

A tribute to Dave Neita

Karen Frankel
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The following tribute to Dave Neita was sent by Karen Frankel, a member of the Workers League in the early 1970s. We encourage readers to also review the obituary written by World Socialist Web Site International Editorial Board Chairman David North and for those who knew Dave Neita to share their recollections in the comments sections of these articles or in standalone tributes.

I met Dave when he joined the Workers League in the early 1970's. At that time, he had just been released from the army, where he was involved in intensive combat. He was in the TET offensive. He was a strong, burly guy whose demeanor belied a sensitive and gentle soul. He had a keen wit and intellect, with a love of opera, jazz, animals and people. He had a gift, an ability to talk with anyone and to explain the most complicated concepts in a way that could be understood. He had the ability to turn an issue around and to pose a question which provoked a dialogue, without hostility or rancor.

Dave struggled for many years with the after-effects of Vietnam. His health was severely compromised by exposure to Agent Orange. He developed MS within a few years of his release from service. Nonetheless, he was not awarded his disability benefits until around 2023, 56 years after his service in Vietnam. As a result, as he became more disabled, and unable to walk, see properly, or work.

Despite these struggles, Dave never abandoned his Trotskyist principles. When in the Workers League (the predecessor to the WSWS), he ran the printing press, among his many other leadership duties. He went to the docks and spoke with dockworkers. He confronted the union bureaucrats who attempted unsuccessfully to expel him from the yards. He spoke to students and youth all across the country, from the ghettos to the universities. He had friends in the arts and theater as well as his old vet comrades.

David struggled mightily against this degenerative disease, availing himself of every experimental treatment offered by the veterans' hospitals. He believed in science and medicine and was the last living member of an advanced study involving the use of interferon. He was a fighter in every good sense of the word. He joked about having the last laugh on the government by outliving their attempts to deny his disability payments.

Although not formally involved in the Trotskyist movement in the latter part of his life, he always followed the political developments and was keenly aware of and excited by the evolution of the organization from his early days in the 1960's until today. He continued to stay in touch with old comrades and reconnected with the WSWS in the recent period in order to express his support for the success of the website and the organizing taking place internationally.

Dave clearly saw the dangers of this period of capitalist decay—but never abandoned his belief in Trotskyism, internationalism and the working class.

He will be sorely missed by all who knew him.



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