Clarence Returns To Spain

By Richard Chamberlin

In a shady grove on the outskirts of the small Spanish town of Marsa two friends were reunited after 72 years. On November 6, the ashes of Abraham Lincoln Brigade veteran Clarence Kailin were spread over the secluded grave of his comrade in arms John Cookson.

Cookson died in 1938, in his twenties fighting for the survival of the Spanish Republic. Kailin, a dedicated socialist, died in October 2009 at the age of 95 after a lifelong fight for social justice.

He and Cookson, who had been working on his Ph. D. in mathematics at the UW, went to Spain together in 1937. They were part of the International Brigades that were organized to help the democratically elected government of Spain resist a military coup by General Francisco Franco’s Fascist Rebels. Spain stood alone, the hastily organized international brigades its only ally.

On November 4, friends and family of Clarence arrived in Marsa where 900 members of the brigade were billeted in September, 1938 during the final campaign of the war. Marsa is located in northeastern Spain about 80 miles west of Barcelona.

The next day they visited battlefields and the caves where the brigade was headquartered. Cookson,

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Many people in the left have used the word “fascist” to describe almost every Republican candidate since Nixon. However, with all the talk about the Tea Party taking over, the deepening recession, and the Fox network promoting right wing zealots, I wondered if we actually were sliding into fascism like Germany in 1930s.

To answer that question I turned to a book written in 2004 by former Columbia University professor Robert O. Paxton called *The Anatomy of Fascism.*

Paxton describes fascism as more of an affair of the gut than the brain, a lust for past glory and ruthless suppression of the opposition. He lists six warning signs: extreme nationalism, hate crimes, political deadlock in a crisis, looking for tougher allies, the willingness to give up the rule of law, and seeking mass support by nationalist and racial demagoguery.

When on the fringes fascists tend to remain more of a law and order problem than a political threat. However, Paxton reminds us that “extreme Right movements that have learned to moderate their language... and appear normal.” Its leaders often present themselves as moderate while using coded phrases such as “accepting one’s history” and “restoring national pride.”

You only have to look at calls for nullification of federal laws by states, the attacks on Muslims, and the hero worship of the military to see ominous parallels developing.

Paxton lists five stages in the rise of fascism. They are (1) the creation of movements; (2) their rooting in the political system; (3) their seizure of power; (4) the exercise of power; (5) and the long duration during which the fascist regime chooses either radicalization or entropy.

While many fascist movements reach stage one far fewer become rooted in a political system. Nazi Germany advanced the farthest.

Fascism results from of the breakdown of liberal democracies. It is home grown and is different in each country. Today in America we have a growing threat from an oligarchy with a democratic facade. Economic collapse could bring right wing extremism; skillful demagogues could take over. Stay tuned.
who’s job had been to co-ordinate the field telephones, was killed by artillery shrapnel while repairing lines. His is the only marked grave that has survived.

Next stop for the group was Hill 666 overlooking the Ebro River. Republican forces were desperately trying to drive Franco’s army back across the river in the fall of 1938. Clarence and other brigade members were defending their position on the hill. He was hit by shrapnel in the right elbow and was saved by a medic who immediately applied a tourniquet. Later he was evacuated to Barcelona, then back to the states. In 1939 Franco entered Madrid, the last stronghold of the Loyalists who surrendered in April.

Saturday morning a small group gathered at the grave of John Cookson where they buried a box of Clarence’s ashes. Later that day a busload of former political prisoners of Franco arrived from Barcelona and had another ceremony at the gravesite. They sang The Internationale, then went into town to dedicate a monument to the Brigades paid for by Kailin who had helped raise money for it.

Clarence’s son, John, spoke of his father’s battles from Jarma, at the beginning of the war to the Ebro River Valley at the end.

