a window for retribution among vengeful elements in law enforcement to target men like Bill Meis, who defied Ford's Clemency, or Sam Israel, who'd given up on the U.S. and was now a Canadian citizen, and who, under very different circumstances than Meis, fell into their hands.

Our inbox regularly contained letters from exiled resisters and their relatives – deserters for the most part – who sought our opinion on how closely the borders were being watched. Close enough, as in Sam's case at least, which may have been further complicated by the fact

that his mom, Kay, had been so outspoken on his behalf that she'd incurred the wrath of the local federal agents in her district, who she had accused of harassing her family with their blatant stake-outs around the Israel home.

Push-back on amnesty retained an institutional base as well within the highly conservative and pro-military veterans' service organizations, like the American Legion. On the campaign trail that summer, Jimmy Carter made an obligatory appearance at the Legion's 1976 national convention, hosted that year in Seattle. The reporter covering the event for the local daily observed how, despite the shouts of "no, no, no damn way," when Carter told the "convention he would grant a blanket pardon to draft resisters," one attendee acknowledged that, the pardon notwithstanding, "there were 19 points of the American Legion platform on which he and Carter agree."^{iv}

Carter had clearly calculated that a pardon for middle class draft resisters would be popular with liberal Democrats whose votes he depended on, and would be swallowed by more conservative and working class Democrats in light of his attacks on welfare and his pro-Pentagon policies.^v The image of Jimmy Carter as the critic of U.S. foreign policy and humble founder/volunteer of Habitat for Humanity that now attaches to the ageless former president is in stark contrast to the Southern conservative of 1976, who was a confirmed Cold War militarist, and harbinger of the neo-liberal agenda that remains the paradigm of U.S. political and economic life in the early decades of the 21st Century.^{vi}

With Sam's unannounced appearance, there was little I could do until Tod's return which would then leave less than a month before the AFGE convention in Las Vegas, not to forget whatever other obligations also taxed us. But once Sam's legal representation was established with Tod's retainer at the end of August, we moved quickly to create a defense campaign on his

behalf. Kay and Ben Israel had been there for us on a number of occasions, and there was no way we would not be there for them in this unanticipated emergency.

Naturally, there was nothing like a live case to energize our imaginations, and bring out the best in what were by now our tried and true capabilities. Dispatching an immediate press release, we stated the facts of the case and called on U.N. Ambassador Moynihan to “appear publicly with Sam and re-iterate his support for the plank in the Democratic Party platform... as articulated by Governor Carter to give a full and unconditional pardon to men like Sam.” This was followed by an open “memo” to Moynihan’s staff, urging that, “if an appearance is impossible, to issue a public statement of support.” The Moynihan gambit was purely an attention-getter; we were kicking up sand in a dozen ways, not sure where the grains would settle.

Ben wrote an Op Ed submission that was heartfelt and articulate. If it ran anywhere I cannot say. But we used much of it to fashion a six panel brochure on card stock with all the headings highlighted in red ink, including the word RESISTER, written free hand in graffiti-style over the words Draft Dodger, which are crossed out with a red X. In the simplicity of its design and clarity of content it was one of the best brochures we’d ever produced. It was a worthy vehicle for Sam’s eloquent statement. Of particular poignancy was his observation that, “I am to be punished for refusing to fight in a war that not a single public official dares to defend today.” As for Carter’s position on a “blanket pardon,” Sam declared, “I must on principle reject his offer.”

Sam was not looking to turn that stance into a public fight. Having by now made his new life in Canada, he described himself as a “reluctant defendant.” But Carter’s “refusal to regard military resisters as equals to draft refusers is repugnant to me,” he wrote. “To deny relief to

soldiers who only learned the truth about Vietnam after they were in uniform is nothing less than racial and economic discrimination.” Indeed this was Safe Return’s longstanding formulation of the issue. But there was no arm twisting to get Sam to endorse this position. It was his position as well, and he was determined to stick by it. We all hoped, of course, that he would not be tested.

To underwrite the campaign’s costs, we pumped up our own base with a new outreach tool we dubbed an Amnesty-Gram, urging that supporters not only contribute, but write and demand that the Attorney General Edward Levi drop all charges, warning that unless our pressure prevailed, Sam faced a trial date immediately after the November elections. The press conference we set up, initially with Bella Abzug, but for which Paul O’Dwyer – a former New York City Council President and unsuccessful candidate for the U.S. Senate – filled in owing to a conflict in Bella’s schedule, generated one very valuable article in *The New York Times*, by George Vecsey.^{vii} Vecsey, who would later become the *Times*’ lead sport’s columnist for three decades, was sympathetic to the antiwar movement, and had already written a couple of pieces on Safe Return’s past activities.

Vecsey avoids any political spin, and gives a straight forward account of Sam’s decision to resist, of his exile life in Canada, and his arrest at JFK. But in merely reporting the case, the *Times* implied the absurdity of Sam’s dilemma at this late date, and no doubt federal prosecutors as well as Jimmy Carter’s operatives, took note. The only other print story I find on this case appeared in the *Daily World*, which did not shy from politicizing the moment, quoting that Sam’s arrest was “tragic and offensive to public sentiment... [and] particularly ironic... at the same moment that Jimmy Carter announces his intention to confer a pardon upon those who, like

Sam, refused induction.” As noted appreciatively above, an article in the Communist Party daily brought other benefits in the way of financial support from their readers.^{viii}

With Sam’s case in a holding pattern until after the election, Tod and I went on to Las Vegas for the AFGE convention, then on to San Francisco where the one task related to amnesty was to take a meeting with the Public Media Center, an advocacy agency performing strategic marketing on behalf of groups engaged in social justice work. I believe they had gotten wind of our ad campaign and broadcast spots, and sought us out offering their assistance. Their initial copy was overly focused on exiles and draft resisters. In response, I wrote them we need to “shift people’s attention... toward the real center of gravity of resistance, here at home... concentrating on resistance in the military, desertion, with its almost inevitable less-than-honorable discharge disability and stigma. Carter’s proposal would “pardon” approximately 4,400 draft resisters – men like Sam Israel, and forget about literally hundreds of thousands” of vets with bad discharges, “most of whom never left the country.”

