



* * * * Serving the 300,000 veterans living in greater Los Angeles * * * *



Jules Rochielle Sievert, artist and archivist with the Metabolic Studio, checking the well-being of the strawberries in the intensive care unit of Bldg 209: *Garden Folly*, on site at Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

APOLITICAL GREENS: KOREAN WAR VETERAN BOBBY SHELTON MAKES STRAWBERRY FLAG'S GARDENS GROW PART 1 OF 2

BY LAURA SANDERSON HEALY

When I first met Bobby Shelton, he was working as a Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) gardener at *Strawberry Flag* last fall, tending to the re-purposed strawberry plants of the artwork's stripes. His soft Southern accent whispered "mid South" to me; that's the region of the United States from which we both originate—the wide Mississippi River ("Big Muddy") bisecting his northeast Arkansas from my southwest Tennessee.

Not long after, Bobby and I found our costumed selves dancing partners in the "human flag" performance being snapped from the air by photographer Joshua White. As the humming helicopter flew rounds above *Strawberry Flag*, Bobby and I circled each other tentatively in his first strawberry row, remembering different instructions on whether to move after eight counts or not.

Drinking tea together one winter day beside the tent at *Strawberry Flag*, I asked Bobby about his childhood in the South, and we turfed up some common ground: the long flat landscape of Poinsett County, Arkansas, a mainly rural area of farmland, figured greatly in both of our histories. Growing up in Memphis, Tennessee, I spent many happy days visiting friends in Lepanto, a grain of a town not far from the small county seat of Harrisburg where Bobby said he

was "raised up on a farm." Bobby knew Lepanto—he said he had picked cotton there when he was just a child—and in high school he played basketball against teams in Memphis, an hour southeast. We laughed about people we remembered, funny names and traits, and then on a somber note, Bobby shared with me a story about desegregation in Arkansas circa 1957. An enlisted friend in the National Guard was ordered to stand in front of Little Rock Central High School to prevent African-American students from rightfully entering. Bobby said his friend's heart broke when he came eye to eye with his own niece trying to enter the school.

When a visitor came to see Bobby's greenhouse at *Strawberry Flag* this spring, Bobby told him, "Arkansas has a little bit of everything: diamonds and gold, mosquitoes and alligators too." Although Bobby's sixtieth high school reunion is this month (no one who knows him would believe that the energetic Bobby is in his seventies), he will likely be tending to his work at *Strawberry Flag*, a job he takes great pride and care in. "It gives me motivation and therapy getting up every morning to come in and be able to walk around through the plants," Bobby said. "To be able to put a seed in the ground and watch it come up is good for an old man like me."

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It's Harvest Time at the *Gazette*

BY TERENCE LYONS

As the *Strawberry Flag*, disassembled but with the strawberries still alive and growing, rolled down Bonsall Avenue from the quad in front of Building 208 to be reconfigured in Los Angeles State Historic Park north of downtown on October 1, many of the veterans and artists working on the move reflected on the project they had tended for more than a year.

What had they grown? It was now harvest time, both on the calendar and for the *Strawberry Flag* project. Of course, they had harvested thousands of strawberries, cooked them into preserves, and served them to each other and to guests

with tea. But the harvest was more than that. Henry David Thoreau wrote, "true harvest of my life is intangible," and so it is with the *Strawberry Flag*.

This issue of the *Strawberry Gazette* examines the harvest. In the agrarian societies of time gone by, this season that we now call "autumn" was known by the name "harvest" – the time of year when people reaped the bounty of their year-long efforts. It was also the season when there was plenty of work for everyone, and so the *Gazette* addresses the subject of work – jobs and life's work – as part of its examination of the harvest.

Both the legacy of the *Strawberry Flag* project and the struggles of veterans looking for work are the focus of this issue. The place of veterans in the larger American society figures in this discussion of harvest, as does reflection on the life of a man in the Owens Valley.

The strawberries that made stripes of the strawberry flag were rescued from a farm in Rosemead, where plants were plowed under after a single harvest. In the flag's stripes, they yielded multiple crops. So the harvest, while it may mark the end of the growing year, does not have to be the end of the life of any plant... or any person. There are multiple harvests still to come.



The Metabolic Studio's trolley, named for Mark Twain who was fascinated by the West, is an homage to the author who died one hundred years ago.



Always do right. That will gratify some of the people, and astonish the rest.

—Mark Twain

They say that habit is only second nature; who knows but that Nature is the first habit.

—Pascal, around 1630

APOLITICAL GREENS... CONTINUED »

I wanted to learn more about how Bobby and his coworkers coaxed the strawberries to grow so beautifully, and also find out about his planted vegetable garden, which is located right in the VA ground—as innovative a use of federal property as I would ever see. “Bobby’s Garden,” as it has come to be known, is planted in the quadrangle in front of Building 205 next to *Strawberry Flag* behind a dark green picket fence (which was painted white when it was first put up in February), and vegetables and fruits are also growing in eleven oversized “ag bins” (6 × 3 × 3-foot wooden planting boxes). When he had time, Bobby gave me

a tour around there and the old VA Veterans Gardens site down the hill where he was a longtime employee before the VA’s Incentive Therapy (IT) and CWT programs there came to a halt in 2009.

On the day of my tour, I could see that the VA property’s gophers, which live under the quad, had been busy. “The guys started teasing me that he (the gopher) was coming for my garden,” Bobby said. “I’m not worried about it. I’ve put my mojo on it—a remedy we used back in Arkansas—and you’ll see it work. [Note: Rumor has it that Juicy Fruit gum and garlic were involved.] I’m going to get him, and if I can get one of them, I will put the rest of them in flight.”

We entered Bobby’s Garden and I listened to him describe all that he had planted, right there on the VA property, fresh food that would go to the *Strawberry Flag* kitchen in Building 208. “We picked radishes yesterday; they’re exactly the right size a radish should be, a little bit smaller than a quarter. It doesn’t take them long, they’re about one of the quickest things to sprout up out of the ground—four or five days after you plant them they’re up. Beets take a long time; I should have planted them about January or February.”

Bobby was proud to have grown everything from seed. “I start everything in my little greenhouse. I don’t use plants; the company provides me with any kind of seed

I want. I just tell them what I need and they make sure that I get it. I plant the seeds and wait for them to come up and materialize, and I bring them from the greenhouse to the garden and then take them from the garden to the table.”

Though the okra was about to come up, Bobby was concerned that he had planted it “a little bit too early; the ground should be really warm when you plant okra, it’s a summer plant.” Another group of leafy plants—“those are collard greens”—caused Bobby to make a confession. “The one thing I don’t like is spinach. My mom used to make me drink spinach juice when I was a kid and I didn’t like the taste of it.” As we looked at the thriving vegetables, Bobby nod-

tomatoes. They’ll be about four feet high.” Of the strawberry plants that were not in one of the “stripes,” he said, “We took ‘em out of circulation and they’re doing fine. The runner beans, pole beans, are going to go up here, and they are going to grow right up the corn.”

After showing me his garden, Bobby drove me in the *Strawberry Flag* golf cart down the hill and past the baseball field that UCLA leases from the VA to the Veterans Gardens area where he worked for nine years. The non-profit Rancho Santa Ana Botanic Garden was scheduled to start managing the site for the VA, but much to Bobby’s chagrin the area looked like a ghost town.



Lovely Ruth’s soul food Fridays were popular with veterans, administrators, and clinicians on the north side of the VA of WLA. The Metabolic Studio’s kitchen was shut down on October 15 as the administration deemed it unsafe for patients to be cooking in the kitchen.

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ded to the mulberry trees growing in and outside of his garden. “You hear the mockingbird singing?” he asked me. “They love fruit like this, so they get all my mulberries.”

Bobby continued with a litany of the produce he is bringing out of the good earth at our feet and in the bins. “I have squash and Chinese cabbage (bok choy), here I have kale, there’s the green sunburst squash—it doesn’t turn yellow—and we’ll also have sunburst yellow squash. I’ve got a little bit of everything in here: greens, tomatoes, lettuce, cilantro, Brussels sprouts. I just cleaned those boxes, and sometime next week they will be filled with dirt. I’ve got to utilize everything and make use of all the space I can get. I’ll have regular cabbage, Romaine lettuce, iceberg; I planted those seeds about a month ago. I’d love to fill all these boxes with dirt, and I could raise vegetables year-round. Summer vegetables, winter vegetables, keep me busy, keep me young, keep me healthy.” Bobby said he and his mother raised tomatoes inside a five-gallon can in Arkansas. “We had a garden and plenty of land back home but we also grew tomatoes that way,” he said, showing more of the new growth. “These are my beefsteak

We walked through the abandoned area where flowers still bloom and an old ficus spreads its leaves over tables in a picnic area. Yards of vining nasturtiums and ivy, high grass gone to seed, and acres of wildflowers had overtaken the once productive area where veterans grew flowers for florists’ bouquets and bushels of produce for restaurants.

Veterans Print Shop

Thursdays 5–7:30pm
Building 208
Room 123

Create and design
your own T-shirt!



PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST IN ACTION/ ACTIVISM: ROXANNE STEINBERG

BY LAURA SANDERSON HEALY

Art is neither an instrument nor a convenience, but a secret logic of the imagination. It is another way of seeing, the whole sense and value of which lies in its autonomy, its distance from actuality, its otherness.
—Louis le Brocquy, Irish painter (1916–)

One of the brightest artistic lights that shines at *Strawberry Flag* is Roxanne Steinberg, the Metabolic Studio's mesmeric choreographer and team member. A multitasked dancer, performer, and costume designer, Roxanne captures the playful spirit of the artwork and invites others to share the feeling there. Gliding through the High Teas draped in dramatic costumes and headgear, she always fascinates, chiming her bell to summon veterans and guests to their tables, or semaphoring with colorful reams of fabric, twirling like a modern-day Loie Fuller.

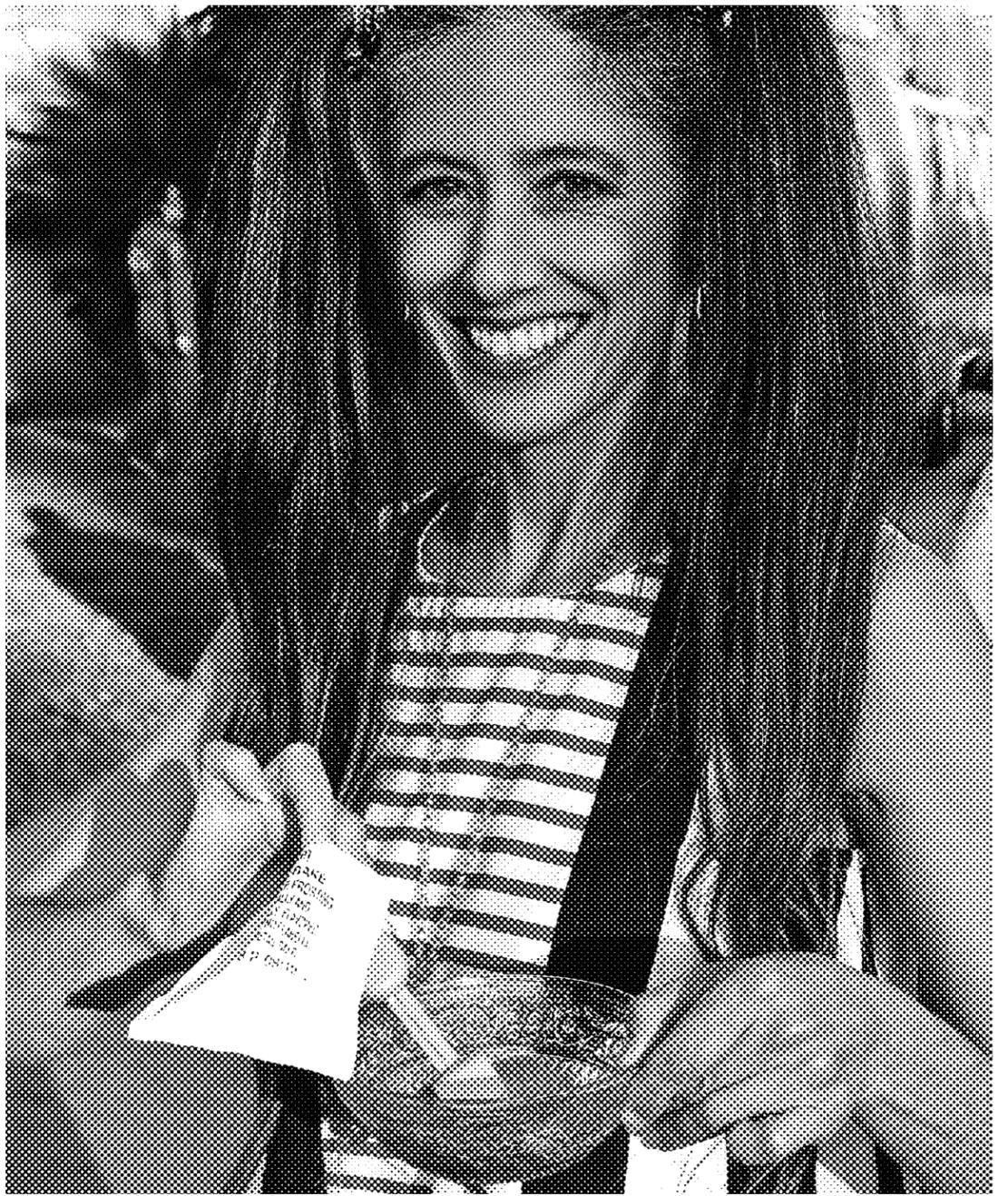
An all-purpose participant in the project, Roxanne participates in jam sessions (making preserves) and chats with veterans who have found their way to the quad and

shepherds them and other visitors through the strawberry rows or to the kitchen or print studio. With her big, friendly smile, tinkly laughter, and graceful presence, she carries herself with poise, her striking hair in a long plait down her back. If *Strawberry Flag* were a ship, Roxanne would be its figurehead.