At Jarma, he experienced the terrible command errors that drove so many to their unnecessary deaths. He told me once that bullets rained around him like hailstones, that he cannot comprehend why he should have been spared….he describes the last September days near here at the Ebro Front. On Hill 666 he was the lone man with a Czech rifle, a rifle with ammunition. For three days without food or water, the men suffered a pain that goes without recognition. At the end, my father lost his self-control and rose up only to be hit, his right arm, bones and nerves shattered...two years of specialized care before he recovered partial use.”

Norman Stockwell

Friends and comrades John Cookson (L) and Clarence Kailin from Madison’s WORT-FM radio station spoke about Clarence and helped unfurl a Veterans for Peace banner designed for the occasion by VFP member Joel Garb. The next day groups toured the many caves and battlefields in the area.

Spain recently offered citizenship to the surviving members of the International Brigades. One of Clarence’s friends, Judith Klehr, who was on the trip, said that Clarence was one of the first to sign up. “He got up out of a hospital bed and went down to the Spanish Embassy in Chicago,” she said. “He wasn’t about to pass up that opportunity.”

On November 13, Clarence’s daughter Julie from Madison sent an email to her brother John while he was in Spain. In it she said that the mailman had just delivered an official ballot from Catalonia Province for Clarence to cast his vote for the elections.

“Clarence’s ashes and the ballot almost passed each other going opposite directions,” said Judith. It couldn’t have been more appropriate.
The pervasive nature of war on society is a matter of great concern personally. The only way we can truly become civilized is to stop this major problem. Only then, can we move towards social justice and productive work. Democracy cannot function well while perpetual warfare exists. I feel that the veterans can provide the leadership towards bringing this necessary change about. They certainly did this ending the Vietnam War.

I wish to be a member of the Board of Directors of the Clarence Kailin Chapter of Veterans for Peace. Most veterans in this organization have been to war and understand the physical and spiritual destruction of war to everyone caught in it. Our knowledge of war and its effects is invaluable in countering the drum beat for war from our government and the corporations that own it and in teaching high schools students about the reality of war and encouraging them to choose another path. I feel I can help further these goals by joining the Board of Directors of Madison Veterans for Peace.

I served in the US Navy from 1942 to 1948. I am a veteran of World War II and of Operation Crossroads (the first post-war series of atomic bomb tests). After my military service I completed my education and was a professor of anthropology and sociology for four decades. When I retired from the University of Wisconsin System I had been teaching at the two-year campus in Wausau. By the time I was discharged from the navy I had decided that nobody can argue against war more adequately than someone who has actually experienced it. So, in 1989, when I learned that there was an organization of Veterans for Peace, I joined immediately. For the past sixteen years I have lived in St Louis, where my wife had a good job. In June, 2010, when she retired, we both returned to Wisconsin because this is where we wanted to be. I am very dedicated to the work of VFP and have served two terms on the national board of directors, during which I was treasurer for one year and secretary for three. I also spent several years as chair of the resolutions committee and, while I lived in St Louis I spent many hours doing volunteer work at the national office.

I have been involved with community activism most of my life. I attended the UW Madison off and on from 1952-1965 I graduated in 1963. I was in the Army from 1953-1955. In 1956 I did some election work for the Democratic Party. Later I helped raise $220,000 for a community development project in Mississippi. In 1975 we brought food to the Menominee Warrior Society that was occupying the Alexian Bros. Abbey in Gresham, WI and helped raise money for their legal defense. In the same year I was ordained as a minister of The Church of the Helping Hand and began pastoral visits to Waupun Prison. After a ten-year struggle we finally got permission for a pow-wow there. In 1985 we took over The State Capitol to force the state to divest its retirement funds from companies involved with apartheid. I have been active in Madison Vets for Peace since the early 2000’s. I served two years on the Board of Directors and would appreciate your vote. I am currently on the committee to create a set of by-laws for our chapter which is long overdue.

