

Action Report

Subject: Memorial Day Writer's Project (MDWP)

Activity: Poetry, Prose and Song on the Mall

Date: May 28, 2002

Location: Washington, DC

(behind the sidewalk facing 20th Street and Constitution Ave.)

What a weekend! What a day! I have so many people to thank for making the weekend special and for choosing to share themselves. Monday passed as a blur. Before I left, I sat in the tree line looking toward the people at the Wall. A young boy came up to me and asked me if I would tell him about the Vietnam War (for his history class). Too bad, Dolf, Ed, Mike, Clyde, or Gunny wasn't there for me to point to. He seemed disappointed when I told him I didn't fight in the war.



I rode the beltway in the rain, trying to clear my head. The day passed as a blur. Many of you didn't want it to end. Even as the tent crew was taking away our chairs—**Dolf Droge** (the tall thin guy dressed in black) says he has a work in progress and he wants to tell us all about it. **Lad Carrington** has something else he wants to read. Gunny (**Briah Conner**) is waiting to read several of Clyde's poems, and **Jonathon Myer** (believe it or not) wants to do one more song and a poem to boot. Thank goodness Joe Mishler wasn't there at the time. People, you are all absolutely wonderful!

Nancy Morrey flew in from Canada to ride with her friend (an F4 pilot) in Rolling Thunder. She had to catch an early plane back, but stopped long enough to share her wonderful work with us. Nancy is doing a book of poetry and I'll let you know when it becomes available. Her stuff is right on and a pleasure to hear and to read.

Clyde Wray came in from California for the weekend to be with us. Clyde always makes it a special occasion. It's been 19 years since I have seen **Frank Crowson**. When I worked with him at NUS Corporation, I never knew he wrote poetry. Frank is a veteran of WWII (South Pacific) and Korea. Frank lives in Mt Airy, and his buddy, **Woody Printz** (guitar playing, folk singer, Woody Guthry style) came down from Mass to be with us. I got a feeling they will be regulars with the MDWP.

For those of you who do not know, Frank, Woody, Clyde, and poet/gospel singer, **Epifhani Howard**, featured at Mariposa, a venue in College Park on Saturday night. It was to be an MDWP evening. We may have got off the subject a tad but it was a special evening indeed (and they asked for us to come back).

As good as Epifhani is, we all held out breath when her young daughter recited a poem in memory of her Grandmother. She was a showstopper and we are all proud of her—and thank you Epifhani for being with us and sharing your love and your voice. After much coaxing, **Edith Graciela** came to read with us for the first time. Her poem "*With Those Boots—Shiney, Stinking*" comes from the strife of her native land of Bolivia. You could tell, Edith is a performance poet, she'll be back.

Other new comers I want to thank: **Michael Schaffner**, novelist and poet; **Ken Williamson**, photo journalist and poet; **Cliff Bernier**, poet and mean harmonica player (blues style); **Stephen Scholes**, poet; **Rich Barrett**, poet, **Linda Street**, who read her heart-felt words and shoved her chapbook of poems into my hand and walked off satisfied—and the attractive young woman who gave me a Vietnam vet key chain, but demanded payment of one good hug, then whispered in my ear "but be careful my husband (a recon) might be watching—thanks.

Now to our repeat customers: **Sam Hurst**, Host of Poets Anonymous in Fairfax, VA (the other man in black) **Datrinne Barker**, **Lad Carrington**, **Parris Garner**, and **Maritza** (host of Mariposa in College Park). Thank you for sharing, and thank you for helping spread the word of who we are and what we do. **Ray Campbell** (past host of the LA poetry group in Reston) moved to Key West, FL and sent me some of his poems to read, because he wanted to be here with us. Thanks Ray.

Now a word about **Steve Scholes** (and I sure as hell hope I have the right name). I'm referring to a friend of Ed Henry, who recently lost a buddy due to PTSD and read a letter he wrote to say goodbye. This, I believe, is the primary reason why the MDWP exists and why we do what we do. I'm glad that we were here for Steve and I'm glad he chose us to share his sorrow. And to Brooksy (USMC), maybe you will join us next time. Our thoughts and our love is with you.

Now old timers: **Jonathon Myer** and his wife, entertaining and informative—you start and end the day with us. We love the songs. Don't stop coming. **Tom Edmonds**, with his quiet reading style and words that punch holes in your heart; **Joe Mishler** with his plays that help us open our eyes, our ears, and our minds; **Dolf Droge**, who promised to put his stories together in 5 to 7 minute increments so we can hear more of his insight throughout the day.

Then there is **Ed and Connie Henry**, **Mike and Suellen McDonell**, **Clyde Wray**, **Cathy Solomonson**, and **Briah Conner**—without them, there is no MDWP. Thank you for sharing your friendship with me and thank you Mike for being a bigger man than I. Semper Fi.

Interesting note: Bob Dole (the guest speaker) read a poem to express himself. Next time maybe he'll read with the MDWP.