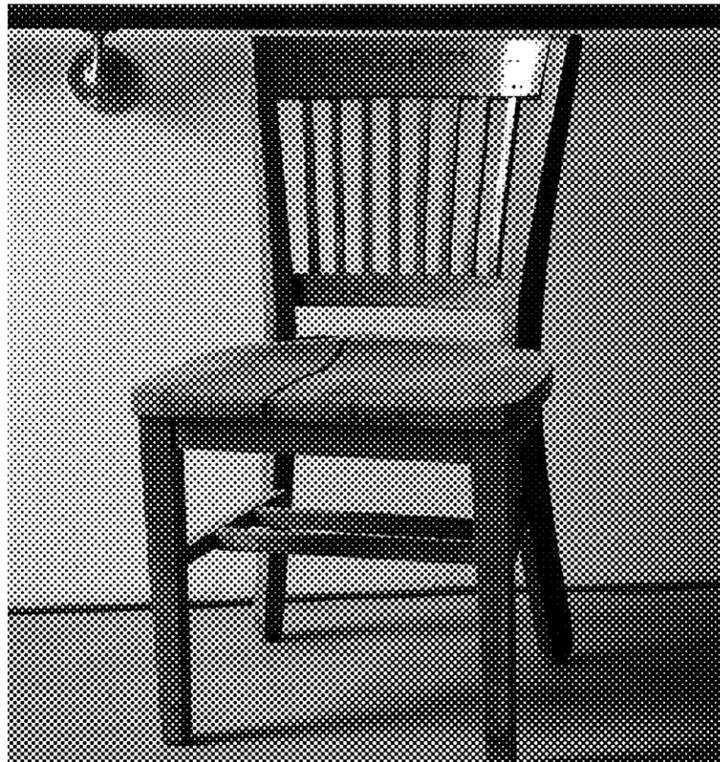
The Tax Day High Tea on April 15 found Roxanne clad head to toe in a spaceman-like medical decontamination suit, passing through the tea tables dispensing strawberry syrup out of a syringe as she went. That weekend she performed at the Electric Lodge Theater in Venice in an otherworldly dance production called *COLD DREAM COLOR*.

Composed of pieces based on the paintings of families by Irish modern artist Louis le Brocquy (a nonagenarian national treasure still at his easel in Ireland), *COLD DREAM COLOR* was a family affair: dancing with Roxanne was sister Morleigh Steinberg, a choreographer-dancer-filmmaker who lives in New York and Ireland.

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Roxanne Stienberg delighted guests at *Strawberry Flag* high teas.



This chair was found in what had been the computer room in the basement of Bldg 208 of the VA WLA.

If you were in the [printing] trade, you basically had to reinvent yourself, maybe go back for a little bit more education and just go at it from a different angle. That's pretty much what has happened here; I have got a new eagerness, a new lease on life basically in my trade.

—Lawrence Flaherty, *Strawberry Flag* CWT worker, print studio

COMPENSATED WORK THERAPY

BY DAVID FIERRO

Mr. Fierro is a vocational rehabilitation specialist with the VA GLAHS Veteran Community Employment Development program (VCED), better known as Compensated Work Therapy (CWT). He described his experience working with the Strawberry Flag project in the following piece, written a few months ago.

Compensated Work Therapy's mission is to provide vocational and behavioral rehabilitation services to veterans with psychiatric or addiction-related impairments that interfere with their ability to work. CWT programs strive to maintain highly responsive, long-term, quality relationships with business and industry, promoting employment opportunities for veterans with physical and mental disabilities.

I would highly recommend the Metabolic Studio for any project with the Department of Veterans Affairs based on all the work they have done with our veterans. Metabolic Studio has assisted us in accomplishing our goals and in caring for our disabled veteran population.

When Metabolic Studio first arrived on campus, I was a bit con-

cerned and cautious of dealing with this new project. This was based on my past experiences of attempting to work with outside agencies who, once they were exposed to our population, decided that they would rather not invest the time and care it would take to assist our veterans in fully integrating back into competitive employment.

Not only did Metabolic Studio stick with our veterans, but they offered much more than I expected. Besides working with our CWT veterans, they provided our veteran population with a warm and caring environment by providing jam sessions, entertainment, barbecues, plays, and teas. Veterans on campus are now exposed to an artistic environment they may normally not have been exposed to.

Metabolic Studio staff became a piece of our therapeutic environment. They take the time to meet with vocational rehabilitation staff to consult when issues arise, and they become part of the solution. Metabolic Studio is very flexible with assignments, and provides reasonable accommodation for those that need the required assistance. They have created assign-

ments to fit veterans' individual skills and to promote healthy lifestyles, such as the stationary bike coach and the newsletter writer. When the stationary bike coach did not work out, they continued with their mission by providing a trainer for all to use. Metabolic Studio is quick to employ veterans who they feel would be welcome additions to their staff.

Those veterans who have been fortunate enough to work with the *Strawberry Flag* project have acquired new skills [that] they may use to be much more marketable in the community. Skills such as aquaponics, hydroponics, solar power, print making, event production, and journalism were beyond any skills I believed could be taught in a CWT/Transitional Work Experience assignment. These skills are not the only skills taught by Metabolic Studio staff — there are also the valuable soft skills which come with dealing with the public.

Even though they have only been on campus for approximately six months, many veterans have already come through the CWT portion or have been hired by

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If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance even less.

—General Eric Shinseki

The true harvest of my life is intangible - a little star dust caught, a portion of the rainbow I have clutched.

—Henry David Thoreau

COMPENSATED WORK THERAPY CONTINUED »

Metabolic Studio. Countless others have volunteered or have taken part in their services. I now receive calls from other clinics inquiring on how they can get their veterans involved with the *Strawberry Flag* project.

Other veterans involved with the *Strawberry Flag* project have had their lives improved therapeutically by maintaining their sobriety, learning responsibilities, and having a feeling that they are part of the Metabolic Studio family. I do not have to worry about the veterans on their assignment displaying a lack of motivation. Every time I visit the site, the veterans are always working due to the environment which has been created for them. I know that one veteran from the *Strawberry Flag* project has even enrolled in college.

In summary, I know that there is much more that the Metabolic Studio and the CWT program can learn from each other. I feel that there are more services we can provide for our veteran population. But what we have accomplished together, in these first six months, has to be acknowledged. I am very grateful for all that the Metabolic Studio staff has done with our CWT program and for our veterans. My hope is that the Department of Veterans Affairs and Metabolic Studio can continue to grow together. I expect the next months to bear even more productive fruit now that we have overcome our growing pains, have maintained great rapport with each other, and have created positive outcomes for our veteran population.

AMERICAN EXCEPTIONALISM

The following account and commentary on the Chilean miners rescue has been making the rounds on the internet. It is generally credited to Michelle Malkin, an American conservative blogger, political commentator, and author. (<http://michellemalkin.com/2010/10/12/celebrating-american-greatness-in-chile/>)

While some may not believe in American exceptionalism, I do. And I'm thinking there's a whole bunch of people in Chile that would agree.

Regarding the mine rescue, did you know:

The guy that designed the rescue module was a NASA Engineer?

The Drill was made by Schramm Inc. from Pennsylvania.

The Drill Bits were made by Center Rock, Inc. located in Berlin, Pennsylvania.

The lead driller Jeff Hart and his team are from Denver, Colorado. They are on loan from the U.S. Military in Afghanistan where they are drilling water wells for our Forward Operating Bases.

He spent the next 33 days on his feet, operating the drill that finally provided a way out Saturday for 33 trapped miners. "You have to feel through your feet what the drill is doing; it's a vibration you get so that you know what's happening," explained Hart.

Hart was called in from Afghanistan, "simply because he's the best" at drilling larger holes with the T130's wide-diameter drill bits, Stefanic said.

Standing before the levers, pressure meters and gauges on the T130's control panel, Hart and the rest of the team faced many challenges in drilling the shaft. At one point, the drill struck a metal support beam in the poorly mapped mine, shattering its hammers. Fresh equipment had to be flown in from the United States and progress was delayed for days as powerful magnets were lowered to pull out the pieces.

The mine's veins of gold and copper ran through quartzite with a high level of abrasive silica, rock so tough that it took all their expertise to keep the drill's hammers from curving off in unwanted directions. "It was horrible," said Center Rock President Brandon Fisher, exhausted after hardly sleeping during the effort.

Fisher, Stefanic, and Hart called it the most difficult hole they had ever drilled, because of the lives at stake.

"If you're drilling for oil and you lose the hole, it's different. This time there's people down below," Stefanic said.

"We ruined some bits, worked through the problems as a team, and broke through," Hart said. "I'm very happy now."

Miners' relatives crowded around Hart on Saturday, hugging and posing for pictures with him as he walked down from the rescue operation into the tent camp where families had anxiously followed his work.

"He's become the hero of the day," said Dayana Olivares, whose friend Carlos Bugueno is one of the miners stuck below.

In a different day and age, Jeff Hart would be the most famous American in our country right now. He would be honored at the White House. Schoolchildren would learn of his skill and heroism. But because Jeff Hart works in an industry currently being demonized by (insert name for the clowns currently running our country) more people in Chile will celebrate this symbol of American greatness than in America itself

It's an amazing bunch of people. You got them from different backgrounds and different walks of life, but all of them are focused on this one particular goal and it's bigger than all of us and it seems to work out well. I believe that's what it's supposed to be. There's more of a higher purpose behind it. It's some good that people can do. It's an example, this *Strawberry Flag* has inspired you to know that you can start with a little seed, wherever you're at, and plant that and something can come out of it, like it did here.

—G.G., *Strawberry Flag* CWT worker, kitchen



Open mic sessions of Strawberry Sundays returns to the quad of Building 208! Come out and express yourself in word and song! Sundays 2–4pm from November 14th

The law of harvest is to reap more than you sow. Sow an act, and you reap a habit. Sow a habit and you reap a character. Sow a character and you reap a destiny.

—James Allen

Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

—Galatians



ENTRY FACADE



ENTRY FACADE DETAIL



BLDG 209



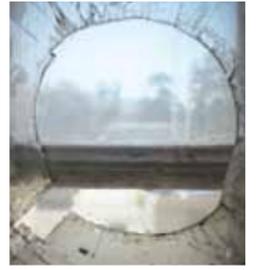
ENTRY CORRIDOR



ROOM 133A



ROOM 101



ROOM 101 DETAIL



ROOM 136



ROOM 138



ROOM 138



ROOM 138



ROOM 158



ROOM 158



ROOM 158 DETAIL



ROOM 133



ROOM 133



ROOM 133



ROOM 133



ROOM 134



ROOM 134 WINDOW DETAIL



ROOM 135



ROOM 151



ROOM 130



ROOM 130



ROOM 130



ROOM 130



ROOM 130 WASHROOM



ROOM 130 WASHROOM DETAIL



ROOM 157



S. WEST CORRIDOR LEVEL ONE



NORTH CORRIDOR LEVEL ONE



ROOM 107



ROOM 107 DETAIL



ROOM 107 DETAIL



ROOM 132A



ROOM 248A



VIEW FROM ROOM 248A



VIEW FROM ROOM 244



HEALTH SERVICES ENTRY



ROOM 230



S. EAST CORRIDOR LEVEL TWO



S. EAST CORRIDOR LEVEL TWO



ROOM 202 DETAIL



ROOM 202



ROOM 202 WINDOW DETAIL



ROOM 202 WINDOW DETAIL



ROOM 203 WINDOW DETAIL



ROOM 203 WINDOW DETAIL



ROOM 203 DETAIL



HEALTH SERVICES DETAIL



ROOM 210 ENTRY



ROOM 210 DETAIL



ROOM 210



ROOM 210 WINDOW DETAIL



ROOM 210 INTERIOR WINDOW



NORTH CORRIDOR LEVEL TWO



Unemployment is capitalism's way of getting you to plant a garden.

—Orson Scott Card

It is the people who have no say in making wars who suffer from the consequences of them.

—Philippa Carr



Bobby Shelton continues to tend to the remains of the garden where *Strawberry Flag* planted healing grounds for veterans.



COMING TO TERMS WITH HISTORY AND OURSELVES: ONE PERSON'S STORY

As the summer drew to a close and the Strawberry Sunday gatherings on the quad in front of Building 208 neared what we thought was the end of their run, a Navy veteran came to the mic on October 3. She carried no musical instrument. She brought no poetry to read. She did not sing. She had simply told the host that she would like to come up and say a few words. This is what she said.

Eh, I'll make this really quick. It's not poetry or anything, so it's kind of an on-the-fly essay. I guess I would call it an ode to Lauren Bon, Building 209, and the Strawberry Flag exercise.

I really don't talk about my past very much. I have been out at the VA for a good number of years in about every capacity you can be: employee, patient, visitor, volunteer, etc. And when this Strawberry Flag first started, I really wasn't involved in it. I had seen them setting up and came and asked about it, and it sounded really interesting, although I really didn't know what it was about. And I was sort of going through a situation where my VA archive, which I keep on the grounds, has been traveling all over the campus, and I basically needed a place to store it. So in my kind of self-serving way, even though my material did benefit the Strawberry Flag and veterans, Lauren and the artists were very kind and gave me a place to store these materials; many of these materials became used in the history and stuff with the Strawberry Flag. And basically I kind of got more than I bargained for, because in helping them with their history, I didn't think that I would be confronting my—my own history at the same—excuse me—at the same time.

One Friday, Lauren was bringing a tour into Building 209, and I just happened to want to see what they were doing with the people they brought up on the Friday trolley. And so I went in and looked. And I wasn't planning on revealing any of this, but I had actually been a patient in Building 209, and a lot of the people that were patients in 209, in these old buildings, are gone now. And in a way I felt it was kind of my responsibility to kind of come clean and sort of come out with it as a living person that's come from the old VA—and the old VA treatment systems back before patients really had a whole lot of rights that were enforced—it was very paternalistic.

My takeaway lesson from all of this,

other than a big thank you to Lauren and all this staff and the veterans that have participated in the Flag, is when she took remnants and pieces of this building, 209, and took them into the [LACMA] courtyard and put a piece together, her Strawberry Indexical Flag, and I went back on the trolley that Friday with them. And to see the pieces of 209 in the courtyard of the LACMA museum was basically more than I could take. Because I thought, if I would have thought back to when I was sitting on the ward and I would have said to a staff member, "Hey, you know what? Twenty years from now there's going to be no patients in these buildings; some artist is going to come along and build like an art piece—part of it here, and then they're going to take part of it down to LACMA, and well-heeled art patrons are going to pay money to see it, or just walk through and not have to pay for that part," they would have said, "You are out of your mind—you need more meds."