I suggested “one crucial concept to include in this campaign is that most war resisters...heeded the call and found out through personal experience... about the true nature of the war. Another [concept] is the class (working) and racial composition of military resisters. Resistance in this sense can be seen as an extension of class and race exploitation. I realize we’re putting an incredible burden on you, and hope you will still want to take the job on. We’re about dried up on ideas on how to raise these aspects of the issue in a low-keyed and imaginative way. We’d like to get something out before Carter’s inauguration (again our assumption) to pressure him to ‘go all the way... Finally we probably can’t say, “Write the President and demand Amnesty. It would have to be more like, Write the President and tell him what you think.”

There's a good deal of truth in my admission that we were drained of promotional ideas around our amnesty program. The revised copy we received from the Public Media Center reasonably synthesized our position on military resisters, but offered no clear path to move it forward in the context of a dying issue. It was too late in the day to have any impact on the outcome in what was one small corner of the class and anti-racist struggle. Still I'm amazed in looking back that we were able to rise to the occasion – at least for Ben's sake - and wrap up our work on amnesty with a flourish.

All of October, it seems, was devoted to our other on-going concerns, as my thank you note to Steve Rees on the 6th establishes. I take up three subjects in the letter, none of them related to Sam Israel. On returning to New York, I told Steve, Tod and I scrambled to get an article outline on the AFGE convention out to several magazines, and we “will begin to write within the next few days. There were several meetings with members of New York-New Jersey area AFGE locals on our agenda, one of which “in defiance” of the union brass, “favors signing up service people” immediately. I characterized this meeting as “one of the most important we've had in years.” Shifting to events in Portugal – our final article had just come out in the October *Progressive* – I gave Steve an update on the chances of the Popular Unity Movement in the country's upcoming local elections, noting with hopeful, but no doubt exaggerated enthusiasm, that “the revolutionary left is still much in presence in Portugal.”

One administrative chore that repeated not infrequently bears mentioning. We would be contacted by a state watchdog agencies which had received objections to our mailings and questioned our tax exempt status, we assumed all political in origin. Tod as our *General Counsel* would typically respond in a thoroughly lawyerly manner to these harassing inquiries demanding that we justify our existence. Although it was never clear if any of these bureaucratic queries

contained an actionable threat. The key was simply to answer them, and, in essence – given the power of the written word - any plausible answer would do.

At one point in October we were contacted by an entity on Park Avenue in New York – non-governmental in this case – styling itself the National Information Bureau, an agency for rating charitable and tax exempt organizations. Based on the annual report we had filed with the State of New York, and on behalf of a third party who I suppose had made a complaint – a competitor? - the Bureau wanted information on how much time, and on what percentage of our budget, we devoted to fund raising, and also an explanation of our telephone solicitations. In my capacity as ATOM Inc.'s president I responded to the first question that it was 10-15% of staff time, and, to the second, that we only called persons who had previously donated. To their question about how ATOM justified expenses related to our involvement with Portugal, I wrote that the foundation had “sponsored expenses for M. Uhl and T. Ensign to travel to Portugal to conduct basic research on the conditions within the Portuguese armed forces, particularly in the lower ranks.” This exercise reminds me of how my commander in Vietnam was willing to accept any account of the activities of my intelligence team as long as he had it in a typed report.

On November 7th, Jimmy Carter managed to pull off a close but convincing win over Gerald Ford, and we quickly shifted back to amnesty with a plan to apply such pressure as we could on the president-elect during the lame duck period to widen the scope of his projected pardon before Inauguration Day in late January. We again turned to our friend Jack Larson to design a print ad that captured the moment in which the amnesty issue found itself. Urgency probably dictated that, for once, Jack's graphic was not hand-drawn and lettered, but consisted of a large photograph showing a man's suited-hand holding a knife and beginning to cut through a

large loaf of bread. Above the photo in bold type were the letters, **President Carter: Is Half a Loaf the Way to Begin?** This was followed by copy objecting that Carter's promised pardon ignored military resisters, citing the numbers of the less-than-honorably discharged, and urging that concerned parties should write the President-elect and "give him your views." We mailed a camera-ready lay-out of the ad to a list of 780 American newspaper and magazine publishers and editors we'd acquired from our list broker.

We received some respectable placements gratis for this public service ad as I have already mentioned. But what I now grasp more clearly is that we had finally achieved a level of simplicity in our message beyond prior efforts which could never shed their polemical voices, and we did so without compromising our politics. It was the only gambit left, however futile. Our greatest failing after five years of total immersion in this issue was that we had not broken out of our cigar box enterprise sufficiently to mobilize the necessary support to give this 11th hour gesture the distribution and visibility it deserved. If we had, we might have flooded Carter's mailbox in Atlanta. We always had the ability to satisfy ourselves, but we were anything but easy to play with. On the other hand, had we mastered the arts of dissembling and diplomacy, we would not likely have tapped and channeled the inner turmoil that drove us to accomplish as much as we did.

I have brought Jack Larson's name into this memoir on numerous occasions, and he deserves at least an abbreviated profile. Jack grew up in Flint, Michigan the only child of two Norwegian Americans, his father a coarse man, he would say, a butcher who did not find his son manly enough. Jack and Tod had been frat brothers at Michigan State, and they found each other again after Tod finished law school at Wayne State, and moved to the East Village where Jack also had an apartment, and which he would inhabit until his death. He had a railroad flat on the

ground floor of a building on E. 9th Street, the very block I also lived on for a spell; it was beautifully decorated, including several murals he'd executed on the wall. One entered the apartment at its midpoint, and headed toward the back of the building past a small studio space with a drafting table, into sitting room with very tasteful and comfortable furnishings. His physical appearance recalled Mark Twain. Jack had a bushy but well-trimmed mustache, and a long thick main of hair, prematurely greying. He was an impeccable dresser, a style all his own in casual slacks and shirts that no one else ever seemed to find. Jack always lived alone. It was understood by his friends that Jack was gay, although he never came out publicly, never was seen (by me at least) in the company of a partner or paramour, and Jack eventually died of AIDS years after I had moved from the city. He was charming company, entertaining in a sardonic kind of way, and always had the best dope, both of which attributes routinely brought me to his apartment during my years in the city. Jack remained close to Tod till the end, and even closer to Tod's girlfriend Pam Booth. Some of my happiest memories of the seventies are of the delightful banter among the four of us sitting around a table at Phebe's on the Bowery, or at the bar in the Grassroots Tavern on St. Mark's Place. We lived and breathed the air of New York denizens. None of promotional printed matter for Safe Return or Citizen Soldier would have looked at good if Jack had not found a way to execute them with his unique aesthetic vision.

