

Unconditional Theatre's

VOICES OF ACTIVISM: CRAWFORD

By John Warren

*Based on interviews conducted
by Ashley Boyd, Kim Fowler & John Warren
in Crawford, TX, August 2005*

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*All the words in this piece are taken directly from
interviews with the actual people represented.
Nothing is invented.*

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SCENE 1: WELCOME TO CRAWFORD

CHARACTERS:

Barbara Cummings, Johnny Wolf, Dennis Kyne, & "Walking Mary" Adams

BARBARA: Nothing like this has ever occurred. Not even Woodstock, not, not the war protests in Vietnam.

JOHNNY: I got a call Friday night, "There's a mom that wants to come to Crawford, and she said that she wants to see the President. And she's not leaving till she sees him."

DENNIS: Cindy Sheehan and I met in Dallas at the Veterans for Peace Convention. She rallied up a bunch of veterans, and we drove her down here on our bus.

JOHNNY: And then Cindy and the veterans showed up, and so I just gave them the logistics of what to expect. And — we went down the road...

DENNIS: We parked right here. We made a couple deals with the, the, the sheriffs and everything. They stopped us and — sent us over here to the ditch on the side of this road. The sheriffs, there was probably — ten, fifteen of them, but it was also Secret Service. There was some guys in army uniforms out here. They brought the farm out, right? It starts here with, umm, "Okay, Cindy, you've got to walk in the ditch. If you don't walk in the ditch, you could be arrested." Okay. This is the sheriff talking to Cindy.

So we marched down this ditch. Then right about where the bend is, there's the big guy with two stars. The general. I mean, this guy looked like he had been lynchin' people in his life. The guy is like, "Well, y'all made a deal, and you walked on the road, you can't go any further." That was it. Somebody stepped out of the ditch, and that was the end of the walk. We're like, "Dude, this is America, man. What are you talking about, we can't walk on a country road? Man, you've got to be kidding me." (*laughing*) You start thinking like you're eight again.

BARBARA: The first couple of days they, they postured, and they tried to scare us away, but I think they were directed to do that.

DENNIS: And so, everybody fell back here, because there was shade. It was hot as sin on that road that day. And Cindy set a tent right here. So it all ended up here in this triangle. We've been sittin' over here since August 6th.

JOHNNY: The Mayor told me that he hated the fact that we were there, and how disrespectful we were, and why didn't I just go back home and quit harassing the people.

BARBARA: But when they saw that this effort would not be chased out of town, the Crawford Police Department has been, I mean, just phenomenal. They see that we're making the effort to keep peace.

JOHNNY: And the Mayor says, “You know, we’re all Bush supporters here. You give us the wrong, the wrong image.” And I said, “But you’ve taken a stand. And we disagree with you.” And he said, “Well, you’re an American. We believe in your right to free speech.” I said, “Absolutely. That’s why we’re here.”

BARBARA: I’m from San Diego. Uh, I came out here on the third day. I was at home planting and I was listening to an Air America radio program, and I heard a lady say, “My son is shipping out to Iraq on September 24th, but I’m *not* going to spend my last month with my son. I’m going to go sit in a ditch with Cindy.” And, I mean, it was like an instantaneous — jolt to my heart. I picked up all my gardening tools, I went upstairs, and I called my friend. And I said, “Were you listening to the ra—?” And she said, “I’m already packing.” And so we were on the road within twelve hours.

MARY: We only had 49 states represented until yesterday. And I was working at the reception booth, and a woman came in from South Dakota! We just (*clapping hands*) *ha-ha!* Yes! So we have all 50 states.

BARBARA: We made it here in 22 hours. I got on the shuttle to go up to Camp Casey, and as I was stepping off they said, “Oh, we need volunteers at the Peace House to answer phones,” and I said, “Well, I can do that for a little while.” So I’ve been here for sixteen days. I’ve never been back to Camp Casey. We just consider ourselves the infrastructure people, getting people to the camp, providing the food and water and stuff. I’m kind of the greeter, so I have had the opportunity to actually meet every single person who has crossed the threshold.

MARY: People call me Walking Mary, and I suppose I’ve been called that since the ‘80s... there was a walk across America for nuclear disarmament. And it’s similar to this in that every day new people come. And...experienced workers leave! So, you can see we recruit new people pretty quickly.