You know, completely! But yet, this is exactly what has transpired, and I really want people to know that back in those days there really wasn't a whole lot of hope. And I got sent up here because another VA didn't know basically how to deal with me, so a lot of their problem children ended up in 209. So, it's been uplifting, it's been healing. I mean I just love to hear the veterans with their massive amounts of talent—they're playing music and poetry that's just lovely and touching, and the children that are out here and the dogs that are out here. The artists and civilians and veterans and everyone getting together and making like a beautiful thing together—I don't know what to call it, but it's something that I would have never have thought of as possible.

I think this whole Strawberry Flag experience and this courtyard thing and everything has come together to create something very special, and it's been wonderful to be a part of it, and I want everybody to take back with them whenever they are with other veterans or with civilians or whoever, that anything is possible and there's new beginnings to be made. I mean, there was lots of ugly stuff that has gone on out here on these campuses, and I don't want to leave it on a downer note, but the good thing is that an artist [has] seen some kind of possibility to come out here and plant flowers and to make a flag, and they had veterans working in the kitchen, and you're getting paid work, and there's even more possibilities for the Part Two or Three or whatever—little things that spring off from this, and I just wanted to thank everybody that was a part of this.

And it's just been—I would say that this has been one of the more positive of my post-military experiences that has really struck a nerve with me and touched my heart in ways that I didn't think were possible. So thank you to Lauren, thank you everybody for being a part of it.

The Studio for Southern California History

SHARON SEKHON

Sharon Sekhon is the director of The Studio for Southern California History. The Studio's reference library boasts nearly 1,300 publications related to Southern California history, including books, documentaries, fiction films, magazines, and various ephemera such as maps and postcards. She has actively participated in Strawberry Flag's high teas and tours and brought her considerable knowledge about the history of place to our programs. The Studio's website is www.socalstudio.org.

The Studio for Southern California History (Studio) was founded four years ago by a group of dedicated historians, teachers, and artists as a place to critically chronicle and disseminate the region's social history to foster a sense of place, or the connection one may have to a particular place. Since its beginnings, the Studio has included the role of veterans in our history. We have collected oral histories from veterans of World War II—including Tom Floyd, who served under Patton at the Normandie Invasion and the Battle of the Bulge, and Ethel Greenfield Booth, who

joined the Navy at the age of 18 to fight fascism—and more recent conflicts such as the Vietnam War. In doing these poignant interviews, we have discovered that the condition currently called "post traumatic stress disorder" was often called "battle fatigue" after World War II, and is nothing new. The stress of being at war and then coming back to a society that has no idea what that means has long been a source of profound anxiety to veterans.

One reason the Studio does its work is to highlight the often-ignored parts of our history. In this way, the Studio recovers lost history or history people did not want to discuss publicly but that can now be shared after the passage of time. We encourage individuals to donate digital scans of family photographs to show change over time in Southern California, but to also bring the idea home that we have more in common than not. The Studio focuses on the basics of the human experience: birth, death, work, school, courtship, parenthood, and military service, if applicable.

Much of the Studio's past programming is available online at the LA History Archive (www.lahistoryarchive.org), a resource that was funded in part by a generous grant from the Annenberg Foundation. In addition to its membership program, there are different ways to support the Studio's work—such as by purchasing a Studio product like LA History Playing Cards or a T-shirt with an L.A. history event or person highlighted on the back.

The Studio's ongoing exhibit, called "Love is Living Large in Los Angeles," opened September 4, 2010 in conjunction with the recognized birthday for the founding of the pueblo of Los Angeles: September 4, 1871. This exhibit focuses on different individuals who contributed to building community across Southern California history and includes an exhibit dedicated to activists, athletes, artists, business leaders, writers, lawyers, preservationists, workers and other individuals who "lived large" in Los Angeles by a life actively engaged towards building a better good.

VETERANS' SPORTS: IT'S A SHUTOUT

TERENCE LYONS

What's a newspaper without a sports page? A breakfast without orange juice? A day without sunshine? Throughout the brief life of the Strawberry Gazette, we have made an effort to put together a sports page, or at least a sports story, for our readers at the West Los Angeles VA. But in the course of that effort, we have discovered something even more perplexing than a newspaper without sports news: a campus of nearly a thousand resident veterans, and tens of thousands of outpatient veterans, without a sports program. Or sports facilities.

The VA has a Wellness Center, but we're talking about sports.

As recently as the summer of 2009, MacArthur Field at the north end of the VA grounds hosted softball games between the Dom and the Haven. New Directions fielded a team and played there too. But there were no games to report this past summer, and so no sports news in the Gazette. You can't report what doesn't happen.

At the October meeting of the Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (GLAHS) Mental Health Consumer Advocacy Council, it was reported that MacArthur Field is no longer available to such veterans' teams

because the facility is now subject to a sharing agreement for use by non-veteran sports activities. Someone remarked that the only swimming pool on the VA grounds was filled in and taken out of use years ago. There is no gymnasium on the campus. No tennis court. No handball, racquetball, or squash courts. Not even an outdoor basketball or volleyball court on which to play a game.

There is a golf course, but veterans can only use it under the aegis of a therapist.

Like an "athletic club" for veterans who were once in the best shape of their lives.

The VA Greater Los Angeles Annual Report for 2009 states that 79,893 "unique patients" were treated that year, meaning 79,893 distinct and different veterans without double-counting for any one vet's multiple visits. And there are 1.4 million vets in the Greater Los Angeles (GLA) service area, according to the VA website www.losangeles.va.gov/about. Would it not be a good thing if the GLAHS headquarters facility in West L.A.—the largest VA facility in the country—had a handball court or a pool or a gym (boxing ring?) for those vets to use? Like an "athletic club" for veterans who were once in the best shape of their lives.

And then there are the several hundreds of vets who live on the West L.A. campus.

The Consumer Council—not a VA staff group, but an advocacy council that represents the consumers of VA services (that is, veterans and their families)—voted in October to appoint a committee to look into the lack of athletic facilities for veterans at West L.A. and report back to them.

It's not as though there are no resources available at all. The GLA 2009 Annual Report shows \$113,577,363 for "facilities" in its Fiscal Year 2009 budget of \$744,547,205. And there is certainly enough land for some athletic facilities, even after turning over twenty-two acres to Brentwood School for its athletic complex that serves well under a thousand students.

It is no secret that the VA will soon be dealing with the substantial influx of veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan. Many of them will surely require medical care, including treatment for physical disabilities and mental health disorders. But even those who do not—men and women who are now in the best shape of their lives—will require a place to call home. A place where they, as veterans, can pursue and maintain the lifelong goal of *mens sana in corpore sano*—a sound mind in a sound body. Don't we all need that?



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
11301 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90073

October 7, 2010

The Annenberg Foundation
2000 Avenue of the Stars, Suite 1000
Los Angeles, CA 90067

Attn: Lauren Bon

Dear Ms. Bon,

In our letter of July 29th, 2010, a 6-month extension was approved for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Operation (Strawberry) F.L.A.G. Expiration of this extension was September 18, 2010. An additional 2-week period was approved for clearing VA property and restoring it back to its original state, making the final date for exiting the site October 2, 2010.

On Wednesday, September 29th a visit to the project site revealed most of the project property was still intact. There was however, evidence of project staff disassembling items and removing them from the property.

In a conversation with the project site manager, Rochelle Fabb, it was guaranteed that the entire project would be cleared out of buildings 205, 208 and 209 and from the quad area by October 2nd. The exception to this guarantee was that the Army Reserve was deployed and could not retrieve their tent until a later date.

Today, a site visit was conducted and there was evidence that the Strawberry F.L.A.G. project has not cleared VA property. The kitchen on the 2nd floor of building 208 remains fully functional and the office space is still occupied by project staff that continues activities for the Strawberry Gazette.

In the quad area, there are several planters aligned on the brick patio near building 205. The gazebo is still erect with continuous music being played in the background. The water bladder is still lying full of water in front of building 208. It was also discovered that the Airstream trailer and camo that once sat between buildings 208 and 209 has been relocated to the back side of parking lot 39 near the soccer field.

Please be advised that additional usage of VA property is not approved. Accordingly, all the above mentioned project items must be removed from the VA property immediately. Your immediate response is requested as well as an action plan for removal of Strawberry F.L.A.G. project property. Please coordinate this action plan and removal of property with Lori Jackson, Associate Chief, Asset Management at (310)268-3789.

Sincerely,

Donna M. Beiter, R.N., M.S.N.
Director

In Reply Refer To: 691/10A5

Bakersfield Community
Based Outpatient Clinic
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Bakersfield, CA 93301
(661) 632-1800

Los Angeles Ambulatory
Care Center
351 E. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
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Santa Barbara Community
Based Outpatient Clinic
4440 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
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Sepulveda Ambulatory Care
Center and Nursing Home
16111 Plummer Street
North Hills, CA 91343
(818) 891-7711

West Los Angeles
Healthcare Center
11301 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90073
(310) 478-3711

METABOLIC STUDIO

Via Federal Express – Overnight Delivery & Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested

October 11, 2010

Donna M. Beiter, R.N., M.S.N.
Director
Department of Veterans Affairs
Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
11301 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90073

Re: Strawberry Flag Project of the Metabolic Studio
Discontinuation of Compensated Work Therapy Program

Dear Ms. Beiter:

This letter acknowledges your letter to me dated October 7, 2010 regarding the Strawberry Flag project of the Metabolic Studio, a charitable activity of The Annenberg Foundation, in which you directed that all Strawberry Flag "project items must be removed from the VA property immediately." Please be advised that we have removed all materials on site you listed minus the blue bench where veterans and clinicians sit daily. We have left it behind as a gift that we hope our Veterans will continue to enjoy.

Moving forward, it was our expectation that you would honor the MOU that I have signed with the CWT program, a copy of which is enclosed. It is of utmost importance that the Veterans we have been working with be encouraged to continue their trailblazing endeavors and for this model to be clinically studied so as to be of service to future service men and women whose well being is the purpose of both your work and ours. I was troubled to receive your letter as the success of our continued work at the VA of WLA is aimed at making it a place that sets new standards of excellence for the CWT program nationally.

The Strawberry Flag CWT program on the West Los Angeles VA property has been widely recognized and acclaimed as an innovative success story that has provided an unprecedented benefit to the men and women who have served our nation, a benefit that they have certainly earned and deserve to continue to receive. Indeed, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs itself has recognized the success of the Strawberry Flag CWT program in an article entitled "Success Story: Strawberry Flag Project," which appears on its web site at: www.cwt.va.gov/StrawberryFlag.asp. Moreover, the Strawberry Flag CWT project is currently the second largest source of CWT jobs at the West Los Angeles VA property, which has provided unique training, opportunities and, most

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METABOLIC STUDIO

Thank you very much for your attention to this matter and I look forwarding to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Lauren Bon

Enclosure: MOU For Continuation of CWT Program

cc: The Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, Secretary of Veterans Affairs
The Honorable Bob Filner, Chairman, House Committee on Veterans Affairs
Roger L. Brautigan, Secretary, California Department of Veterans Affairs
William C. Schoenhard, Deputy Under Secretary, Health Operations and Management
Robert A. Petzel, MD, Under Secretary for Health
Zev Yaroslavsky, LA County Supervisor, 3rd District
Joseph Ciccone, Chief, Greater Los Angeles Veterans Affairs,
Compensated Work Therapy
David Fierro, Program Coordinator, GLA VA, Compensated Work Therapy
Barbara Fallen, Network Director,
Jonathan Sherin, MD, Chief of Mental Health, Department of Veterans Affairs,
Miami, Florida, and Vice Chair, University of Miami, Department of Psychiatry
and Behavioral Science
Richard L. Fox, Esq., Dilworth Paxson LLP

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DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
11301 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90073

In Reply Refer To: 691/10A5

October 12, 2010

The Annenberg Foundation
2000 Avenue of the Stars, Suite 1000
Los Angeles, CA 90067
Attn: Lauren Bon

Dear Ms. Bon,

In a letter dated July 29th, 2010, a 6-month extension expiring September 18, 2010 was approved for the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Operation (Strawberry) F.L.A.G. An additional 2-week period was approved for clearing VA property and restoring it back to its original state, making the final date for exiting the site October 2, 2010. Based on site visits to the project on September 29th, October 7th, and October 12th, 2010, this has not occurred. Notwithstanding the many benefits Veterans received from the program, there is currently no agreement in place which grants the Annenberg Foundation access to VA property.

For those Veterans who were participating in this project through Compensated Work Therapy (CWT), alternative therapeutic work assignments will be made available from within our existing programs. These assignments will be consistent with the therapeutic needs of these individuals.

You are hereby notified that as of 5:00 p.m. on Friday, October 15, 2010, you will no longer have access to the areas shared under the now-expired MOU. Please remove all materials and belongings from VA grounds, including the Airstream trailer which has been relocated to lot 39, and return all VA keys issued to you.

I have reviewed your letter dated October 11, 2010. At this time, we are not interested in pursuing your request to enter into an MOU for continuation of this program.

Thank you for your enthusiasm for serving our Nation's heroes.

Sincerely,

Donna M. Beiter, R.N., M.S.N.
Director

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1801 Westwind Drive
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(310) 478-3711



METABOLIC STUDIO

importantly, instilled a sense of confidence, pride, inspiration and hope, to those Veterans who have participated in this project. Our CWT jobs on the VA property provide creative, meaningful and purposeful work. To abruptly put an end to the Strawberry Flag CWT-related activities on the VA property that have been created and fostered by the project would truly result in a grave injustice to our nation's Veterans. Indeed, it is absolutely vital for the CWT program of the Strawberry Flag project to continue to be conducted on the West Los Angeles VA property, particularly in light of the fact that the project is dedicated solely and exclusively to Veteran purposes, in contrast to many other situations where the VA property has been allowed to be used for purposes unrelated to Veteran causes.