Two days after Carter's election Tod was addressing a disturbing aspect of Sam's case which probably had its roots in Kay Israel's visible and vocal public advocacy for amnesty, well within her protected right, but which nonetheless had probably caused Sam to become a subject of particular interest to the FBI. In late October, just days before the national vote, President Ford had been scheduled to address a campaign rally in Atlantic City. Kay Israel contacted the

local GOP office requesting tickets for the event. She was probably going to find some way to communicate to Ford what she thought about his Clemency Program. Kay was political.

Whatever her intended tactics on this occasion, which would have been tough in the manner of a good reporter, but hardly threatening, Kay's request for a ticket brought forth instead multiple visits from Secret Service agents to the Israel home. The agents claimed their presence was prompted by abusive phone calls Kay had made aimed at the president, even though the phone number from which the calls had been made was not that of the Israel's, and the caller had been a man of a different name. Nonetheless Kay was warned to not attend the rally, and moreover to stay off the Atlantic City boardwalk where Ford was to also make an appearance. After hearing her account of these intrusions, Tod – again as Safe Returns' 'Counsel' - addressed a letter of complaint to the Director of the Secret Service "respectfully requesting a detailed explanation for the agents' behavior in all aspects of this affair." Tod's principal concern, beyond what was an offensive abuse of office on the part of the agents, was to prevent "that any bias or unfairness intrude upon the disposition of a federal prosecution," which is to say, of Kay's son Sam.

Tod was genuinely outraged, in the manner of an honest tribune of the masses. But how his letter played in the head office of the Secret Service is any one's guess. There was a reply defending the agents' actions as within the protocols to provide protection for the Chief Executive. But a flap is a flap, and those in high positions seldom wish to risk that a public complaint will become more widely known. And no commander especially in a militarized institution like the Secret Service tolerates a blunder from below that might bring discredit upon him; someone down the ladder very likely got a memo thanks to Tod's letter, and it probably didn't help his career.

Late November saw us attempting to lobby Carter more intensely, at first indirectly through his political allies like the lawyer, William Van den Heuval, who'd run his New York campaign, and Victor Gotbaum, the powerful leader of the city's municipal union, the largest in the nation, who had also played an active role in the campaign. There was also talk of a meeting with Percy Sutton, the Manhattan Borough President, which George Daly was supposed to arrange, but we didn't pursue, likely because we would have seen it as purely ceremonial. On November 20th we wired a Western Union mail-gram to Jimmy Carter directly, requesting that he meet in Georgia with a Safe Return delegation representing various categories of war resisters.

Hearing nothing, we gathered a small delegation to include, along with Tod and myself, Ed Sowders, and Sam's parents Kay and Ben, and flew to Carter's hometown, Plains, Georgia, where we formed a picket line outside the Baptist Church. It must have been on December 12th a Sunday, since Jimmy and his wife Roseland were inside at worship while we stood fairly bundled up behind large placards with neat lettering urging Carter to not forget military resisters after he took office. There must have been some media present. Steve Rees would comment in a letter, "Sounds like you've been busy running around the peanut circuit," presumably learning about our protest from something he'd seen in the media.

What I remember is that we were largely ignored, including by Carter, who left the church in a car with darkened windows that drove right past us. I have a very clear picture of being in that semi-rural town, to include a visit to the new president's brother Billy's gas station and convenience store, where someone, perhaps even Billy himself, told us of an entrepreneurial venture he hoped would benefit from his brother's increased visibility, to bring out a brew called Billy Beer. It actually came out. The other image that endures, captured in a photo of the picket line, is of me decked out in my full length leather coat, a fine woven scarf that Kathryn Grody

had given me, wrapped neatly around my neck. This was definitely a costume change, but I'm not sure what exactly I was trying to project.

Plains was a two-day gig, and Sam had not been with us because he was by then, I'm sure, safely returned to Canada, already with growing odds he'd never be prosecuted, and eventually to get his pardon without compromising his ideals. I'm sure we scrambled soon after this minor caper to get back to New York. I was in midst of three major writing tasks, both alone and with Tod, attempting a final piece on Portugal about the decline of the Popular Power Movement, which after three drafts was still rejected by John Judis at *In These Times*. After which we desisted. There was little point to continue on with events in Portugal, which, from the perspective of the activist international Left was now the provenance of scholars and experts. It was the GI Union that loomed large in our horizon, that and a few more set tasks on amnesty to show we were more than willing to go down swinging.

I quickly drafted a letter directed to our house list, a final call to arms on amnesty, or at least to arm us with their donations. "Your dollars will be put to immediate use," I promised them. And that was true. To budget for future fixed expenses, we had placed some funds in timed certificates of deposit, otherwise we spent every penny as soon as it came in; cash flow alone determined which ideas from our endlessly productive bag of tricks would be given form, and which would not. In the end game of this struggle, as within this donor appeal, we increasingly emphasized the plight of vets with bad paper as the real losers in Carter's pardon proposal.

Carter must have begun to feel an exposed flank on this issue. He made a clumsy move to diminish military resisters in the public eye, contrasting them with "the poor boys in Georgia who didn't know about such things [as the option of going in to exile or seeking legal forms of

exemption], and went dutifully to Vietnam.” Now these men, we countered, those very same “poor boys” who served, had received over 780,000 bad discharges” because they rebelled over what they’d discovered about Vietnam, or had otherwise run afoul of outright racism, or the arbitrariness of military justice where command authority always overrides ‘due process.’

