

EDITOR'S NOTE

We Send Them to War – Are We Teaching Them How to Come Back?

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When I met with veteran Jake VandenPlas a couple weeks ago for a story in this week's paper about his new nonprofit organization, Door County Farm for Veterans, he quoted a study that I looked up after the interview. It's called the Cost of War Project, done by the Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs at Brown University. The project began in 2010 and was completed in 2020. Its main findings are numerous and chilling. It can't come as a surprise to many that the cost of war far exceeds those

who die in combat. Yet "war" as a concept is a strange phenomenon. It's simultaneously completely familiar, yet utterly unknown to Americans who don't serve. The statistics, then, can jar. The statistics should jar.

According to the study, the number of U.S. soldiers who have died during the post-9/11 wars is 7,052. That's since 2001, and that figure includes the wars in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen.

By contrast, 30,177 veterans have died by suicide during that same 20-year period. Due to the stigma surrounding suicide, it's believed that those numbers are even underreported.

"They send us over to war, and they don't teach you how to come back," VandenPlas said.

Those words have haunted me since the interview. My fear is that the phrase is not a new one, that VandenPlas was not the one to first utter it. My fear is that the phrase could almost be a cliché.

I know it's important to remember on Memorial Day all those who have given their lives for our country. Veterans Day – Nov. 11, a day to honor all veterans – almost seems like a lesser holiday. This could be human nature or cultural norms. Rarely do we honor and remember a person's life before the obituary or memorial service.

I have been doing stories for Veterans Day and Memorial Day since I started in this business. I have listened to and reported the stories of many, many veterans over the years. A clearer picture evolves

when listening to stories about the challenges of returning. How soldiers who get help with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) face discrimination by employers and others. How a soldier's résumé of responsibilities and experience gained during combat operations doesn't translate to positions at home. How the sense of community is gone, how the leaders who inspire have all vanished, how the sense of purpose departed with the mission of protecting and serving a greater good. "They send us over to war, and they don't teach you how to come back."

VandenPlas cannot have been the first veteran to utter that phrase. If he is, then we all need to listen. If he's not, who is listening and what's being done?

Letters to the editor

Courteous Professionalism Experienced during Visit to Totem Pole

Recent letters in the *Peninsula Pulse* from Ruth Chase and Jason Daubner reveal important concerns and potential conflicts within Peninsula State Park's great golf course. How can the course best serve golfers and accommodate others hoping to see the historical totem pole? How might golfers and walkers safely share certain spaces?

No easy answers, particularly considering the unpredictable paths of both hikers and golf balls. No easy answers, given the diverse parties, risks and liabilities. The Chase and Daubner letters could cultivate a helpful discussion.

For now, I would simply offer an account of the kindness of two staff members who certainly seem to be doing their best.

On Oct. 1, my wife and I visited the course wondering whether, when and how we might be allowed to see the totem pole and portions of the course. We simply walked up to the starter booth and inquired. The starter radioed a ranger who, within minutes, arrived in a cart, drove us to the totem pole and then added a delightful 10-minute tour of several scenic areas.

The starter and ranger could not have been more courteous or accommodating (and both declined gratuities). We were grateful, and we also wondered how, if at all, such a service could be extended to others.

We don't know, but we hope the Chase and Daubner letters will stimulate a cooperative discussion. In the meantime, we can reassure readers that, if the starter and ranger we met typify the courteous professionalism of the staff, visitors are already in very good hands.

Charlie Schudson
*Sedona, Arizona, and
Ellison Bay, Wisconsin*

Helping Humanity Survive

"Love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them, humanity cannot survive."
— His Holiness the Dalai Lama

The Climate Vulnerable Forum is a group of developing countries from places such as Africa, Asia and the Pacific that are highly threatened by climate impacts. The 48 member nations, representing 1.2 billion people, are responsible for only 5% of global emissions.

They make the plea that they're running out of time, and they're calling on world leaders at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, currently taking place in Glasgow, Scotland, to act with the urgency this crisis demands.

In her book released this fall, *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World*, Dr. Katharine Hayhoe explains that she chose her profession because she is a Christian who cares deeply that climate change affects food and water security and is pushing more of the world's most vulnerable people into poverty. She believes that we must care for those who are suffering.

Consequently, let's heed the words of climate journalist and activist Bill McKibben, who, during a 2013 guest sermon at Riverside Church in New York City, asserted: "Our goal must be to make real the Gospel, with its injunction to love our neighbors. Not to drown them, not to sicken them, not to make it impossible for them to grow crops. But to love them."

Terry Hansen
Hales Corners, Wisconsin

Mill Improvement Plan Needed

Sister Bay is number one. Congratulations to all past and present board members. Your individual actions, when put together, have driven Sister Bay's mill rate to be, by far, the highest of our municipal neighbors.

Currently Sister Bay's mill rate – thanks to the Oct. 8 *Peninsula Pulse* for the great information – is a huge 167% higher than Ephraim and a whopping 243% higher than Liberty Grove. Yes, Sister Bay is also number one in cost-to-service, with our debt currently costing us 304% more than Ephraim and 296% more than the much larger Liberty Grove.

Does Sister Bay need a CIP [Capital Improvement Plan], as noted in the Oct. 15 *Pulse* article, to help decide how to spend millions more on improvements that all in Northern Door will benefit from? Probably. However, first I believe our elected representatives' top priority should be a serious MIP [Mill Improvement Plan] to get the mill rate back down near those of our neighbors.