BARBARA: They’ve come from Sweden in the middle of the night. They don’t even go to a hotel. “We want to go see Cindy.” A 74-year-old lady rode a bus from New York for three days. People are quitting school, taking leaves of absence. It’s like going to Mecca for some of these people.

MARY: And people are so willing to work together. There isn’t any of the processing that I was familiar with in other movements. We don’t have time. This is a revolution.

BARBARA: We’ve got — three 70-year-old ladies said, [*in Southern accent*] “We’ve never set up a tent in our lives, but honey, we are goin’ set up this tent and we are goin’ sleep in the ditch with Cindy.” And sleep they did for a week in their little tent.

MARY: I made a little family right away. My experience here has been like a love-o-lution.

BARBARA: The common thread of every single person, every one, they say, “I had to come, I was compelled.”

JOHNNY: I don't think anybody really knows why they're here. You know, I feel like we're part of a divine plan, and I'm here to serve it, and not necessarily understand it.

BARBARA: And, and I, I — just I'm so emotional because it seems like every need we have is met within ten minutes of having the need.

MARY: Well two farmers in bib overalls were coming in and I welcomed them, and one guy said, "I have more money than God." (*laughs*). I said, "Oh!" And he said, "What do you need?" And of course I began telling him. He donated close to a thousand dollars of equipment for our information systems.

JOHNNY: The idea that the divine can make things happen — when things are supposed to happen and there's a flow... we try to assist it.

BARBARA: We ran out of ice last week; the ice truck broke down, we, we ran to all the stores, bought all the ice they had, "Oh Jeez, what are we going to do? We have no ice. We have all this food." A guy drives up from Houston — Houston is a long way from here — with a truck full of ice. He said, "I had to come. I'm a Republican, but I hate this war, and I thought y'all might need some ice." I don't know how these things can be explained.

JOHNNY: I'm, I'm really humbled — by the number of people here and this whole situation. We're not in charge. The people that are moved to be here are really my stars.

DENNIS: I'm a protester. I mean I don't want to call it a career, because I don't want to do it forever. If this administration hadn't lied to me, I'd probably be at the beach, playing my guitar, you know, hanging out. So I wouldn't be active if they weren't lying.

MARY: I've been involved all my life. I knew by the time I was ten years old not to spread war.

DENNIS: Being in Desert Storm, I speak a lot about depleted uranium. They dropped 340 tons over there. So I was in the 24th I.D., we walked right into that shit, all my guys are dead, and so — what am I supposed to do? Like, I tried to have one of them jobs, but, you know? I mean, this is what I do. All I need is a sandwich, now. My whole sustenance is here.

MARY: If you want a happy, rewarding story of full-time activism, you need a simple lifestyle to accompany it. I worked for Greenpeace once, and I was the highest-paid employee in that office...and I qualified for food stamps.

DENNIS: I wrote my first letter to the United Nations in 1993 as a drill sergeant. I was always an advocate for a peaceful existence. I just had no idea how to get there.

MARY: I've walked long distances, you know, from Albuquerque to...Knoxville. (*laughing*) There was a time when I could walk to Washington, D.C. But I'm 65 now, I have sciatica, I have foot issues.

DENNIS: So in 2003, when this stuff started really hitting me, I realized that I should have been working harder. A little bit of shame kicked in. I now have a really serious duty not to let another decade go by. That's why the revolution is taking so long. We have these ideas long, long before we ever act on them. And it just took me so long, man.

BARBARA: When I left for Crawford, I made a phone call to my daughter. She said, "Mom, you are just acting like a crazy person. It'll be you and Gloria sitting in a ditch with this lady. I mean, I just don't understand why you would make this effort." And I closed my eyes, and even then, sixteen days ago, I said, "Laurie, behind my closed eyes, I see the United States map. And I see — little spots of light all over the map, lighting up. People are, people are waking up. And I think there's going to be thousands of people like me who have said, "We have to seize this opportunity and go there." And lo and behold, agnostic Barbara has proven correct, because they're here from all over the world.

JOHNNY: I met Joan Baez a couple of days ago. And she grabbed my hand, and she says, "Crawford Peace House, you're so famous. It's such an honor to meet you." (*laughing*) It was like, oh my goodness.

MARY: Physically, my body is a part of this. Physically, my body is in concert with other people who want to bring the troops home. I'm not lonely anymore. I don't have to be depressed or sad...that we uh, invaded Iraq and bombed hospitals. I'm in the solution. I'm here, when two and two and two make a million.