Commentators in the press were increasingly, if belatedly, taking up the ‘bad paper’ dimension as a bonafide component in the demand for amnesty. Not surprisingly, some of the most insistent voices found expression in the African American press, to include Vernon Jordan, whose syndicated column, *To Be Equal*, circulated widely. Citing his experience as a member of Ford’s Clemency Board, he had “found that many of the draft evaders and resisters and deserters were not pampered middle-class kids seeking to evade responsibility... but were made up of a large number of men whose personal problems and experiences were such that they should not have served at all... The Clemency Board did not do the job of burying Vietnam’s divisions. Nor did it begin to tackle the hidden problem - that more than 350,000 veterans... got less than honorable discharges.” Noting the “Army had begun outreach programs to grant hearings reviewing such charges,” Jordan concluded that “piecemeal efforts would leave many untouched. Amnesty is essential... It should be as broad and sweeping as possible.”

An editorial in the *Sun Reporter*, a black daily in San Francisco, left less room for ambiguity. Not only should Carter extend his pardon to deserters, the editors argued, but to stop there “perpetuates one of the most discriminatory practices of the armed forces: the issuance of several grades of discharge that are less-than-honorable. The thousands of ex-soldiers who are carrying such stigma, most of them non-white... cannot get jobs,” and “even though their ‘offenses’... wouldn’t be contrary to law in civilian life,” they were being denied the veterans’

benefits to which their service entitled them. “The practice of giving out such discharges should be abandoned and the stigma removed from those who have received them.”^{ix}

Columnist Mary McGrory, long a friend to antiwar veterans, also weighed in that Carter should honor the demand from “the aristocracy of the Amnesty Movement” – referring I suppose to the big institutional players like the churches and the ACLU - and declare a universal amnesty.^x But the most unexpected support for this position rising from the pundit-sphere appeared in a lengthy editorial in the *New Republic*. It was tediously predictable that the center-left magazine would pontificate about how, “unfortunately” amnesty had been “defined almost entirely as a political issue.” The new president was urged to “set aside the most strident political claims and get to the human dimension.” The antiwar forces in the amnesty movement were, of course, the targets of this charge of stridency, whereas the denial of the issue’s political dimension on the part of *The New Republic*’s editor, Martin Peretz, was nothing less than the demagoguery that liberals typically aimed at anyone to their left.

Beyond that, the editorial, spread over two dense pages, is a superb journalistic summary of historical arguments around past amnesties, and a thorough taxonomy of the contemporary resister constituencies, ending on a note that advises Carter “to close the book on an undistinguished decade and offer a fresh start.” Under the heading, “Amnesty Options,” the editorial nonetheless offers all the arguments on why only one option, a blanket amnesty, will actually close the book on the Vietnam Era. To counter opposing views, there is at least one very hard headed expression of leftwing principle. as expressed in the following sentence. “There is the fear that leniency toward Vietnam offenders might undermine America’s failure to mobilize and maintain a strong military force. It’s as if a new war is being planned for

tomorrow.” Although the language applied to resistance is again equivocal, the point is anything but. The real fear is not “leniency,” but unchecked American militarism.

When summarizing in turn all the categories of resistance, the editorial is particularly emphatic about how “less-than-honorable discharges were used systematically as an unappealable form of punishment for dissent covering a range of sins such as publishing antiwar literature [and] refusing to be assigned to Vietnam... covering an enormous number of men, about 790,000 by some estimates.” This was precisely the number that Safe Return and the other activists in the amnesty movement had by this time cemented into the national discourse by elevating soldiers with bad paper to, if not exactly to the status of resisters, at least as victims of military injustice. For the pragmatic worthies at *The New Republic*, it made no sense that “a new President pledged to diminish government inefficiency will start by creating the bureaucratic sprawl necessary for a judicious review of more than three-quarters of a million potential appeals.” That was certainly one way of arguing against a case-by-case solution to the problem.^{xi}

On January 21, 1977, the day after Jimmy Carter took his oath of office, the pardon was issued. I have one tangential reference to this moment in a letter Tod had written to Steve Rees a couple of days later. Tod had wanted to respond to a letter from Steve “right away... [but] with Carter’s stingy pardon, the normally somnolent press went into a 12 hour frenzy. We had two TV crews in the office at the same time fighting for copy – haven’t laid eyes on that since the Meis case (Sept. ’74).”^{xii} The burden of Tod’s letter was to critique the sample issue of *Enlisted Times* which had been in our possession for several days. One article headed “Vietnam Scrapbook,” Tod found especially objectionable, “because the conduct of the war is not credible,” he wrote. He thought the “testimony” was too sensational, in the manner of “that

Vietnam War classic, *Conversations with Americans*, by M. Lane. I found that no one (with a few exceptions) had the range of experiences this fellow claims to have had.” This tendency of some in the antiwar movement to exaggerate American atrocities, which were bad enough when honestly conveyed, was a bugaboo for us that went back to our war crimes organizing days. Tod also cautioned Steve that in addressing contemporary GIs, his “instinct was to get away from the images and forms of the Vietnam Era. If I were editor, I think I’d handle Vietnam very gingerly until I really knew how it’s perceived and experienced (if at all) by today’s soldiers and sailors.”

Returning to amnesty for one final comment at the end of this letter, Tod shared that “the Carter action had stimulated some interest in an old project, the possible filming of “*The Amnesty of John David Herndon*.” Actor Bob Balaban had acquired the film rights to Jim Reston’s book. And, either because we had a contractual agreement with Jim for a share in the book’s royalties, or because we might provide useful consultation to the scripting and filming of the project, Balaban executed a separate contact with Tod and I, which was the standard boiler plate of its type, promising us round trip transportation to wherever the film was to be shot, if our presence was requested, reimbursement for other film-related expenses approved by him in writing, and a half percentage point of the net profits – which is to say, nothing. Since we did not look on the undertaking as a direct source of revenue, we had taken no issue with the stingy terms of the contract; it was the prospect of an eventual feature film that was the real asset for whatever future purposes we could put it to. I suspect Balaban probably got a few quick turn downs and that was the end of that.