Of particular significance in this matter is that the West Los Angeles VA property was originally conveyed under a deed requiring the property to be held in trust as a "home" for Veterans. Our continued presence on the West Los Angeles VA property furthers this mandate by advancing the success of Strawberry Flag in building a bridge between the notion of home and the reality of hospital, thereby serving the very purpose for which the land was intended. Obviously, this purpose cannot be achieved if we cannot continue to operate on the West Los Angeles VA property. Indeed, it is of paramount importance that the kitchen and print studio established through the support and efforts of the Metabolic Studio remain on the West Los Angeles VA property, as they are critical to the success of the CWT program, are already successfully being conducted on the VA property, and their continuing to operate on the VA property continues the various synergies that have been created over the last year, which cannot be replicated if these operations are moved off the VA property.

Historically, the "Soldiers Home" was established as a haven for recuperating Civil War Union soldiers. Tea was served daily at 3 in the afternoon. Among its activities intended to help create a "home" at the VA, Strawberry Flag's kitchen located on the second floor in Building 208 has reestablished that ritual. The daily practice of sharing a cup of tea has become therapeutically important for many Veterans located on the West Los Angeles VA property. It also offers important skill-building to CWT workers in daily outreach to Veterans on the property.

The kitchen in Building 208 is currently operated as a CWT job site and is supervised by a Veteran in the CWT program. During the course of our project, the kitchen has served fifty cups of tea each week for seventy-five weeks. It is already a fully functional and fully staffed kitchen and it is down the hall from the new computer room where Veterans in transition go to look for work. The two spaces compliment each other. The Metabolic Studio would remain the employer for this kitchen. There are currently ongoing discussions regarding how this space might also develop into a catering kitchen for the newly opened "California Veterans' Home" in West Los Angeles, to serve tea to Veterans there, and add to the social dimension that creates a place called "home." This newly opened agency has also requested that the Veterans currently working at our print studio on the VA property produce its print material. They are eager to use Veterans in employment.

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METABOLIC STUDIO

The print studio is also a CWT job site. It is currently managed by a Veteran who has successfully graduated from CWT into a management consultancy position with the Metabolic Studio. The print studio is also fully operational in Building 208 and there is a "cross pollination" between this creative space and the vocational art therapy space in the same building. This is a hugely popular program with the Veterans in a cross section of programs located on the North Side of the campus. These programs include the Domiciliary, the Haven, Naomi House, New Directions, A Home for Heroes, as well as individuals who are coming from the hospital to participate. We already have bona fide customers who are ordering shirts designed and printed by the Veterans on campus. This offers a rare opportunity for Veterans to find value in their creativity right away. This creative space being located near the kitchen supports the well-being that all of us working to create a better link between healing and well-being can see is palpable.

In addition to the kitchen and print studio, our newspaper, the Strawberry Gazette, www.strawberrygazette.org, has offices located in Building 208. This paper is managed by a Veteran and in design cooperation with the print studio offers a rare window to look at two Veteran industries made strong by physical proximity.

CWT offices, located in Building 208, have been in daily contact with Strawberry Flag team members and have been heartened by the positive effects that the Strawberry Flag project has had on their patients. We have received national acknowledgement of the success of our program including, as indicated above, by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs itself. For this reason, CWT has offered us a new MOU to continue the CWT program on the VA property in connection with the kitchen, print studio, and newspaper, and we are still at work on the site and hope to continue to be on site. It is important to understand that the weave of operations that our CWT program allows is possible only if it is allowed to interweave on the VA property. Moreover, the investment of the Metabolic Studio can only be truly maximized if it can be co-authored with the CWT program on the VA property.

The Metabolic Studio as a practice supports innovation. We are interested in supporting innovation that has emerged as part of our experience of working with Veterans and clinicians at the VA of West Los Angeles. The work needs to happen there because ultimately our investment is in the VA itself being able to "own" these innovations. Strawberry Flag as an "object" has departed and in the space that is left behind is the potential for continued enterprise that the Veterans themselves brought to the work. We hope that the executive leadership will allow the Veterans to continue to help forge the way to their own deinstitutionalization and we would respectfully request that you reconsider your position.

We are truly indebted to the VA for cooperating with us in establishing the Strawberry Flag project on the West Los Angeles VA property and appreciate all of your cooperation with this project. We look forward to continuing our relationship with you so that the Veterans on the West Los Angeles VA property can continue to reap the benefits of this project, which they so richly deserve. We would be happy to meet with you personally to discuss this matter further.

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METABOLIC STUDIO

October 13, 2010

Donna M. Beiter, R.N., M.S.N.
Director
Department of Veterans Affairs
Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
11301 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90073

Re: Strawberry Flag Project of the Metabolic Studio
Discontinuation of Compensated Work Therapy Program

Dear Ms. Beiter:

I am writing in response to your letter of October 12, 2010 in which you advised me that the Strawberry Flag CWT workers would be reassigned to alternative work assignments and that, as of 5 p.m. on Friday, October 15, 2010, we will no longer have access to the VA site on which we have operated our program over the last year, stating that "Notwithstanding the many benefits received from the program, there is currently no agreement in place which grants the Annenberg Foundation access to VA property." Your letter also advises that you have reviewed our October 11, 2010 letter and that at this time, "we are not interested in pursuing your request to enter into an MOU for continuation of this program."

Preliminarily, I would emphasize that we were extremely dismayed by the tone of your letter. As you know, we have been a strong advocate, supporter and benefactor of the Veterans at the West Los Angeles VA. Your letter, however, treats us as an adversary, rather than the friend we have been. We are also troubled by the fact that despite our taking the time and effort of providing you with a thoughtful and detailed letter fully explaining the need for our CWT program to continue on the VA campus, your letter summarily dismisses us, without any explanation whatsoever or your providing us with the in-person meeting that we requested to discuss this matter further. We certainly don't deserve to be treated in this manner.

Moreover, it is our understanding that despite the lack of a signed agreement between us, we are, in fact, legally entitled to continue our CWT program on the VA campus. This is the case because in reliance of the oral promises we received over the last few months from the VA CWT that our program would continue on the VA campus beyond October 2, 2010 under a new MOU, we proceeded to incur significant obligations, expend substantial funds, and take a variety of actions and engage in

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METABOLIC STUDIO

various activities in connection with the CWT program extending beyond October 2. Therefore, we reasonably relied to our detriment on the promise of the VA CWT that our program would be continued on the VA campus beyond October 2 and it is our understanding that you are now estopped under the law from asserting that because "there is currently no agreement in place," you can simply discontinue our program. We understand that this is an injustice that would not be tolerated under the law.

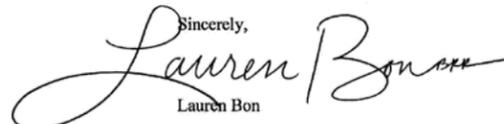
We have also been notified in an email today from Jeff Blake that "while there may be an opportunity in the future, at this time you should plan to operate without a CWT program for any off-campus work." As a result, you would be denying Veterans of the opportunity to participate in the Strawberry Flag CWT program, both on and off the VA campus. Considering that the Strawberry Flag CWT program has been widely recognized and acclaimed as an innovative success story, including by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs itself, there is absolutely no justification for this position.

As proven allies of the VA of West Los Angeles in particular and significant contributors to the civics of democracy for over a half a century, we are entitled to more than a cursory rejection letter from you. In fact, we have the right to due process, a right we are prepared to protect if necessary through appropriate legal remedies, which may include seeking a temporary restraining order or an injunction.

Los Angeles, with the largest population of veterans in the United States, has the eye of the nation on it. Your stewardship of this crucial Los Angeles program is moving in a direction that is not putting patient care at its center if it involves summarily rejecting all that has been carefully built here under our stewardship. As a Director of the Annenberg Foundation, I have the responsibility to ensure that the public funds that have been spent at the VA of West Los Angeles continue to do the work and achieve the purposes for which they were intended. Namely, to de-alienate healing spaces and to create a place where Veterans can at least feel at home, which is exactly the purpose for which the property was intended: a home for recuperating soldiers.

I would suggest that we meet personally as soon as possible to discuss this further, in an effort to amicably reach a resolution of this matter.

Sincerely,


Lauren Bon

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It isn't that they can't see the solution. It is that they can't see the problem.

—G.K. Chesterton

I never give them hell. I just tell the truth and they think it's hell.

—Harry S. Truman



New Directions Choir rehearsed for two days with Berlin director Walter Asmus and then performed a dramatic rendition of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, October 31, 2010 at the VA of WLA.

THE STRAWBERRY SUNDAYS' HARVEST

WITH PAUL CROWLEY

Paul Crowley: The veterans that come up on Sunday afternoons, we have both performers that play music, some of their own stuff and cover some of the other musicians from the 70s, 80s, whatever. Then we have a group of veterans that come up and read

poetry, it's all their poetry, originally written, from stuff about their experience in the military, in the wars, and afterwards, with homelessness, drug abuse, alcoholism, whatever happened to them over their life. And what I've observed by watching these guys and listening to them...

the stuff they are putting out is stuff from their core, it's stuff that they sit down when they are alone and write about, it's stuff that is important to them and really hits home.

Laura Sanderson Healy: And Strawberry Sundays got them to do that, to sit down and write.

Paul Crowley: Almost all of the poets that come up there and read have never read in public before,

have never shared their stuff with really anybody. And musicians too, there's a couple musicians that had never played in public too. It's amazing to hear. There are actually two performers—one poet and one musician actually told me that Strawberry Sundays and Strawberry Flag really saved their lives and they feel because of the positive energy and what they get to do up here and everything like that—this has changed their lives immensely. It's

given them a more positive outlook for their futures. And again back to the poets, poetry is cathartic, they get more out of it by reading it to them, baring their souls to the audience, baring their souls and getting such a great response. It far outweighs anything they could get from a counselor, a psychologist, a psychiatrist.

A Veteran's Pride

BY BRUCE RILEY

this is a poem for
all the lonely vets
the ones i haven't met
this is a poem for
the boys in uniform
the ones here now
and the ones before

this is a poem about our FLAG
keep it high
so it won't sag
i never let it drag
it's red, white and blue
we fly it high for me
and you

it's a symbol of our
courage and our faith
it's there so we can face
the soldiers from the wars
the wars from every place
so, i am for one, full
of pride to know your
by my side
to know at least we tried
we didn't run or hide
i'll preach it loud
to show i'm proud

Untitled

BY AN ANONYMOUS VETERAN

Long ago two families knew what was needed
Codified in their will their land they deeded
A gift to the fighting men of this nation
A place of healing, a permanent station
This hallowed ground
A beacon for veterans all around
In modern times increasingly unheeded
Perceived by our government an excess of land unneeded.

Why do senior VA staff live on site
Like some kind of parasite?
For them there is no urgency
In a 9-1-1 emergency
It's city fire who's paid to inquire.
What of our homeless veterans' plight?
Why does leadership treat them as part of urban blight?
Do they dream of a hallowed land stolen in broad daylight?

This VA hospital tertiary
Is built upon the old soldiers' sanctuary
The sole purpose of the deed
Was to be there for veterans in need.

Isotopes to rotten cantaloupes
Everything it would seem
Has been tossed in the ravine
From headstones to telephones
Into this impromptu dumping ground
Unusual items can be found
Buried beneath this toxic mound.

Rumors of radioactivity
Just beneath human activity
Look, there's Rover

Rolling in the glowing clover
Six million years for the half-life to decay
What does it matter? We'll all be long gone anyway.

Your kids won't need to wear lead shields
To play sports on Brentwood School's athletic fields
Everything will be just fine
Go ahead! Sign on the dotted line
It's all in the enhanced use lease
Another part of the Golden Fleece.

Then one day the land did shake
It became a casualty of the Northridge Quake
Oh Sepulveda what became an ordinary clinic
Oh I'm such a cynic
State-of-the-art E.R./Urgent Care promised
All I saw was Building 2 demolished
Another promise abolished.

At Sepulveda I'm more likely to see a movie set
Than a fellow disabled vet
When fictional patients generate more revenue
What's a VA manager to do?

"Oh, screw you, veterans" is the message that gets through
Over the years my growing frustration
To see our sacred lands
Subject to ever-growing exploitation
Alternate funding streams
To keep the VA from falling apart at the seams
This is all part of the misuse, better known as fraud, waste,
and abuse.



KELLYE

VIDEO TESTIMONIAL
OCTOBER 8, 2010

Kellye Coleman, a non-veteran, is a licensed MFC therapist volunteering at Strawberry Flag.

Hello. My name is Kellye Coleman. I am a [licensed] marriage and family therapist. I work at a psychiatric facility here in Southern California. I've worked there for the past seven years. I've been a trauma therapist. I have worked with people with a number of mental disorders: schizophrenia, bipolar. We've actually had quite a few veterans come in, in crisis.

I just want to make it brief. I have been brought on board here recently to just help out and give some clinical information regarding this program which I truly believe in. From what I've seen, it's positive in all aspects and I would like to be on board to sort of be the person here on site to be a clinician and help with the veterans issues, anything that would come up while they were on site, I would be here to assist with that.

And just a brief overview of what I see is happening here and why I think it's so important, is the fact that the Metabolic Studio and the Annenberg Foundation has been providing employment, and the stats that I believe I have here is that at least seven compensated work therapy employees have been working here on site and it has been extremely productive for them. I have talked to each one individually and said that this has given them a place to work, feel productive, which in turn helps them feel some self worth, they feel valuable. We have the kitchen here where everybody comes in and joins together and eats and socializes and feels validated. This is not to say that this isn't happening at the VA but from what I see therapeutically this site acts as a sort of decompression site.

A lot of the vets have told me that they're in trauma therapy and when they bring up a lot of their trauma during groups, this has given them a place to come and use a better coping skill. They come here to cook; they come here and eat lunch, and communicate. This helps them to start to relax. There needs to be an environment that is not as clinical but more of just a therapeutic, calming space that's safe. It's definitely safe. As a clinician, I've observed and it's a safe environment and it's also a place where the community is involved with veterans which is a bit unheard of.

The mythology behind the Vietnam vets [is] that they were kind of left out in the street, and I'm hoping a project such as this one, a pilot project would be a way to change that mythology and prove that the community does care about Vietnam vets. We don't want to see them homeless. We are willing to show up, if only the VA would allow us to be here. It's an important shift that I think the VA needs to make all over the country. It can't completely be a separate entity.