The election for the board of directors will be held at the regular meeting of The Clarence Kailin Chapter of VFP on Wednesday January 19 at 6 pm upstairs at the Madison Public Library. There will be seven directors elected and one alternate. All current Chapter 25 Vets for Peace members are eligible to vote.
As a founding member of Chapter 25, I served continuously on the board since it was formed. I feel my long experience with the chapter provides a link with the past to the chapter's future activities. I worked in peace and justice movements immediately and continuously after leaving Vietnam in 1966 where I was a combat journalist with the 1st Infantry Division. Among other actions, I was an organizer and speaker at the 1969 war moratorium in the Fox Valley. I designed the peace dove at the Highground Park in Neillsville, traveled to Vietnam with Mike Boehm and others in 1995 for dedication of the first Vietnamese-American Peace Park, compiled and edited Long Shadows: Veterans' Paths to Peace, and executed a series of anti-war paintings which have been exhibited widely. I continue to conduct counter recruiting events in rural Wisconsin high schools and coordinate VFP scholarships for graduates. Whenever possible, I carry a “Peace” sign for 3.5 miles along Highway 14 near Arena. I've done that about 200 times since November 2002. My wife, Nancy, and I live in rural Iowa County.

David Giffey

The status of the peace movement is smaller than prior to the war in Iraq invasion. Some factors contributing to this is the economy, some mis-educated people who belittle the intelligence of ordinary people which alienates them. Counter-recruitment has been my main effort in Vets for Peace. Some of the schools involved with this effort are Wisconsin Dells, Eagle River, St. Germaine, Columbus, Wausau, Lodi, Baraboo, Deforest and every high school in Madison. What I would like to see our chapter work on are rules and regulations, involving more members in activities, and recruiting new members.

Will Williams

I joined Veterans for Peace in 2007 because of the frustration I felt about our involvement in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. As a Vietnam veteran I had hoped that our country learned something from the mistakes of the past. I was wrong. Vets for Peace is a unique organization because we are the warriors who have said, “No more.” Since joining I have found comradery with veterans and others dedicated to the pursuit of peace. Along with co-chair John Fournelle, I helped organize the first Memorial Mile tombstone display in 2007 and have lent a hand in organizing it since then. In 2008 my wife and I went to Vietnam where we rendezvoused with Mike Boehm and other Madison peace activists to help commemorate the 40th Anniversary of the My Lai Massacre. I took on the task of newsletter editor last year and this is my fourth issue. I have a BA in Journalism and have worked as a reporter, free-lance writer and author of a memoir about my Vietnam experiences and adjustment period afterwards. Currently I chair the committee to write our first set of by-laws. In my time at VFP I’ve always been impressed with the quality of people it attracts. I would be proud to serve on the board and use my experience to further our work.

Steve Books

I was a radio-teletype operator in the Wisconsin Army National Guard from 1980-1986. I joined Veterans for Peace in the fall of 2005 due to an incredible concern about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a person who likes to stand vigil on street corners, I feel right at home here and continue to feel good about what Chapter 25 is doing in the community. I also enjoy tabling at the Farmer's Market and making our presence known to the public. Currently I'm VFP executive board secretary and work part-time under a grant from the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice. With the many concerns I have of the two wars, I would like to have the opportunity to continue as a board member, to help recruit new members, and to look for new opportunities to help raise awareness of the costs of war.

Rich Chamberlin

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WINTER 2011

A Good Day For

Counter-Recruiting

At Richland High

By David Giffey

Clarence Kailin’s frequent reminder—“There’s a lot of work to do”—was indisputable. So was his example of consistent activism for peace and justice.

Clarence was on my mind as I drove to Richland Center High School December 1, wondering if it was worth the trip.

I had a cold and felt lousy. It was a long drive in the middle of a work day. There probably wouldn’t be any tangible results for the effort because most of the students are preoccupied with each other and cell phones and the holidays. The need to update the counter-recruiting display, which I did the previous night, with new body counts and increased military budgets was depressing. Generally speaking, my morale was low.

Even so, I had no choice but to keep going. There is too much evidence that military recruiters and their patrons in government and corporate America will stop at nothing to support their militaristic habits.