The Carter pardon had now delivered the anticlimax to a five year long slog to win a proper amnesty for all categories of Vietnam Era war resisters, a hard-fought campaign which had elevated the visibility - and in the eyes of many Americans – the legitimacy of deserters as

agents of resistance in the military, and highlighted the injustices of the military's punitive discharge system. Protests around Carter's action came from many quarters.

At Safe Return we prepared and distributed a flyer under the heading, I Beg Your Pardon, Mr. Carter!? I suppose this was our parting shot, a detailed set of arguments on why a pardon, even in its own terms, was the equivalent of no solution at all. We endorsed a position put forward by CCCO that most resisters could already do better than a pardon. CCCO had found that more than 90% of the unconvicted draft resisters were in a position to get their records cleared without a trial. Even going to trial would be preferable to accepting a pardon, since those who won their cases, as was the likely outcome at this stage, would also have their records cleared, unlike those who Carter pardoned. In point of fact a pardon implied guilt and stigma. Richard Nixon's acceptance of a pardon, we wrote mockingly, had certainly not improved that villain's public reputation. In the last paragraph of this farewell polemic we chose to enumerate one last time, like an engraving on a monument, the final tally of "those many other people besides the known draft resisters who need a real amnesty."

700,000 or more veterans with less-than-honorable discharges.^{xiii}

500,000 or more men who had not registered for the draft.

Thousands of Vietnam era AWOLs still in exile.

Tens of thousands of civilians who were convicted of acts of war protest.

An issue like amnesty, which occupied a public space in the body politic during those five plus years, isn't just turned off with a twist of a presidential spigot. It lingered in corners of the movement, especially among groups like CCCO and other activists who would play a role in helping individuals negotiate the programs that might benefit them personally, marginally or

otherwise. Succumbing to whatever pressures touched him, Carter had enhanced his “stingy pardon” by creating a Special Discharge Upgrade Program. According to one movement straggler, Gold Star Parents for Amnesty, the program did “promise real relief to approximately 432,000 individuals... [but] contained many inequities and only half of the veterans with less-than-honorable discharges are eligible.” It was, moreover, “poorly advertised, and [by April] only 40,000 veterans have applied.” Congress then introduced a bill that would “give the military the power to determine on an individual basis which veterans participating in the program would receive benefits.” Thus the incentive for taking the trouble to seek an upgraded discharge was totally voided; whatever “paper” these vets got would still distinguish them from vets whose discharges were unambiguously honorable.

The discharge upgrade game was CCCO’s bread and butter, and they jumped on it with characteristic thoroughness and attention to the fine print of military Diktat and legalese. Their lengthy memos devoted to the upgrade process read like the prosaic pamphlets in which all self-assembly instructions are cast. Except, in CCCO’s case the prose was fluent, and the instructions clear. Behind such “memos” were the committed hearts of the counselors, who disdained the big-picture folks like Tod and I, and took refuge in the minutiae where at least one soul at a time might be solaced, if seldom entirely saved.

CCCO attacked where the Carter machinery was weakest. Like the Gold Star activists, the CCCO memo opened on the qualified hope that, while “the program offers significant relief,” it most egregiously excluded those persons sentenced with a Bad Conduct Discharge. “This is a senseless injustice,” as the memo explains with a genuine stroke of originality, “because the only difference in their cases was a commander’s decision to court-martial instead of administratively discharge them.” Bingo. I don’t recall, nor have I seen evidence, that this formulation was ever

raised prior to Carter's phony upgrade scheme, which was not only an irrelevant waste of effort for the overwhelming majority of those applying, but a ruthless snap of an ideological whip to further chastise those who had dared to challenge military authority.

The memo then goes to report the criteria for those still in deserter status to qualify for this latest iteration of the discharge stigma, now termed the DUOTHC – Discharge Under Less-Than-Honorable Conditions. It would be administrative, essentially an Undesirable in a new wrapper, and spare the deserter a court martial, assuming he didn't take French leave while in a combat zone, or on R&R (like our old friend from Paris exile days, Jose Claudio, who'd booked it in Japan), and that he had no other charges pending against him. Although certainly the avoidance of jail time for those who satisfied the criteria cannot be gainsaid, to suggest this program was a potential path for more meaningful relief simply offered false hopes. Without access to VA benefits for college or training, bad paper vets would remain at the back of the line.^{xiv}

If the demise of the amnesty movement fell far short of a just resolution, and, in historical terms can be described as a tragic failure, then one reverberation a month after Carter's intervention can only be seen as farce. In late February a feature film with the actor Sammy Davis, Jr. cast as an exiled American deserter was about to begin principal photography in Sweden. As reported in the film industry trade daily, *Variety*, "Davis will play a Vietnam pacifist deserter who gets involved in violent doings when seeking refuge in Sweden. Film's climax is an attack on the American Embassy in Stockholm."^{xv}

A week later, another article in *Variety* reported that, "if Sammy Davis, Jr. goes ahead with his plans to make a film in Sweden, in which he plays an American army deserter... he can expect no help and a lot of hindrance from the American Deserters Committee and the united

Swedish antiwar groups.” The ADC promised picket lines if the film, “tentatively titled *An Eye for an Eye*,” ever made it to the theaters, and called upon the Swedish Film Institute “to withhold financial support.” ADC spokesperson, Mike Powers (with whom we and the *UP From Exile* crew had once clashed politically) said that “Swedish money should not be used to promote... a film...” in which an American deserter is duped by Swedish leftists to conduct a terror attack on the U.S. Embassy. “It is an obscene exploitation and defamation of war resisters and the Swedish antiwar movement,” Powers told a reporter, because “there has never been a single violent incident in the entire history of the Swedish antiwar movement.”^{xvi}

We were in total solidarity with those deserters remaining in Sweden, including Mike Powers. In what was a grand, if largely symbolic, gesture, we announced in early March a national campaign to protest the film. “The movie’s presentation of Vietnam resisters as violent nihilists tends to reinforce the Pentagon’s campaign to portray all military resisters as misfits,” we fumed. And then we found a way to lay some of the blame on Jimmy Carter who “added to this confusion by treating draft resisters differently from deserters,” and for leaving the latter’s future in the hands of the Pentagon.” We sent letters to Sammy Davis and his producers demanding “an immediate meeting to detail the amnesty movement’s objections to the film.” Just more fireworks and drama. Covering our civil liberties flank, we disclaimed any intent at censorship, piously proclaiming “our right to condemn a degrading and defamatory movie.” For the coup de grace we threatened to “organize theater boycotts across the country if distribution of such a film is attempted.” Apparently it wasn’t. The film is not listed in Sammy Davis’s filmography. I think a lot of noise was kicked up around this project from many precincts of liberal and radical opinion, including ours, and I suspect among many antiwar Hollywood

professionals. A boycott would very likely have developed. Farcical as this whole episode was, I guess we can say we won that one.