Taxpayers' money, my tax money pays for these facilities and we want to know that these people are being taken care of when they return. I believe that the Iraqi and Afghanistan vets are going to be coming home and it's going to increase the population here and instead of dealing with it when it's a crisis, can't we just do a preemptive strike and start projects such as this one where the community feels involved? I think that connection makes the vets feel empowered and they don't feel hopeless. Clinically and therapeutically it's a win-win all the way around. The [Annenberg] Foundation is willing to employ vets and the goal was to employ even more. How can that be a bad thing? I don't understand. That's my two cents. I hope that we get permission to stay. Thank you.

CURTIS

VIDEO TESTIMONIAL
OCTOBER 8, 2010

Veteran Curtis Bailey works as an artist through CWT at the Strawberry Flag Print Studio.

I don't understand sometimes where everybody's at. VA's a good place. You got a lot of people who need a lot of help; mental, physical, clinical, and medical, I guess you could say. The VA can fix all that. There's a lot of things that that realm doesn't fix. It doesn't even begin to get there. The only thing that could fix these areas is people. People taking care of people. Vets taking care of vets. Compassion. I'm grateful for every day I'm on this earth. I'm grateful for every day that I wake up and breathe oxygen. I'm grateful for what has been given to me in these last few years of my life.

We've got an awful lot of our boys, young boys, who've given up everything, their life, and some of them have given up their lifestyle, their family, their youth, their innocence, and they're doing all this just so that we can go home at night and watch our TV, drive our cars, sit in a park, eat whatever we want, whatever, whenever we want and hopefully, God willing, they'll be coming home soon. Some are not going to be in very good shape. There's nothing nice over there. We can fix their broken legs, repair their wounds, sew them back together, heal them, and make them feel better, physically, clinically. We can't let these men and women go to the wayside—history's shown that doesn't work. Everybody knows what we're talking about there.

When I got here to the VA, I came here clean and sober but I had some issues in my life that I really didn't understand. I was pretty depressed. I had some medical issues. I came here and got my medical fixed up. They're still working

on some things, but hey, you know, I'm old, I'm falling apart.

Things that can't be fixed here at the VA is what really needs to be looked at. It's people taking care of people. How to see compassion in your heart for another human being who might just need a helping hand, somebody to talk to, a shoulder to lean on for a minute, somebody to walk with, simple stuff, to be shown that people care about love, kindness, compassion. We're in a fellowship; you used to call it 'brotherly love.' Sometimes that's all it takes. It's going to be what a lot of people need when they get back and that's what I found up here, up on the hill. I didn't expect to find any of this when I got here. I came here to have my teeth fixed and take care of other medical issues, things like that. Thank you VA very much for helping me with that. I feel better physically. But I feel a whole lot better mentally, emotionally thanks to all the friends and the new family that I've met up here on the hill, 208, 209, and with what seems to be a bad word up here, the *Strawberry Flag*. These people, they showed me kindness, gave me time, allowed me to discover that I actually have some artistic talents that I would never have been able to explore if I hadn't come up here. These people are worth their weight in gold if not more. They've given me purpose in my life. I volunteered hours and days and weeks up here for nothing because to be around these people, that's how good it felt.

Now I'm working what they call a CWT job up here on the hill. It started with the *Strawberry Flag* people, but they've been told to leave, to go away. For what? Why? What'd they do? I don't get it. I don't understand. I'm still up here working but I don't know; is that in jeopardy, is that in danger? Do we, veterans, got to go away now too? When is that going to happen? I don't know.

Well, I'm not sure why but I think somebody was under the assumption that these buildings were not used. I know that not 208 but 205 and 209 are underutilized. I have no idea why 208 was included in that when there's four functioning programs in this building. I would like to know who made that decision that this building was empty. Yeah, I mean I can understand the building to our left, the one where the print studio is, I know that one is not being used and the building to our right, I believe only the bottom floor is used as a mailroom. Other than that, I don't think there's anything functioning there. So, I have no problem if something happens to those buildings, but not ours when you have a homemaking program to our left, an occupational therapy program downstairs, a vocational rehab program on both floors, and the Wellness Center to our right. I don't understand what would be the need to get rid of all these programs or have us moved.

—David Fierro, VCED

18TH ANNUAL VETERANS' HOLIDAY CELEBRATION

Sunday, December 5, 2010
1–6:30pm

Join us as we honor and thank you, our Veterans and Active Duty Personnel
Great fun, delicious food and live entertainment.

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HOROSCOPES

ARIES (March 21–April 19)

This month, a relationship of yours reaches a new level of understanding and commitment. Money occupies your thoughts, and much of your free time goes to learning about finance. Don't get too swept up by your research, dear Aries. Be sure to listen to others more than offering your opinion this November. A travel opportunity will come toward the end of the month.

TAURUS (April 20–May 20)

November is a great month for finding new love. However, if you are already involved, be ready to argue over where you've been spending your time. Your financial responsibilities will take precedence over your social life this month, dear Taurus. This is the time to look into those health issues that have been nagging at you. You will experience good news on the last two days of the month. Professional secrecy will lead to devastating circumstances.

GEMINI (May 21–June 21)

Joy and love are in the stars for you this month, dear Gemini, if you can put your work aside long enough to let them in! Money is a hard matter for you to talk about this November, but it does take up much of your time and thoughts. There is an activity that you've been asked to join in by an elder male—go for it! It's the right path for you to be on. Money owed to you by a family member will return at the end of the month.

CANCER (June 22–July 22)

Romance and your social life will come in full swing this month. You've been busy at work, but now's the time to focus on your home life and relationships. However, dear Cancer, avoid bringing coworkers into your personal life; it will lead to trouble later. The last week of November will bring the need to become more active and exercise. Spending some time alone will help you bring out your creativity, which has been dormant for some time now.

LEO (July 23–August 22)

Leo, the beginning of the month will prove difficult and full of seemingly fruitless work. However, it is necessary work, and your life will return to normal midmonth. Single Leos, you may meet a new love through your job. Be careful with money this November; you've been spending recklessly and it's catching up with you. This is an emotional month for you, but persevere, the ease of the next few months will be your reward.

VIRGO (Aug. 23–Sep. 22)

Turn up the charm this month, Virgo! You've had your eyes set on someone or something and this is the month for you to go out and get it! Your romantic partner is acting irresponsible this month, and it may be time to downgrade your relationship with this person—do this on the 15–16 when you'll be most persuasive. You'll meet some very eccentric people toward the end of November and will end up in the most unusual circumstances with them—just go with it, you'll have fun.

LIBRA (Sept. 23–Oct. 23)

You need to make time for your friends and family this month, though this will be a hard task because November is full of work-related responsibilities. However, the 10th through the 12th is a good time to ask for the raise you've been working toward. Organize your personal finances this month and stop overspending. Others may rile you up, but keep calm no matter what, dear Libra.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24–Nov. 21)

Your home life does not require much attention this month, though you will start to daydream about your ideal home. Feel free to talk to your partner about this; it's likely they have been thinking about it too. You have plenty of confidence this November and it shows! Your coworkers are looking to your opinion and ideas to take direction from, dear Scorpio. Catch up on your paperwork and return the e-mails you've been putting off.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22–Dec. 21)

November is going to be a great month for you, Sagittarius! Both your career and family will bring you plenty of positive attention. There may be some wants of your own that need to be put aside in the beginning of the month as well as rethinking of your plans, but others have your best interests at heart and you will be taken care of. Only tentatively give advice this month.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22–Jan. 19)

This is a good month for love, dear Capricorn. Around the 13th, you are your most attractive and

that's the time to go after the person you've had your eye on. You are confident and hopeful this month, which is a winning combination for your social life. Financial matters will start to resolve this month. Focus on eating a much healthier diet this November. Don't travel to places you've already been.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20–Feb. 18)

Work is going to play a major role in your life. Your career has taken center stage for a few months now, but toward the end of November, your life will regain its balance. Be careful to not handle your love life like a job, it will not bode well for you. Single Aquarius, you may find a new love through job-related channels. This is not the time to test people's allegiance to you. The last week of the month is focused on friends and group activities—go ahead and enjoy yourself!

PISCES (February 19–March 20)

Dear Pisces, this is the month to be aware and cautious. You tend to live spontaneously, but try to plan ahead instead this November rather than just giving in to your desire to have a change of pace. Issues with a partner will come to a head this month; find common ground and remain honest at all times. Be careful with your money at the start of the month and be careful with your words in social settings around the 17th. Play your cards right, and close to your chest this month, and you will come out ahead.



The habit of sauntering and of indolent careless application, which is naturally, or rather necessarily acquired by every country workman who is obliged to change his work and his tools every half hour, and to

apply his hand in twenty different ways almost every day of his life, renders him almost always slothful and lazy, and incapable of any vigorous application even on the most pressing occasions.

—Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, in arguing for the division of labor

PORTRAIT OF AN ARTIST CONTINUED »

Morleigh created the show with Roxanne's equally renowned choreographer husband Oguri, the Japanese-born master of Butoh dancing, who also performed with Robert Scott and Cat Westwood, over from London. Music for the production was by Feltlike with Paul Chavez and The Edge, U2's guitarist and Morleigh's husband.

"Morleigh and Oguri collaborate really well," Roxanne told me after the show, which was more conceptual and slow-moving than the normal form of classical dance. (Oguri and Roxanne run the Body Weather Laboratory performance company and are Electric Lodge artists-in-residence.) The artist le Brocquy, she said, was a friend of *COLD DREAM COLOR*'s costume designer Mariad Whisker (what a fabulous name!)—"and I think my sister had met Louis and his wife Anne and wanted to do something that connected to the place where she lives and to the important legacy of painters and artists there."

In the program, Morleigh writes that the dance pieces crafted from le Brocquy's paintings explored the human form "both figuratively and viscerally... as a profound manifestation of the spirit, painting the full scope of the human condition with particular reference to the Irish identity." Le Brocquy's paintings "take us on an uncharted journey from the exterior reality to the complexity and mystery of the interior human landscape... his figures are imbued with a vitality that imagines a springing from the singular plane of the canvas into multidimensionality." And so, the dancers translating these ideas had the wraith-like figures slipping the confines of the picture frames and possessing the stage. At one moment, Roxanne balanced on one leg while winding up and unraveling fabric; this reminded me immediately of the Noh-inspired W. B. Yeats one-act play *At the Hawk's Well*. All the performers were made up with very pale faces, and in the dark theater it was spooky at times when all that was visible was a ghostly face suddenly appearing in the blackness.

It was a dreamlike event, well named because of its otherness; all of the participants conveyed various dynamics of families interacting together. "We had this large body of work to kind of distill," Roxanne told me, "and so we took characters from the paintings who come in and out of a lot of the work, like the mother. There's one painting that's called *Sickness* and [has] the mother lying down. My sister and I were trying to decide who would be the mother in this—she's almost like an angel, or it's like her soul is kind of coming out and she's kind of flying, so we had our two heads together and we worked with that image." Seeing the two Steinberg sisters moving sideways,

cheek to cheek, was amazing, as they seemed to defy the forces of gravity.

I enjoyed comparing notes with writer Martha Ann Babcock, who attended excerpts from *COLD DREAM COLOR* that the Steinberg sisters performed at The Flea in New York City in May. (Martha Ann had met Roxanne at *Strawberry Flag* in November when she participated in *Great Performances' Southern Stories*.) She found herself in awe of its power. "There was a lot of Irish mysticism about it," she said. "Roxanne's strong face was visible from the beginning. I thought of Irish spirits, the bog—haints, Celtic fairies, and banshees without the screams. It was also reminiscent of the Symbolist painter Odile Redon."

Martha Ann found the fabric motif interesting ("taking up the fabric, winding it up, was like life"). She also found it representative of "Irish linen—white, clingy like a cocoon; it reminded me of insects, a caterpillar making a chrysalis. Then there was unfurling the fabric, the bundle representing the woman's role in Ireland, baby after baby, having one child after another, oppressed, and sad. They threw the white linen out like a carpet, and then bundled it up. The music tinkling reminded me of Irish Waterford crystal."

In May, Oguri and Roxanne staged a mind-blowing conceptual performance called "For the Corn and Flowers" at Lauren Bon's artwork *The Anabolic Monument* at the California State Historic Park with percussionist Tatsuya Nakatani, who played cymbals, singing bowls, and a bowed gong. Roxanne reminded me here of a female Samuel Beckett character, unlayering items of material as she transited the space, while Oguri moved glacially atop the decaying straw of the former *Not A Cornfield*. I loved it when Roxanne did a slow tumble at one point and ended up laid out flat. It is always thrilling to watch such world-class performers, and I can't wait to see what she has up her multilayered sleeves next.

A CASE STUDY IN TRANSFORMATIVE PHILANTHROPY: STRAWBERRY FLAG

BY RICHARD L. FOX

Strawberry Flag was not only an artwork, but also a philanthropy project. Lawyer Richard L. Fox of the Dilworth Paxson LLP firm in Philadelphia examines the project in that light. He specializes in advising nonprofit groups and donors and is the author of the treatise *Charitable Giving: Taxation, Strategies and Planning* (Thomson Reuters). The Annenberg Foundation is among Dilworth Paxson's clients.

Strawberry Flag, a project of artist Lauren Bon and her Metabolic Studio, is a philanthropic success story and a vivid reminder that helping those in need can be accomplished by simply helping them to help themselves. What's most impressive about the success of the *Strawberry Flag* project is that although Ms. Bon is a director of the Annenberg Foundation and the Metabolic Studio is a direct charitable project of the Annenberg Foundation, *Strawberry Flag* is a low-cost project, driven to success with passion, dedication, and hard work – all with the active involvement of the very people the project was created to help, the veterans of the West Los Angeles VA.

The project falls under the increasingly popular concept of "hands-on philanthropy," where philanthropists, such as Ms. Bon, along with her Metabolic Studio team, roll up their sleeves and work from the ground up, as opposed to the traditional philanthropic concept of simply giving away money. What started out as a *Strawberry Flag* sculpture, an artwork in the form of a veterans' program, led to a full-blown *Strawberry Flag* Compensated Work Therapy ("CWT") program on the West Los Angeles VA campus. It provided meaningful work and unique training opportunities for veterans, including the opportunity to work at a fully operational print shop, kitchen, and newspaper. And it also created an outdoor sculpture at the Los

Angeles County Museum of Art and operated the "Twain" trolley tour, which raised public awareness of the difficult issues facing veterans.