The Pentagon’s annual budget for recruiting is more than $7 billion. During fiscal 2009, all branches of the military handily met or exceeded their recruiting goals. That meant that 296,505 young men and women, like the teenagers I was about to see in Richland Center High School, signed contracts agreeing to submit to training intended to prepare them for deadly combat. After all, the undeniable purpose of military service to kill or be killed.

Simple arithmetic shows that the U.S. government was willing to support recruitment of each enlistee in 2009 with $23,608 from the recruitment budget. After that it gets really expensive.

The cost of deploying one U.S. soldier for one year in Iraq is listed at $390,000, according to figures from the Congressional Research Service and The Brookings Institution.

That doesn’t include $9 billion in taxpayers’ money and $550 million in spare parts lost and unaccounted for in Iraq, or the $1 billion in missing war machinery like rocket-propelled grenades, or the $10 billion as of 2007 mismanaged and wasted in Iraq, or Halliburton’s overcharges of $1.4 billion, or the $20 billion paid to KBR to supply the military. (See About.com for more data).

Those numbers are about money.

Priceless is the cost in lives, American, Iraqi, Afghani. Also unmeasured is the debt incurred by families and communities when injured and damaged soldiers come back to homes they too often can’t recognize or remember.

I was ready to work by the...
time I arrived in Richland Center.

During two lunch hours in the cafeteria, a lot of students visited my table. A girl very quietly told me that her boyfriend just finished basic training at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. That’s where I took basic training in 1964, before being shipped to Vietnam with the 1st Infantry Division the next year.

The girl, very quietly, said she was thinking about joining the military. I explained, as calmly as I could, that the purpose of the military is to wage war, to teach enlistees how to kill, and to desensitize them from the real possibility of their own death or injury in combat. She just looked at me and shrugged. I gave her a copy of *Addicted to War* and tried to make some convincing arguments about alternatives to the military.

I wanted to give her a hug so she couldn’t see how moist my eyes were becoming, but instead I told her that I didn’t think enlistment would be a good idea.

With such young people, it’s difficult to judge their responses. The only thing I knew for certain was that she left the Veterans for Peace table with some reading material.

Then a group of boys showed up. They asked all kinds of questions and said they appreciated seeing a display about peace. Best of all, they willingly signed their names and set off in search of a faculty advisor so they could form a Students for Peace group in the school. Their first names were Max, Nathaniel, Kyle, Matt, and Tiger. I promised them that Veterans for Peace would help in any way possible with literature, programs, and contact information.

“Okay, Clarence,” I thought on the drive home, “It was worth it.”

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**ZINN FUND STARTED TO HELP FUND LOCAL CHAPTERS**

By Dennis Lane, VFP Executive Director

The 25th Anniversary of any organization is one of the first major benchmarks in its history. Generally, people recognize the organization has longevity and that they can feel secure investing in its mission.

All of us are proud that Howard Zinn was a member of our organization for over 23 years. As you know, our beloved friend died on January 27, 2010. The board determined that we needed to establish a VFP endowment in his name. When the family was contacted, they said, "Of all the things that have been asked, this would have made him the happiest."

The money in the VFP Endowment will be invested in financial vehicles in line with this organization's mission. Once the fund is established, the annual income will be distributed 80% to chapter programs and 20% to the national office. We want to ensure that this fund grows and will make a difference in VFP’s outreach across the nation. It is also an important way of demonstrating that the national office is here to serve the local chapters.

Most of the money raised will be coming through planned gifts and major gifts. On September 25, the fund officially kicked off at an event with the Zinn family and their friends. No gift is too small.

[Editor’s Note: Howard Zinn wrote the introduction for Chapter 25’s book, *Long Shadows: Veterans’ Paths to Peace.*]

1. **Mail your contributions to:**

Veterans for Peace
216 S. Meramec Avenue
St. Louis, MO 63105
314-725-6005

2. **You can donate on-line at:**

https://salsa.democracyinaction.org/o/826/t/9311/shop/custom.jsp?donatepageKEY=6592
“Well, I'm an optimist—I still think peace can be avoided.”

Veterans for Peace

P.O. Box 1811