Somewhere in those remaining activist precincts elements of NCUUA were also still at their plows. It was not until summer when I find a concrete reference. Linda Alband had written in early August about how badly she trashed Dee Knight to the GI organizer at Ft. Dix. In that same letter she also announced that “some big NCUUA event is brewing,” or so Gerry Condon had told her on the phone. There was a plan to bring another deserter back publicly, a non-event, if not a disaster, given that no conditions suggested that amnesty, least of all behind the antiimperialist shields of the sectarian left, could be revived. Condon was going back east to work on the project for six weeks, Linda wrote. “Poor Gerry, always on the move. He never seems to get anything done... I think he’s pretty burnt out.”

A more immediate presence of NCCUA was felt around the time of Linda’s letter. Tod had reconnected with Chuck Conine, a Vietnam veterans he’d befriended in 1970 around our war crimes work. Chuck had written first. And Tod, responding, briefly, but critically, revisited our split with VVAW, with which Chuck remained linked in some fashion, the VVAW home office being the source of rumors hostile to Safe Return shared by Chuck in his letter. As Tod saw it, “VVAW had succumbed rather quickly to the virus of ultra-leftism – thus destroying the possibility it could have been a significant political force. There could have been a mass organization of Vietnam veterans around their present needs as working class men tossed back into society.”

Tod went on that “our problem with AMEX and NCUUA (much later) grew out of some of the same difficulties. The amnesty movement was a direct outgrowth of the antiwar movement. As such it suffered from some of the same problems: elitism, opportunism, and

undemocratic practices.” Here Tod gives a thumbnail account of our experiences and grievances with the coalition, a subject at the heart of this memoir, concluding on a note I could not have phrased better myself. “I am proud of the work we at Safe Return did on the issue; we played a real part in forcing the liberals and pacifists to embrace military resisters (always our focus) as equal to draft resisters.” We were now moving on with Citizen Soldier, Tod told his friend.

Tod’s opinion on the mass organization VVAW might have become was really this new focus around Citizen Soldier talking – the union talking and blending a lingering preoccupation with the service and social issues confronting returning veterans. In earlier days we would have been more inclined to imagine that VVAW would evolve into a democratic mass organization like Veterans For Peace, which is resolutely antiwar, yet home to all currents within peace and leftist politics. But VFP would not be created for another ten years, and for many old movement hands who’d cut their political teeth as antiwar Vietnam veterans, the idea of banding with veterans who hadn’t been to Nam was not an easy sell for many years^{xvii}. As for Tod’s swipe at the practices of the sectarian antiwar movement, that brush tarred us all.

By 1977, of course, the antiwar movement had been stripped of its mass base. But the emancipatory spirit and vision of social and economic transformation emblematic of the struggles of the previous decade lived on, not least among the hard core activists like us for whom the space of permanent radical opposition had become a virtual career choice. Could we still tap the spirit of the times, however, for work that would also continue to support us? Not around amnesty certainly. To test new waters, we solicited our house list introducing Citizen Soldier “as a way of continuing our antimilitarist work in the years ahead. We’ve concluded we must begin to involve ourselves in the issues and grievances that affect the lives of active-duty GIs.” Citing the Ben Ellerd case, we promised to continue the legal defense work of defending

representative GIs begun by Safe Return.” And our efforts to help build a democratic GI union, we predicted, would “become one of the most significant struggles for human right over the next decade.” Clearly, we’d over shot the mark on that prediction, as would be established soon enough when the AFGE’s ambitions to build a military union were crushed by the government’s repressive action.

The gig in Plains, Georgia is my last clear memory of being in close contact with Eddie Sowders. Right after we returned to New York, Tod had gotten out a letter to Eddie’s mom, Laura in Detroit. It seems to have been written to reassure her in some way about Eddie’s stability. He wrote that he and Eddie had now “been able to put our relationship on a different and better ground.” I interpret that to mean that Tod was being, and was being perceived by Eddie as, less intimidating and more trusting. And I guess that was related to an elevation in Eddie’s self-esteem. In our yearly report, Eddie was now listed as a consultant, and he was being employed on a project basis, like the trip to Georgia. He could play a positive role, and we wouldn’t have to depend on him for the day to day grind. In deciding to commit more seriously to his formal education, Eddie soon moved from the city and enrolled at Rutgers’s University in New Jersey. It was the best solution for all, his emancipation from Tod’s and my relentless expectations. We lost touch with him, which I genuinely regret. I can account for Eddie’s continued presence at Rutgers engaged in some academic capacity as late as 1991, where he was interviewed by an academic writing about GI dissent during Vietnam. Years later I was briefly in email communication with an old girlfriend of his who wrote hoping I’d know Eddie’s whereabouts. She and I both searched every potential lead on the Internet, attempting to find a Sowders’ sibling or close relative, and failed to turn up anything but an obituary, an ambiguous match with someone of the same name. It was inconclusive, but the old girlfriend and I came to

the same conclusion, that the Eddie Sowders we knew would have a footprint somewhere, and that he was very likely no longer with us.