Although the *Strawberry Flag* sculpture, which was the original impetus for the entire project, has now been removed from the West Los Angeles VA campus, it has left behind a major philanthropic footprint and legacy that will continue to have a lasting impression for years to come. The *Strawberry Flag* project raises important issues that are often considered in the context of philanthropy, which are addressed in the following question-and-answer format.

What is the philanthropy behind the Strawberry Flag project?

Philanthropy, in its most basic definition, is "the love of mankind." Having a will and a desire to help others in need is the defining aspect of philanthropy. Today, important aspects of philanthropy focus on an active effort to promote human welfare and the well-being of others. The *Strawberry Flag* project has taken on the long-term challenges facing veterans in the greater Los Angeles area, many of whom have trouble finding work and re-establishing themselves in society.

The *Strawberry Flag* CWT program at the West Los Angeles VA campus created meaningful and purposeful jobs, provided unique training and opportunities, and, most importantly, instilled a sense of confidence, pride, inspiration, and hope to those veterans participating in the program. By participating in this program, veterans were taught to help themselves and, in the face of often overwhelming odds, were able to achieve things they never realized they could. They took on and met difficult challenges, which will have a lasting impact over their entire lifetimes. More than anything else, the *Strawberry Flag* project has promoted human welfare and the

well-being of others, the hallmark of philanthropy.

Does the Strawberry Flag project fit within the meaning of "transformative philanthropy" or "traditional philanthropy"?

Traditional philanthropy is focused on short-term goals while transformative philanthropy seeks long-term change. Whereas the former is a response to an immediate need or symptom, the latter is a strategic effort to eliminate the cause that gives rise to that need or symptom in the first instance.

Transformative philanthropy takes a proactive role in forming organized, collective responses to address problems and create long-term, systemic change. By creating and implementing long-term solutions to the problems facing veterans, the *Strawberry Flag* project clearly fits within the meaning of transformative philanthropy.

Has the Strawberry Flag project brought awareness of its issues to the public?

Transformative philanthropic projects look to eliminate the root causes of a problem and create permanent social change. Informing the public about the issues facing these projects makes society aware of the problem, as well as the possible solutions, and increases the chances of creating permanent change and gaining the support for such change from the public.

This is where the *Strawberry Flag* project has uniquely excelled. It has educated the public about the issues facing veterans through a multitude of outlets, including the *Strawberry Flag*'s own radio station and newspaper. The project also participated in community outreach programs, like the Twain trolley tours, the Strawberry Sunday events, and a series of high teas where veterans

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These white roses were the first things the Metabolic Studio planted at the quad. The tent having just been removed, they are now all that remains in front of Bldg 209 from *Strawberry Flag*.

There is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird's building its own nest. Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough,

the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sign when they are so engaged?

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, in arguing against the division of labor.



A CASE STUDY... CONTINUED »

and visitors came together to visit and learn from one another.

Through these outreach programs, the public was able to get involved in activities relating to the program, learn more about its mission and goals, and gain a greater understanding of the issues facing veterans and, ultimately, join the effort to create a solution.

Does the *Strawberry Flag* project follow donor intent?

Donor intent is a fundamental issue in philanthropy, focusing on whether the expectation of a donor regarding the specified use of a contribution is met. Interestingly, the land on which the *Strawberry Flag* project was operated, located at the West Los Angeles VA, was given to the federal government pursuant to an 1888 deed in which the donors explicitly set forth the intent that the land be used for the establishment and maintenance of a “home” for veterans.

Although the West Los Angeles VA itself has not appeared to follow the donors' intent, the *Strawberry Flag* project has done so, in building a bridge between the notion of home and the reality of hospital by creating a community on the campus, thereby serving the very purpose for which the land was intended. The project encouraged veterans to become involved in activities on campus that helped create a more “home-like” atmosphere, such as weekday afternoon tea, where tea and bread with treats (including strawberry jam made in the kitchen from *Flag* berries) were served.

Can the *Strawberry Flag* project serve as a model for others?

The true importance of a philanthropic project can be judged by whether it creates a successful model that can be followed by others. The *Strawberry Flag* project is an innovative project that has emerged as part of the experience of working with veterans and clinicians at the VA of West Los Angeles and is a model that other VA's can utilize.

Indeed, the staff at the Miami VA Healthcare System has indicated its desire to have projects like the *Strawberry Flag* on its campus as part of its CWT program and to create a *Strawberry Flag*-type initiative.

Is the *Strawberry Flag* project a philanthropic success?

There are a number of ways to evaluate whether or not a philanthropic project is successful. Generally, if a project is able to attain its mission, meet the needs of the individuals it is attempting to support, and raise public awareness of the issues involved, the project is deemed a success. Across the board, the *Strawberry Flag* project should be considered a bona fide philanthropic success.

Indeed, the United States Department of Veterans Affairs itself has recognized the success of the *Strawberry Flag* CWT program in an article posted on the United States Department of Veterans Affairs website, entitled “Success Story: *Strawberry Flag* Project,” where West L.A. CWT chief Joseph Ciccone emphasized that the project has enabled the CWT veterans to acquire new transferable skill sets that have better prepared them for employment in the increasingly competitive labor market which confronts everyone in today's challenging economy.

Through the efforts of *Strawberry Flag*, the public has a greater awareness of the issues facing veterans and the possible solutions. Most importantly, the reaction of the veterans participating in the *Strawberry Flag* project has been overwhelmingly positive, with such individuals now on their way to productive and meaningful lives, thanks to the project.



A THANK YOU FOR THE WELCOME TENT

BY TERENCE LYONS

The *Strawberry Flag* welcome tent, in which veterans met each afternoon for tea and pastries, and in which they gathered throughout the day for conversation, camaraderie, and periodic respite from the military atmosphere of the VA, was itself a military veteran.

It was provided to the Metabolic Studio team for the veterans' use through the efforts of the 311th Sustainment Command (Expeditionary), a U.S. Army Reserve unit just down the street on Federal Avenue in West Los Angeles. The 311th arranged for the tent to be loaned

by the 425th Civil Affairs Battalion, another Army Reserve unit.

Rochelle Fabb, project manager at *Strawberry Flag*, said that she wanted to send a “shout out” of thanks to the Army Reserve for their assistance in providing this literal and figurative shelter to the many veterans at the VA who made the tent a regular rendezvous for the more than a year that it stood on the quad in front of Buildings 208 and 209.

The 425th generally uses the tent in support of its motto—to “Win the Peace”—throughout the Pacific area. The 311th, which is prepared to deploy globally to conduct combat service support operations, can add the provision of shelter and succor to its many accomplishments.

THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF VETERANS

BY TERENCE LYONS

Veterans have an image problem. It's not just that veterans, as a class of people, present a problematic image to the public, although that is almost certainly true. It is also the fact that veterans very often do not have an accurate idea of how they are perceived by the public, and so they can be oblivious to how that perception may impact their lives. And similarly oblivious to how the nation's veterans' policy and VA programs can affect that perception.

The biblical harvest axiom—“As ye sow, so shall ye reap”—applies to public perceptions too, and it may be a bitter harvest if veterans and those who work for them do not take care regarding the seeds they plant in the public's mind.

When the California State Veterans home was dedicated on the West Los Angeles VA campus this June, there was the usual compliment of martial music, provided that day by the Marine Corps band from Miramar, but there was also recorded background music played as the crowd assembled and later as people socialized after the ceremony. “Boogie Woogie Bugle Boy,” “Mairsy Doats,” “Chattanooga Choo Choo”: all World War II music, even though there are few World War II vets still alive. Vietnam veterans are now in their sixties and will be moving into the home, but they didn't play any Jim Morrison.

The American military establishment still cloaks itself in images of World War II—the last really popular war. But that self-image is not the current public perception of veterans: that perception changes over time.

The Good Old Days

When the federal government decided to locate a national soldiers home west of the Rockies in 1887, Los Angeles was among several communities that competed for the opportunity. Of course there

was an economic motive to develop land that was largely unused, and soldiers receiving pensions did have spending power, but according to then-current accounts, the people in Los Angeles and the other communities wanted to have the old soldiers in their midst, to listen to their Civil War stories, and to honor their service (at least to the Union).

Notwithstanding the tendency to romanticize the past, it seems to be the case that the status of the veteran remained quite high toward the beginning of the twentieth century, and again in the aftermath of World War I.

The high respect accorded World War II veterans is now legendary, perhaps all the more so in light of America's treatment of vets in the years that have followed. The veterans of the Greatest Generation had not only fought in a popular and just war, and one that we had clearly won, but everyone *knew* the vets—personally. Military service was so nearly universal that, if you were not yourself a vet, your husband, father, brother (maybe even sister), or next-door neighbor likely was.

Korea—the “forgotten war”—followed so closely on the heels of World War II that, depending on your point of view, its veterans either basked in the aura of the high regard for World War II vets or were simply ignored, unseen in the shadows.

The fact that the mid-century veterans were respected does not mean that they did not have their troubles. Onboard the Metabolic Studio trolley that carried passengers this summer between *Strawberry Flag* at the VA and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, film and book critic David Kipen observed, “The best cinematic treatment of the plight of the veteran was made within about a year of the end of the Second World War, and that's *The Best Years of Our Lives*, and it hasn't been bettered since.”

UC Riverside history professor Catherine Gudis added, “There's something about a sense of disablement, of not being able to reconnect, that happens in that movie, that then is lived out or borne out by so many people in subsequent decades, where your experiences simply aren't matched, but everything else [is] going on around you, and [you] start to form either an interior life that's separate from the rest of the world or an insular existence, right?”

But the public perception of the veterans who faced that “sense of disablement,” who were not “able to reconnect,” after World War II was tempered by the fact that these vets were everyone's family and friends, people they had known before the war and with whom they talked and ate and slept after the war.

Perceptions Change

Vietnam was different. Not only was that an unpopular and controversial war, and one that we had clearly not won, but military service was far from universal—rather than running out to enlist, many sons and brothers and even fathers stayed home and prayed for a high lottery number... or left home and went to Canada.

One commentator described the 1978 movie *Coming Home*, in which Army wife Jane Fonda falls in love with wheelchair-bound Vietnam veteran/war protester Jon Voight before her captain/husband Bruce Dern comes home, as “the quintessential Vietnam War film—it's anti-war, pessimistic, gritty, depressing, and ultimately sort of whining.”

Respect for veterans of the Vietnam War was low not only because part of the public regarded them as having been complicit in waging the unpopular war and even in My Lai-type atrocities, but also because a larger part of the public

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PARROT SANCTUARY ON VA GROUNDS HELPS VETS AND BIRDS HEAL FROM TRAUMA

BY LAURA SANDERSON HEALY

Down the hill from *Strawberry Flag* and off of Constitution Avenue, behind the UCLA-leased Jackie Robinson Stadium baseball field, is a noisy, hidden treasure on VA property that was once part of the Veterans Gardens: Serenity Park Parrot Sanctuary, established by psychologist Lorin Lindner, former clinical director of the New Directions rehabilitation program at the VA. Veterans whom Dr. Lindner led in group therapy sessions (struggling with homelessness, post-traumatic stress disorder, and addictions) responded positively on field trips Lindner took them

on to a shelter for wild parrots that had been abused or whose owners couldn't care for them. She came up with the idea of a park for parrots where veterans could care for the birds, learning skills through occupational therapy. The veterans were better able to heal themselves and learn to care about life again by tending to their exotic winged friends.

Ohio-born former marine Melvin La Rue serves as the park's supervising caretaker, and he runs it like a battalion, looking after 39 stunning macaws, Amazons, African grey parrots, cockatoos, and Indian ring-necked parakeets who sing, talk, and screech up a storm (sometimes a reason owners ask the sanctuary to adopt them). La Rue starts between 6:00 and 7:00 a.m. daily, looking af-

ter the birds in their large, purpose-built cages. He recently said he relates to the Burt Lancaster film *The Birdman of Alcatraz* in a big way, having experienced life behind bars himself.

“I've watched it a lot,” said La Rue one spring morning as he went about his chores at the sanctuary. “He was institutionalized—you can get like that. Even when the doors were open, he wasn't able to go out.” The horrors of war, which La Rue experienced while serving with his Marine division in Beirut, caused many problems in his life, and he came to New Directions from federal prison. “Since being involved with the parrots,” he said, “the case managers and people at the program I was with say I smile more,

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There is some of the same fitness in a man's building his own house that there is in a bird's building its own nest. Who knows but if men constructed their dwellings with their own hands, and provided food for themselves and families simply and honestly enough,

the poetic faculty would be universally developed, as birds universally sign when they are so engaged?

—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, in arguing against the division of labor.

THE PUBLIC PERCEPTION... CONTINUED »

did not *know* these soldiers—in-
stead of people they had known
before the war and with whom they
talked and ate and slept after the
war, these vets were people they just
saw on television or hitchhiking at
an onramp.

The “sense of disablement” and in-
ability “to reconnect” that the Viet-
nam vets shared with the World War
II vets were not shared or appreciat-
ed by the public generally this time
around because these vets were not
everyone’s family and friends. Rath-
er, vets were more likely portrayed
and often perceived “as potential se-
rial killers—somebody who’s going
to go up in a tower,” as critic Kipen
said on the trolley. “The villain of
choice was a deranged Vietnam vet-
eran.”

And Now?

Veterans today are not viewed with
the derision suffered by the Vietnam
vets when they came home. But they
are also not enfolded in the arms of
a public for whom vets are people
they all had known before they went
to war and with whom they all now
talk and eat and sleep.

Veterans still face that “sense of dis-
ablement, of not being able to re-
connect” that World War II and Viet-
nam veterans faced, and although
the public gives them respect for
their service akin to World War II
vets, the public does not share or ap-
preciate that disablement and dis-
connect as it might if these vets were
everyone’s family and friends.

As history professor Gudis said on
the Metabolic Studio trolley, “The
refrain for a lot of veterans coming
back from Vietnam was, ‘We never
got our parade,’ but even when you
get a parade, the parade is a way of
keeping everyone in the motorcade
at arm’s length.”

And so the public’s perception of
veterans today depends in large
measure on the seeds planted in
the mind of an arm’s-length public
by veterans and those who work for
them.

What Seeds Are We Sowing?