Rodney A. Hedeem,
fourth-generation Sister Bay native
Sister Bay, Wisconsin

Remove Misleading CRT Signs

Recently I've started seeing signs along our stretch of Highway 42 saying, "No Critical Race Theory in Schools," "No Funding for CRT" and then a "Trump for President" sign next to them.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is taught in colleges as a theory to be analyzed and discussed. It is not taught to children or high schoolers. The Southern Door School District's superintendent has said that Critical Race Theory is not being taught, and it is not in the district's plans to do so either.

Simply stated: Critical Race Theory is not taught in Door County public schools or in any other public elementary schools or high schools throughout Wisconsin. There is no state or county funding involved in any way.

These signs are based on misinformation, are not relevant to our school system and have no place on our roadsides. To me, they aim to be suggestive and incendiary, with no positive purpose or truth to them. I hope that whoever put them up will take them down.

I'll say it once again: Critical Race Theory is not taught in most public elementary or high schools in America, and it is not taught in our Door County public schools.

Glenna Peters
Sister Bay, Wisconsin

Some Requests for Republicans

Dear Republicans,
Please develop a platform that tries to appeal to the most citizens instead of trying to limit the number of citizens who are allowed to vote. Please get past the desire to control as much as you can with

the Legislature and spend more time on the issues that will benefit the majority of the population (minimum wage, health care, the environment, etc.) and not corporations.

Please stop supporting the *big lie*. Republicans won races in states that elected Biden. How do you think has the most to gain by questioning our elections and our democratic process besides our global enemies?

We need at least two competitive parties in our state and our country to make well-reasoned and fair decisions about our present and future. Please be one that will try to unite us and preserve our democracy.

Bob Ryan
Clay Banks, Wisconsin

Coming: Wisconsin Hunting Bill Package

Be aware that the Republican Legislature has introduced a draft package of 13 bills called the Wisconsin Sporting Freedom Package. Some of the bills would relax hunting regulations, and local conservation groups have not been consulted, according to a *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* story that reported on the package.

I guess my question would be, why haven't those groups been consulted? If one is to make an important informed decision, isn't it in everyone's interest to get input from all involved – not just Hunter Nation and Ted Nugent, who advocates for "less regulations and more transparency" in hunting? I wonder, where is the transparency?

Among the package of 13 bills are these three: reducing the DNR's regulations for hunting, fishing and trapping; a season to hunt sandhill cranes; and allowing Wisconsinites to carry concealed firearms without

licenses. It would be in everyone's interest to look up all of them. We as citizens of this state need to pay attention to what is being proposed at all times by both parties.

It seems that not only our state, but our country has a problem with guns. To continue to make it easier for people to carry firearms is only asking for more trouble. For a bill to be presented on concealed firearms in a bill for hunting regulations is not transparency.

We have an obligation as citizens of not only our state, but this country to protect our environment, the flora and fauna, and our fellow humans from people who would do us harm.

Carol Schmidt
Baileys Harbor, Wisconsin

Applause for the Sister Bay Historical Society

I recently heard that the Sister Bay Historical Society has a bold, new plan for the future of the organization. It is planning to move the Little Sister Barn to its museum site, where it will become a history center. Not a small undertaking.

The society has collected stories and artifacts about the community for several decades and desperately needs a new place to display, store and protect this vast collection of materials depicting the community's rich historical past.

As one who has long been interested in the history of Wisconsin – especially its farms and rural communities – I applaud what the society is planning and am especially pleased that it is finding a new, exciting purpose for this magnificent old barn.

I have often said, when a community forgets its history, it forgets what it is. The Sister Bay Historical Society agrees

with this and is putting its words into action. Moving a barn is no small task, and an expensive one. The society would appreciate any and all donations.

I wish the society the best of luck with this important endeavor.

Jerry Apps
Madison, Wisconsin

The Nature of Wisconsin's Redistricting

We continue to pursue the end of gerrymandering as relentlessly as a "terrier with a sock in her mouth."

In the recent *Peninsula Pulse* story, "The Politics of Mapmaking," Rep. Joel Kitchens explained his rationale for voting for Senate Resolution 63, which seeks to preserve existing gerrymandered districts as they were created in 2011.

"I truly do not believe the maps are as bad as opponents make them out to be," he said.

The opponents of gerrymandering are 70-80% of his constituency. On selecting an impartial board, Kitchens said that some believe there's no such thing – that people have their biases. In addition to the cynicism that a group of Wisconsin citizens could ever act impartially, it's not just the people selected to redraw district maps, but also the rules and processes under which the maps are drawn – and, hence, Senate Resolution 63.

But remember how we got here. The existing 2011-12 maps that Rep. Kitchens views as not so bad were created in absolute secrecy, behind glass walls and the locked doors of a back room in US Bank Plaza, in a law office where attorneys and data scientists hired by Republican legislators spent months creating gerrymandered redistricting maps that would ensure Republicans retained control of the Legislature for the next decade.

When the courts became involved, they wrote that the Republican Legislature gave "every appearance of flailing wildly in a desperate attempt to hide from both the court and the public the true nature of exactly what transpired in the redistricting process." The court further described explanations of the process as "filled with disinformation, foot-dragging and obfuscation."

Once Rep. Kitchens courageously seemed to be open to correcting this, but now he seeks to preserve one of the sleaziest pieces of Wisconsin's political history.

Norman J. Wilsman
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

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