The transition period between *Safe Return* and *Citizen Soldier* was a difficult one for me personally, a conclusion I am forced to draw from sifting the jottings in a few small notebooks. I have already acknowledged that, while my head was in the work on the GI Union, my heart was less so. If I wasn't a complete movement burn out myself by then I was headed in that direction. On the surface I kept up appearances; I've always "presented well," a number of shrinks have observed. This was just another way of measuring how little by then I had plotted the impact of my deepest inner storms, currents of which had managed to seep out in the morbid, often self-lacerating, scribbles buried in my notebooks that I passed off as verse.

A pair of these poems actually made it into print. Jan Barry and W.D. (Bill) Ehrhart wrote earlier in 1976 that they'd accepted them for publication in a second volume of Vietnam veterans' poetry called *Demilitarized Zones*.^{xviii} The first poem was inspired by Wilfred Owens, at least in its Latin title, a string from the Catholic liturgy, *Dignum et Justem Est*, It is Fitting and Just. The poem's content derived from observing my chain of dog tags which were taped to a medal of the Virgin Mary Katie had given me before I went to Vietnam. They had hung in my 9th Street apartment nailed "as on some museum wall, dusty relics, some illusion." Obviously this was still sour grapes aimed at Katie.

The second poem, barely exceeding the length of a haiku was called *Shades*.

Shades are my fishbowl,
my consolation.
The three mile limit
where anything goes.
There I walk secure
among my faceless peers.
There I hide my tears.

I'd formed a friendship with Kathryn Grody's brother Michael, a precursor to what today is called a bromance; it was based on the open exploration of feelings, not ideas or politics, which made my relationship to Michael, less competitive, more brotherly. I had some of that with Tod. He and I could be openly affectionate with each other, and we could both acknowledge the degree to which we felt our feelings were repressed, largely blaming our parents and upbringing. But we tended to intellectualize our excavations of emotions in the context of the psychological. Michael Grody was super-attuned to male frailty, and he could articulate and respond to someone else's pain with a deep compassion, even when that someone, as with me, largely hid the pain from himself. When I showed Michael the above poem, he cried – for me I suppose - then he put it to music and sang it for me. Michael worked occasionally as a session's singer, and might have had a successful career in a band or even solo. But he was irreconcilably allergic to the worlds of fame and ambition; he could never tolerate the artistic phoniness which he saw as pervasive in so much of the entertainment world. His study of singing, on the other hand, demonstrated the deepest commitment. I don't think I've ever heard anyone with a more natural and beautiful voice. Michael eventually made peace with his own inner demons by becoming a monk, and for years now has lived in a Buddhist monastery in Brooklyn.

There's one poem from my notebooks of a lighter substance transports me to the arena of the several classes I devoted considerable time to during that transitional period, in acting, dance, Alexander technique and acrobatics. With Kathryn and I having parted, and with the woman I thought I wanted having gotten away, there were possibilities for romance in all those settings. And I did hook up once or twice, but I wasn't drawn to the women drawn to me. There were two or three I fancied, but they were either involved, or simply had no interest in me. Courtship culture, I have found, tends to be like that, a winnowing down of candidates until one finds or imagines finding, a match. But there was apparently someone, in which of these classes I can't recall – nor can I conjure any mental picture of the observed – who excited a very cautious interest which found expression only in the written word:

Who is this person?

Oh ho
This senorita is
the dark side of the moon
The tide gone out
The desert at midnight
on a moonless night

I wish I could remember who she was; she made quite a first impression. Whereas most of the other doggerel in those notebooks I can barely bring myself to read, much less share. Suffice it to say I was not yet well read into the mysteries of PTSD.^{xix} I don't know if my occasional truancy from the office that year— mid-'77 to mid-'78 - caused resentment from Tod. If it did, it was never felt strongly enough to become an issue. The record tells me that I put in my time in those months, and I doubt my absence for a dance class at 10 a.m. for an hour two blocks away was much noticed – other than as an eccentric novelty - by my partner, who seldom showed in the office much before noon these days himself. Tod had busy nights. Our most

productive hours tended to begin over lunch, often at a local Latino steamtable, and bled into the early evening – weekends when necessary. But the key was we always covered for each other when we had to. Most of my devotion to this brief enchantment with developing the “whole actor” was shoehorned in during a period when our workload was at its lightest, and I could give myself permission to drift a bit in an alternative world.

And still Citizen Soldier in those months strode inexorably toward its true reason d’etre. We had alertly paid heed to news of a war-related health scandal in Chicago brought to the attention of a local CBS news anchor by VA whistle blower named Maude De Victor. For the next five years, the duration of our formal collaboration, Tod Ensign and I would flog the Agent Orange issue for everything it was worth, helping to turn a national spotlight on what might have otherwise died as a regional fluke. When the Veterans Administration after a long popular siege did finally recognize the service-connected disability status of thousands of veterans who suffered from various ailments and diseases traced to herbicides exposure during their service in the war zone, we could look back with pride at our contribution to that achievement. ^{xx}

What we had accomplished with amnesty was not as easy to measure. Postwar activism around amnesty, as with other pockets of radical resistance, operated along ideological lines already well-etched in the social fabric by the multifaceted political culture of the New Left. In the wake of the Peace Accords, followed by Vietnam’s victorious reunification, we had viewed ourselves as still moving toward the same objectives which had long crystalized in an oppositional political space of considerable girth, a force to be reckoned with and which could not be simply ignored or marginalized. Had we studied such oppositional movements of the past more closely, those, for example, of the Old Left three and four decades earlier, we might have understood that our generational moment was no less transient than theirs.

Our bubble too would burst, and by the early eighties, the once swollen activist ranks, dwindled into a rear guard, already retreated into tactics of topicality which could no longer be framed in the revolutionary spirit our earlier struggles had released and, momentarily, sustained. The imprint of that revolutionary spirit remains stored in my emotional memory. At the same time the sober pragmatist in me freely concedes that conditions to challenge the essential economic or political balance of forces during the long Vietnam period never existed. But there has been a turning. Our revolution was cultural, and in the decades that have followed, the politics of culture has trumped a politics of class. As yet the forces necessary to join the fragments of these many just areas of struggle into a single, power-challenging whole that commands a national platform have not congealed - the working class content of the Bernie Sanders's 2016 presidential campaign, notwithstanding,.