Perhaps the two most common sub-
jects one overhears veterans talking
about at the VA—in a hospital wait-
ing room, over meals in the chow
hall, at a bus stop, or outside the
Dreamer’s barbershop—are the
troubles they have finding a decent
job and the difficulties they experi-
ence getting their disability rating.
Of course, one does not always hear

both complaints from the same
vets, but sometimes you do.

Surveying the services provided by
the VA, it often seems that the two
principal goals of VA programs—
apart from the very important phys-
ical healthcare the VA provides—are
to prepare vets for productive work
in civilian society (i.e., a job) and to
secure their veterans benefits (i.e.,
disability). Of course, the VA does
not always pursue both goals for the
same vets, but sometimes it appears
to, if only to provide everyone with a
Plan B.

In September, the *Los Angeles Times*
reported on veterans’ struggles to
find and retain civilian jobs, citing
the case of a 29-year-old vet who “has
applied for at least 25 jobs since in-
juries he suffered in Iraq forced him
to leave the Army three years ago.”
According to the *Times*, the man
“said when he tells employers he
needs time off to see therapists for
post-traumatic stress disorder and
a brain injury, they don’t call back.
‘They think you’re mental,’ he said.”

And can you blame them? Expand-
ing the diagnosis of post-traumatic
stress disorder to include all vet-
erans who are entitled to disabili-
ty compensation, and increasing
sympathetic understanding of the
invisible wounds of war to promote
the public’s understanding are both
laudable goals. But there is another
side to that coin, as noted by UCLA
psychiatrist Patrick Link in March
2010 at a gathering sponsored by the
L.A. County Department of Mental
Health and the VA Greater Los An-
geles Healthcare System.

How do the public perceptions of
veterans promoted by these efforts
play out for the vets looking for a
job? As the *Los Angeles Times* story
noted, “[M]any employers do not
know how to accommodate these
invisible wounds and worry that
[veterans] might ‘go postal.’” Or, as a
veteran on the Metabolic Studio trol-
ley commented, “The public no longer
looks at veterans as baby killers as
many did during Vietnam; now they
just think we’re whacko.”

Veterans and those who work for
them must project a coherent, bal-
anced, and accurate image of the
military experience, and the leader-
ship, adaptability, loyalty, and team-
work that it develops. At the same
time, real disabilities that service
personnel suffer should be recog-
nized and compensated. But the
public perception of veterans today
may be blurred by some fuzzy think-
ing, ambiguous communication, or
even an effort to have our cake and
eat it too.

OBAMA, THE TRUTH WILL SET THEM FREE

BY PATRICIA FOULKROD

*Patricia Foulkrod produced and di-
rected The Ground Truth, a feature
documentary that was short-listed
for an Oscar nomination and focuses
on our soldiers returning home from
Iraq and Afghanistan. This piece ap-
peared in the Huffington Post on Sep-
tember 1 and is reprinted by special
arrangement with the author. —Ed.*

President Obama mentioned a sol-
dier from the Army’s 4th Brigade,
2nd Infantry Division, who stated
that he wished those who are no
longer here could have seen the
withdrawal.

In last week’s *LA Times*, Ned Parker
reported comments from the same
Army 4th Brigade. One soldier,
as they passed an Iraqi field, said,
“Saddam really hid those WMD
well.” Everyone laughed. Another
said, “I have no faith in people
whatsoever. Put two people in a
room with a hammer and one of
them will wind up dead.” Parker’s
article is a cautionary tale that
President Obama does not have
the stomach to tell. He loves the
troops, but like a father who can’t
admit that his son is in deep trou-
ble and it may be from his parent-
ing, neither Obama, Bush, nor the
Pentagon will ever admit the deep-

est wound we have inflicted on our
best and brightest. It is one thing
to say a war is difficult and cost bil-
lions – it is not going well – it may
not be won. It is quite another to
admit to over 1.5 million volun-
teer soldiers as over 400,000 have
already filed medical claims, that
there was no mission, except to
come home.

I directed *The Ground Truth*, a
2007 documentary film regarding
the physical and emotional effects
our current wars are having on our
soldiers. Over and over I heard the
same response from soldiers in
the Army, Marines, Navy, National
Guard; it ceased to make sense to
ask the question: What do you think
is the mission in Iraq? 99% said a
variation of: “to protect your bud-
dies, get this shit over with, and go
home.”

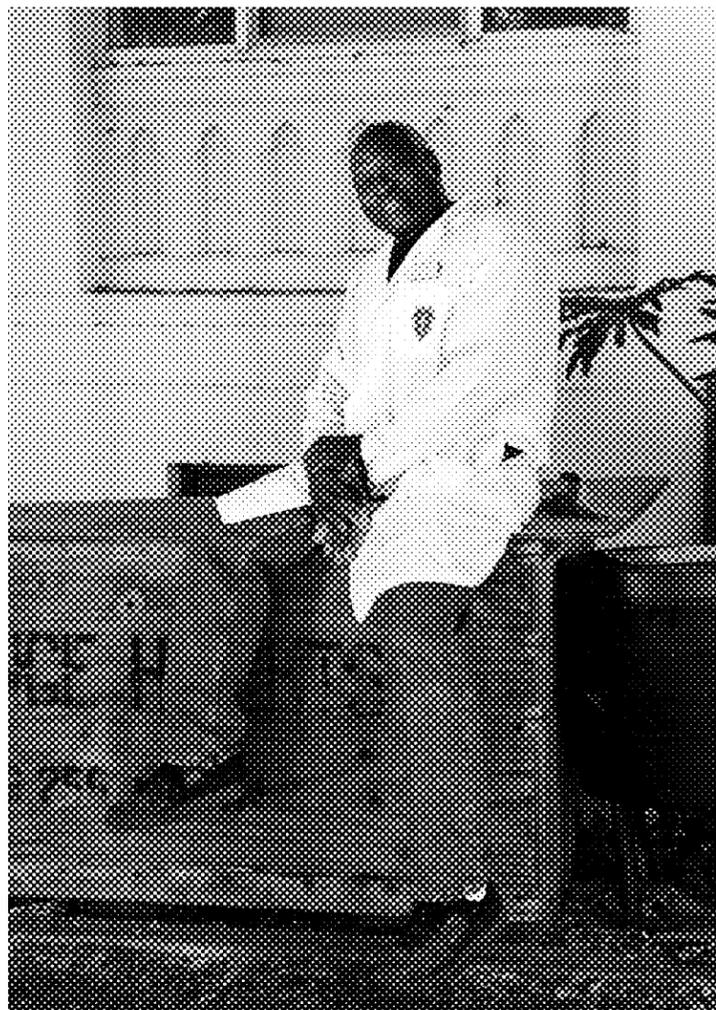
The first thing I learned from in-
terviewing a military general is that
your troops must buy into a combat
mission in war, if you want to be
successful. I would add, if you want
your soldiers to come home with
less PTSD, less intrusive thoughts,
less drug and alcohol addiction,
less domestic and violent crimes at
home, less suicides, and possibil-

ity more ability to transition back to
their families, children and commu-
nity. Unfortunately, time in Iraq for
many will set the stage for a new war
at home, and even after a mission
soldier’s believe in, the effects of
war are often deep. However, more
money, more therapists, and more
citizen support for our troops can-
not heal the no-mission wound.

I have seen severe depression,
drugs, an inability to ask for help
in the VA maze that most can not
navigate on a good day, and most
painful, the young wives living with
traumatic brain injured husbands
who used to be dudes and studs and
are now unable to feed themselves.
And the silent question of “Why” is
deafening, and not uttered because
this war’s pain wants relief, and it is
perceived to be cruel and unpatri-
otic to tell a mother her son died, is
permanently wounded, or mentally
disturbed in vain.

We need to stop telling our sol-
diers how brave and heroic they
are – and start asking for their
forgiveness for telling them they
were liberating people who blew
them up, forced them to impose
democracy on tribal people they

Continued on page 15



Mel Williams, CWT worker with *Strawberry Flag*, has become an authority
on vermiculture, having been trained by the radical ecologist, Nance Klehm.

I’ll have regular
cabbage, Romaine
lettuce, iceberg;
I planted those seeds
about a month ago.
I’d love to fill all these
boxes with dirt, and
I could raise vegetables
year-round. Summer
vegetables, winter
vegetables, keep me
busy, keep me young,
keep me healthy.

—Bobby Shelton

Dear Raw Mama

As *Strawberry Flag*, as well as your
Raw Mama Tuesday lunches, have
now come to a close, do you have
any lessons, tips, or suggestions
to give?

Keep in mind that everyone is dif-
ferent and took different experi-
ences away from Raw Mama lunch-
es. Some visitors didn’t need to be
convinced that the food we made
was good and good for you. Oth-
ers tried and didn’t like what was
offered. And yet, the visitors who
stand for my success were those
visitors who did have to be con-

vinced that the food was delicious
and makes your body feel good. We
had some guests up to the kitchen
that came, didn’t like the food, but
kept trying different things until
their minds were changed and they
were raw food converts!

As far as suggestions go, remem-
ber that your body has the ability to

heal itself and return to a balanced
place through diet. Environment,
like diet, should also be a part of
maintaining balance. Try to cre-
ate a sanctuary by surrounding
yourself with favorite plants, re-
laxing music, comforting smells,
and wonderful people. We were
so lucky in the *Strawberry Flag*
kitchen to meet and interact with

so many beautiful people with
amazing stories who helped us to
remember that positive thoughts
are crucial in keeping an emotion-
al balance. The kitchen at *Straw-
berry Flag* was truly an amazing
place full of positive energy, loving
people, and plenty of smoothies!
Keep healthy, keep happy, and be
well.



OBAMA... CONTINUED »

did not understand, and still keep asking them to protect contractors who are corporate slaves making twice their salaries. We knew down to our core there was no mission, so we acted like a country not at war. I know many soldiers helped the Iraqi people, did what they could to train their soldiers, and that some of these soldiers have spent more years with Iraqis than with their families. I also know military service is cherished by many, many soldiers despite hating the Iraq War and not having a mission.

Until we can look our soldiers in the eye and tell them what they already know better than anyone else – that there was no mission – how can we genuinely welcome them home or expect them to heal? They will be looking in that rear-view mirror for years to come whether they want to or not while we move on to Afghanistan and Pakistan. They will see in that mirror things they wish were not there that we can never see or erase. But we can at least acknowledge that they are not crazy for their frustration and anguish as they had to do their duty while trying to figure for over seven years why they went, and why they were deployed over and over again to fix the mission that could never be found.



Bobby Shelton's greenhouse became the prototype for the intensive care unit in Lauren Bon's indexical work, *Building 209: Garden Folly*.

REPAIRS COMING TO BARBERSHOP

BY PAUL CROWLEY

A major makeover that is a good deal more than cosmetic is in the works for the Freedom Barber Shop at the West L.A. VA, thanks to the efforts American Legion Post 322. A watertight roof (so vets can be high and dry while they get their hair high and tight) and a covered veranda (to accommodate outdoor haircuts for wheelchairs and nature lovers) will soon be on the way.

Anyone who has spent time at the barber shop – located in a trailer north of Wilshire Boulevard in the parking lot just west of the Haven (Bldg 212) – is familiar with the proprietor, known simply as “the Dreamer.” He is a veteran who has been servicing the veterans in that location for approximately thirty years, and he provides a huge complement to the atmosphere to the VA grounds. Working through Volunteer Services at the VA, the Dreamer gives about 150 free haircuts to veterans two days a month, including “house calls” on patients in the hospital and the nursing facilities, going to the wards and attending to their needs.

But the roof in the trailer/barber shop leaks, as was evident a few weeks ago when the Dreamer was holding free haircuts day. It seemed that it was raining harder in the trailer than outside, and a representative from Volunteer Services was standing inside with an umbrella opened. (Slight exaggeration, but only slight.)

And a covered porch area is something the Dreamer has dreamed of, so he can more comfortably accommodate wheelchairs that don't fit into the trailer, and so that vets can gather out of the rain and in the shade in the tradition of Main Street barbershops.

Enter American Legion Post 322, which has recently begun meeting on the West L.A. VA grounds in the new California state veterans home. Phyllis Miller, Executive Project Coordinator for the Post, was contacted to see if they might donate funds for the repairs or know someone who might. “Timing is perfect,” she said, since “we are now in the process of sending our request for funding to a group back east.”

After preparation of a proposal of material, time, and other considerations was put together in a rush, the funding request was submitted on time, and Miller says she is confident that it will be approved so work can begin soon.

As the Dreamer says, “A new haircut can do wonders to help with self-esteem and spirit. Also it is a matter of doing the right thing, at the right time, for the right reason, for the right person.”

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PARROT SANCTUARY ... CONTINUED »

and the clinical director up there says I'm not as angry as I used to be. As far as I was concerned, I wasn't angry, but everybody thought I was.”

La Rue told me about an escaped parrot who had returned that day, to the delight of her mate (“he hasn't left her side since she came back”) and also her human fans, including *Strawberry Flag* Compensated Work Therapy worker Mel Williams, on his run that morning collecting produce scraps from Serenity Park for the compost pile at *Strawberry Flag*. “I'm glad you're back,” said Williams to the bird, who had been AWOL for two weeks after a worker left a cage door open and she flew out. “She's tired and hungry,” said

La Rue. “She's been running the streets.” Given the hawks, ravens, coyotes, and raccoons that actively range the VA property, it was a bit of a miracle the bird got home in one piece, both agreed.

Albertson's Markets donates its left-over produce to the sanctuary, which is a non-profit organization that operates through donations. “We have so much lettuce I don't know what to do with it,” La Rue said, showing the kitchen where he prepares both hot and cold food for his feathered charges. Every day he chops up food for the hanging trays he puts in the parrots' enclosures. This includes vegetables and fruit (apples, corn, tomatoes, avocados, mushrooms) as well as mixed nuts and seeds. And huge bowls of water are constantly being filled. “They

pick what they want off the tray and take it somewhere and eat it,” La Rue said, “then they'll come back and pick something else off the tray. I put lettuce at the bottom of the tray to keep the food from falling out, but they'll take the lettuce and chew on it for a while then throw it on the ground.”

Many of the birds have plucked out their feathers, a sign of stress much like that which causes people to bite their nails or twist their hair. “Parrots like to be talked to and are very social creatures and need a lot of attention or they will pluck their feathers out,” he said. Veterans who work with La Rue get a benefit from bonding with the birds they talk to and play with. Owners visit their former pets, and the intuitive birds often sense a visit.

Sometimes the birds wreak a bit of havoc—they should, after all, be in the wild, and usually forage by flying from tree to tree in the forest. “Oh, quit chewing up the house,” La Rue barked at one of the parrots who was chipping away at a new structure inside his cage. “I think they are genetically mixed with beavers the way they tear up some wood,” he said. But they seem to be connected to their people, and La Rue transported one cockatoo to the funeral of its former owner when the woman's husband and mother requested it. “The bird was quiet as a mouse during the service, and soon as I walked out of the chapel it cried ‘Hello!’” The family requested no flower tributes but asked that friends make donations to the sanctuary, having themselves become major donors at \$10,000 a year.

To me, it was real hard, just walking up the hill and seeing the empty space where all the strawberries and bikes and the trailer used to be. I have to get used to the thought of seeing it empty. I was used to it, it's been there the whole time, it's a shame that a lot of veterans didn't take advantage of it. It was a pleasure and an honor to get to know what the Metabolic Studio does and what Strawberry Flag does and the staff. Just by being around you guys, you planted a seed in my head and my heart that I should help out people as much as I can and also think about the environment. Maybe that's why I started a bamboo flooring company.

I want to say thank you for allowing me to come into your lives and showing me love when I needed it the most and showing me how I should be. I never met more caring people than I have here. You, all of you, are wonderful, beautiful, spirited people and I thank you from the deepest part of my heart and my soul and I thank you for letting me into your lives. This time that I'm here, I will never forget it. I just want to say thank you. I hope that the VA lets you operate here because without you guys, they're will be less activities, less things to do in the VA. Everything you need a permission slip or whatever and right here it feels so good to just come in here. Even chopping up vegetables and seeing people enjoy the food, make dressing for Tuesdays and people enjoy that. Making jam on Wednesday, people are wowed; we open up their eyes.

Just want to say thank you for the experiences that are forever instilled into my heart. Now I have to make my life. I have to take it out of here and just put it out there and apply it and I'll do that. If you guys need a flooring company, call me. Take care. Adios. God bless you guys.

WWW.STRAWBERRYFLAG.ORG

For more information and directions, visit the park's website at www.parrotcare.org

JULIO

VIDEO TESTIMONIAL
OCTOBER 8, 2010

Julio Espino is a veteran volunteer in the kitchen of Strawberry Flag.

My name is Julio Espino. I've been coming here since April, around mid April of 2010. My experience coming up here, I find it very therapeutic. I am not, I was never used to speaking with anyone about certain problems, stuff that happened to me. Around here, I got the, when I first discovered it, from the get-go, met Rochelle, Gabriella, Ms. Ruth, and they welcomed me with open arms. I've been volunteering here since then. Every chance I get; I come up here and help them out. It feels like I'm not a patient in the hospital. When I'm here I'm away from all that because the kitchen feels real good to me. It was sad to see the strawberries go, but I understand that a lot of good things have to come to an end to make room for better things. I'm looking forward to the next exhibit that they have here. I may not be around, but hopefully by then I'll be up in central California, trying to get my own project going, my own something going up there.

Coming here has given me more ideas than I ever had before. I'm going to get some land up there and grow a bunch of vegetables and sell it to local restaurants and also to farmer's markets but also to the homeless. Have a kitchen like they have here. I'm still working on how that's going to work out but in the meantime, I've been focused on my treatment here. October 27th is my last day here but I'll still be around in the area and it would be comforting to know that this place is still going to be here, that this kitchen is still going to be here. To know that I could drop by anytime: it'll be like a family reunion, where I know I'll be welcome with open arms.

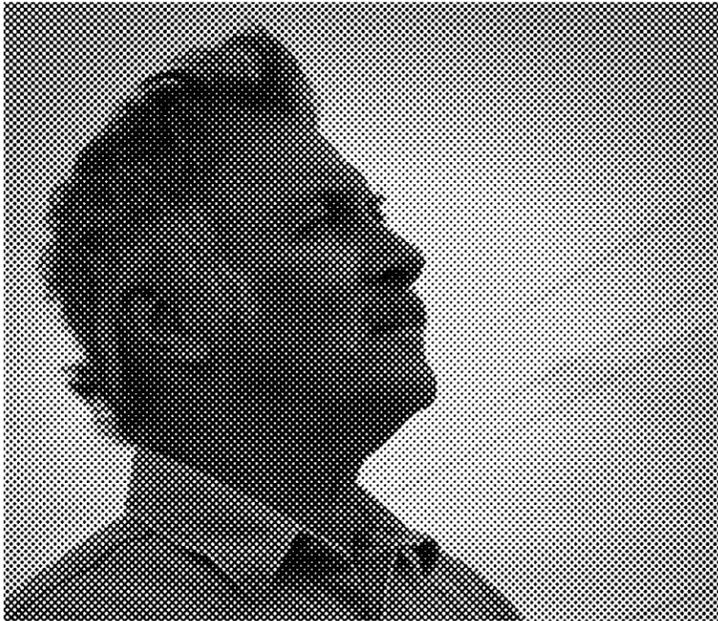


Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant.

—Robert Louis Stevenson

Striving for success without hard work is like trying to harvest where you haven't planted

—David Bly



Veteran Mike Patterson embodied the “American Exceptionalism” discussed in this paper. He was a passionate believer in the American dream.

OBITUARY

Michael Patterson

Michael Patterson — Father, Brother, Grandfather, Son, Husband, Friend, Wizard, Vietnam Veteran, Owens Valley Cowboy, Miner, Historian, you name it.

Michael Patterson, 64, was a man of many talents, many stories, and many passions. Part wizard, part cowboy, and always a gentleman, Mike's last humble abodes included a stunning, magical, historically prominent ghost town—Cerro Gordo—tucked away inside the beautiful Inyo Mountain range as well as James Brady's adobe dwelling complete with sweet-natured dingoes; Midnight the Mule that Mike lovingly bred, broke, and cared for; and a fascinating shed with an idiosyncratic collection of stone implements at Swansea. Also, Mike was miner extraordinaire as majority owner of the Cerro Gordo Mining District in the Inyos. Two of his mining claims were lovingly named Dorothy and Toto.

With a big heart and a sharp mind, Mike had many endeavors in his life

that ranged from being CEO of one of the first wind energy companies in Tehachapi, California, during the '80s, to being one of the first inventors to propose a solution to the Owens Dry Lakebed dust problem in cooperation with scientists. Mentioned in University of California – Davis papers and the Air Quality Group Report from the Crocker Nuclear Lab, he submitted one of the early proposals for dust mitigation to the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power and the California State Lands Commission more than two decades ago. On the subject of his intellect, Mike said “My genius? It's why I wear cowboy boots...to avoid learning how to tie my shoes.”

Among his many other careers and interests, Mike was an advocate for private property in Inyo County and for the entirety of the United States. He delivered pivotal monologues about private property and private ownership concerns in Lone Pine and Independence town meetings as well as at a Metabolic Studio event. He was a local advocate in the fights against Senator Diane Feinstein's wilderness bills, and was in frequent contact with Feinstein's staffers in Fresno and Bakersfield.

Mike was also a fantastic historian and tour guide for his unique ghost town, Cerro Gordo. While in Cerro

Gordo, he made beautiful purses, belts, boots, and saddles as a leatherworker, and was an amateur archaeologist. Mike was a major player in hosting Lauren Bon and the Metabolic Studio's film *Silver and Water* at Cerro Gordo and the discovery of silver and gold on the algae ponds that he helped to care for. He was also ferryman for Swansea pier, where the *Bessie Brady* docked.

In fact, over the last four years of his life, Mike collaborated with Lauren Bon and the Metabolic Studio in such endeavors as filmmaking, algae production, electrophoretic deposition, and policy change. Up until the time of his death, he was preparing a speech regarding private property owners' rights to be read to Senator Feinstein in Washington D.C. Mike also had hoped to create a sustainable wind energy farm on the dry lakebed, and was in the process of building a prototype windmill at the time of his death. Mike was always looking for alternative, innovative solutions to the dry lakebed dust issue. He was erecting a windmill prototype on the Swansea dunes in collaboration with the Metabolic Studio for that very reason.

Mike was caretaker, guardian, and mentor to itinerant souls in the Owens Valley. He was a maverick, inventor, entrepreneur, and root beer brewer, and was the owner and intrepid miner who maintained and descended into the deepest and still operational mine on the West Coast. Mike was an actor who appeared in TV programs as well as independent and feature films such as *Silver and Water* by Lauren Bon and the Metabolic Studio. The world is simply a little less bright without dear Mike's wonderful sense of humor, gusto, genius, zeal, creativity, and love. Not a soul could or ever will be like Michael Patterson. He was a one-of-a-kind human being that touched every person he met and is missed every day.

Ballona Creek and the Watershed of the West Los Angeles VA

A CONVERSATION WITH ROY VAN DE HOEK

BY LAURA SANDERSON HEALY

Roy van de Hoek, co-director of the nonprofit Ballona Institute, thought that the topography on the northwest part of the VA property lookd like a canyon. “The ravine has a small drainage running through there, and this part of the drainage has been filled and they have put a baseball field on top of the creek. I think this would have gone to Ballona Wetlands; all the rainwater off of this park goes by storm drains to Ballona Creek and into our marsh. The Ballona Institute lays claim or interest on anything that's in the Ballona

is straightened with levees like the Mississippi River. Sometimes in the middle of the swampy areas, you see wild celery growing and it's like a garden. I think the Ballona Wetlands could be farmed a little bit, too, if it benefits nature.

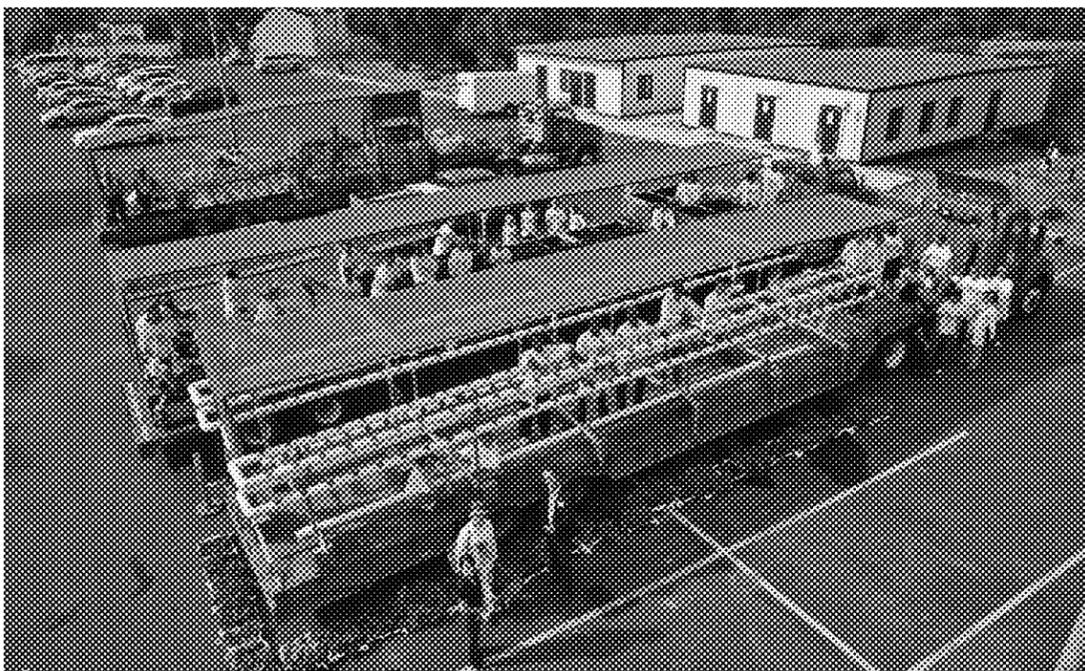
People don't realize that one of the benefits of a rice farm is that a lot of birds and swans go to rice fields. It's all about connecting nature and farms and living together. Mel's (Williams) compost pile here at *Strawberry Flag* will have the earthworms, so the robin's going to come when Bobby (Shelton) puts them out in his garden soil. In North-

People don't realize that one of the benefits of a rice farm is that a lot of birds and swans go to rice fields. It's all about connecting nature and farms and living together.

watershed, so we're connected and that was why I was motivated five years ago to write my essay on the VA land.”

A veteran wondered where, exactly, the Ballona Wetlands were, and asked Roy what was special about them. “The Ballona Wetlands is a low-lying area where a few different rivers come in, close to the ocean. Years ago we lost half of it to the big sailboat harbor (Marina del Rey) that was dug into the marsh. It's swampy and muddy like a bayou, soggy, with lots of frogs and crabs and fishes. Wetlands have other nicknames: marsh, bog, paddy. [The Ballona Wetlands] has high grounds, or uplands, and you go from a little higher to lower and the water takes passageways going this way and that, and one of them

ern California, at Chico, north of Sacramento, tundra swans, storks, cranes, and big huge geese come to farm fields where rice farmers leave 20% of the rice on the field. The rain comes and the kernels float in these flooded areas, and when the birds arrive they can feed on those extra rice grains. There are national wildlife refuges nearby; the government protects some of the really wet swampy areas around the rice farms where the birds can sleep at night. The swans fly to the farm fields in the daytime and eat, and then before it gets dark they fly a mile or so back to the government's marshlands, where they feel safe in the water and where they can swim and sleep. They do this for the whole winter. That's a balance, a cooperative partnership.



October 2, 2010: *Strawberry Flag* all packed up and ready to leave the VA of WLA.

HOURS OF OPERATION

Print Studio Workshop

In the Occupational Therapy Room (Room 123) of Building 208.
Thurs, 5:30–7:30PM

Strawberry Sundays

Each Sunday at the Blues Quad of Building 208
2–4:00PM

Farmer's Market Thursdays

Thurs, 12–6PM

Parrot Sanctuary

Thurs, 7AM–dusk

Canteen/ Restaurant

Mon–Fri, 7AM–2PM

Barber of Dreamers

Open daily, 9AM–7PM

THE STRAWBERRY GAZETTE

Produced in conjunction with *Strawberry Flag* and the Metabolic Studio, Los Angeles. The Metabolic Studio is a direct charitable activity of the Annenberg Foundation.

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