Official history has recast the voluminous popular opposition to Vietnam, and the mass revulsion of countless thousands of Americans toward the political and economic status quo, into a clawless and colorful circus known as the Sixties, where hippies and their counter-culture antics, or the romantic adventurism of groups like the Weather Faction, have star billing. The role of a ubiquitous mass movement of protagonists, uncompromisingly militant, but overwhelmingly nonviolent, who had forced those in power to respond in some public fashion to their radical political critiques, certainly where the war was concerned, is simply purged by those whose fundamental power we had not disturbed, and who still lay claim to dominance over the public record. It is hardly surprising that, when the totality of the social force behind which the antiwar movement of the Sixties and Seventies was gathered is itself so diminished in its popular retelling, that the subsets of our grand generational upheaval, whether second wave feminism or the GI rebellion or the early warnings of ecocide, have been grossly overlooked, and in the case

of black power and the Weather folks, sensationalized to instill fear. The war-generated movement for amnesty, on the other hand, history has swallowed whole. The very act of forgetting which the word amnesty demands has have been turned on the amnesty movement itself.

Begun during the Vietnam War's final years, and continuing past that conflict's resolution, the campaign for amnesty was pulled together from various activist strands: veterans of the antiwar movement - military and civilian - radical pacifists, members of the exile community and of the GI rebellion, who collectively jostled with institutional liberals for whom the purposing of the amnesty cause was considerably less far-reaching. All the advocates eventually agreed, once deserters and bad paper vets had been welcomed to the party, that the core demand for universal, unconditional amnesty was just. When you add the families of resisters, who advocated for their sons and siblings, to a large sympathetic swath of the general public, the numbers of people touched by this campaign numbered in the untold thousands.

I have reconstructed from the vast documentary record of a single entity, Safe Return, a wide-angled view of this forgotten movement from the vantage point of a single participant; if it does nothing more than stimulate other accounts seen from other vantage points it will have served at least one purpose for which it is intended. Scanning more ambitious ground I would hope that scholars of social movements might find in my memoir material of use in a larger study of the amnesty movement for the lessons – to be emulated or avoided – that it models.

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- i. Ed Koch had also introduced a bill in the House calling for universal amnesty.
 - ii. *Amnesty Report*, #7, Fall/Winter 1975
 - iii. *Advertising Age*, August 8, 1976
 - iv. "Legion shouted 'No,' then reflected," by Warren King, *The Seattle Times*, August 25, 1976.
 - v. "3 to 1 public favored amnesty," *Seattle Intelligencer* [tk]
 - vi. As this is written in late 2017, Jimmy Carter is one four successive presidents to reach the age of 93.
 - vii. "Draft Evader Who Fled to Canada Taken Into Custody While Seeing Parents During Change of Planes," by George Vecsey, *The New York Times*, September 16, 1976.
 - viii. "Will defend airport-held war resister," *Daily World*, September 29, 1976.
 - ix. "Carter Should Give Unconditional Amnesty," *San Francisco Sun Reporter*, December 2, 1976.
 - x. "Amnesty Movement Comes Calling," Mary McGrory, *Wilmington Star News*, December 13, 1976.
 - xi. "Amnesty Options," *The New Republic*, December 25, 1976.
 - xii. Only rarely can I document our outreach and exposure on TV and radio, which was generally as extensive as our coverage by the press; but only the latter leaves the researcher with a very tangible and accessible record of the events.
 - xiii. The less-than-honorable discharge issue received a serious and sympathetic treatment in "The 'Bad Paper' Vets," by Doug Bradley in the April 1977 edition of the *Progressive*. The author was identified as a Vietnam veteran who worked as a community organizer in Madison, Wisconsin, where the magazine was published. He was not known to us at Safe Return.
 - xiv. As this work reaches completion at the end of 2107, I discovered a note of sympathy for deserters in an Online posting by the History channel for January 21, 1977: Carter's pardon stated that only civilians who were convicted of [violating] the Military Selective Service Act by draft-evasion acts or omissions committed between August 4, 1964 and March 28, 1973 were eligible. The pardon was unconditional and wiped criminal records clean, but it only applied to civilians, not the estimated 500,000 to 1 million active-duty personnel who went AWOL (absent without leave) or deserted during the war. Many supporters of Carter's decision thought they too should be forgiven by the government in an effort to heal national wounds.
 - xv. "Sammy Davis Cast As Vietnam Deserter," *Variety*, February 23, 1977.
 - xvi. "Sammy Davis Draws Ire From War Resisters On Violence Plot," *Variety*, March 3, 1977.
 - xvii. I shared those biases initially, even though I am a charter and lifetime member of Veterans For Peace, which was founded in in 1985, in Maine where I live.
 - xviii. *Demilitarized Zones: Veterans After Vietnam*, Jan Barry and W.D. Ehrhart, eds. (East River Anthology, 1976).
 - xix. In the mid1990's a research psychologist at the Veterans Administration who crunched the agency's clinical data on PTSD, observed a sudden spike in symptoms among war veterans in their fifties. He called this late-on-set PTSD. For reasons that have not been identified, and around which many theories fly, these veterans had managed to live a good portion of their

productive and family lives keeping their symptoms at bay. There was perhaps in individual cases a high quotient of resilience which helped to mitigate the worst aspects of the disorder. My own case perhaps fits into this pattern, and it wasn't until the late 90s that I received my own diagnosis of PTSD, following an extensive series of tests and psychiatric examinations.

^{xx}. Citizen Soldier also was an early advocate for the so-called Radiation Vets, soldiers exposed to dangerous levels of radiation during U.S. open air atomic test in the Pacific and in Nevada. We take up their story, along with that of vets exposed to Agent Orange in *G.I Guinea Pigs: How the Pentagon Exposed Our Troops to Dangers More Deadly Than War*, by Michael Uhl and Tod Ensign, (Playboy, 1980). Citizen Soldier would finally produce a film, when Richard Schmiechen and I created, "Nick Mazzuco: Biography of an Atomic Vet," funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and aired on public television stations widely in 1982.