BARBARA: Have you seen the movie, *March of the Penguins*? Okay. They march through the ice, you know, blizzards. The female gives the male the egg, and she walks 70 miles to where she can fish. And then she turns around, and marches 70 miles back. And that's how I feel we are. I mean — it's a Herculean task.

MARY: Cindy is the founder of this movement, as Rosa Parks was, as the first Earth Day person was. The unique thing is that veterans and military families are the lead people! With Cindy's son as the catalyst of that. And in my 65 years of peace activism, there's never been military families before. You know, I'm from the traditional peace movement — the Quakers, the Mennonites, the PhDs. (*laughs*) And all the good people. But never have I worked with military families before, and I am so honored.

JOHNNY: We've become a community of, of people that, I would want to live with, and a group of people that I would — want to have a society with. And a, a new vision of how we want to function.

DENNIS: The most inspiring thing I see here is the kids. I really believe that what I do is for them. You know? We're all in this thing together, man, from four years on up.

MARY: Every time I meet young people, I don't worry about the world. So if anyone wants to get over their despair, they should come here and watch the young people.

DENNIS: And you see, you see these kids, they're all happy. You walk around this country, and you see some kids – so miserable. These kids out here, they're not. I kind of like, that's where I get my energy from. My goodness, if I had half of their energy, boy, I'd really be getting some stuff done.

BARBARA: There are people who have — literally taken their life savings, taken leaves of absence, taken early retirements, to follow George W. Bush wherever he goes and protest, and hold him accountable for this — this horrible, hideous thing that he's done.

MARY: This is just the spark. This is just the beginning.

BARBARA: We, we, we have on blinders, and we are trudging forward, over rocks, through them, around 'em, however we have to go. And, and, and we're on a mission. And nothing, nothing will stop us. Nothing.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2: VETERANS FOR PEACE

CHARACTERS:

Ann Wright, Aimee Allison, David Ledesma, Jeff Paterson, & Jeff Key

ANN WRIGHT:

My military skills are helping work for peace. I mean, this is kind of like camping out, you know, going on field exercises with the military, except that you have civilians that are here, and very independent civilians. So, you've got, a camp population that... that doesn't take orders, as such. (LAUGHING) So it's like herding cats.

They're all... I mean, the only people that would come to... Central Texas in the middle of August, uh, to, to work for peace, you know, their heart is so good. So, if they happen to wander off to talk to friends while they volunteered for duties, it's, uh, sometimes it's a little challenging to get... things done on my time table.

I'm a retired military officer with 29 years... in and out of the military, and I was a diplomat for the United States, and served in such places as Nicaragua and Somalia. I reopened the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan. And then my final assignment was in Mongolia, where I resigned from the Diplomatic Corps in opposition to the war in Iraq.

And as things have played out, uh, I mean, it was really lonely the first... month or two. You know, after you've given up your job, you've...put your neck out on the line, you publicly resigned. And the nation's gone to war. And... not that anybody called me a traitor or anything like that, because I'd put my credentials of government service up against anybody's. And I can guarantee you, there are few people who have been in as, as dangerous positions and as isolated places as I have.

It took me about six months before I started running into, groups of people that... appreciated the fact that I had resigned. It took a while to, to...you know, to, to call up peace activist groups and say, "Hey, I was one of the diplomats that resigned, and...I'll tell you about that little story if you want to hear it."

And in, in fact Cindy Sheehan... she emailed and said, "Well, what are you going to do?" And it was like, well, I don't know, but I'm...up for anything. Got any ideas? Well, little did I know what her idea would be. And twenty-five days later in the hot friggin' sun of Texas, it's like, Jesus Christ, I'll never ask that again.

You know, most people in the military are... all for peace. Because they're the ultimate... they know that they...that should the nation go to war, that they are the implements of the nation. If your country sends you to war on false circumstances, that's the worst. And I would have...if I had been in the U.S. military on active duty, I would have had to be court-martialed.

I think we've got ten very brave people that have been court-martialed for not going. But hundreds of people have gone AWOL, and then received an administrative discharge.

So many, in fact, that the military does not publicize how many people are not court-martialed, but just silently, sneakily...allowed to leave.

I find serenity in the fact that um...well, you, you can't go wrong with peace. And non-killing. And...I guess that's it. And, and the strength comes from being in places like this.

AIMEE ALLISON:

I'm here in Crawford because, um – when you talk about supporting the troops, since I was one of those troops, I understand why, why people become, uh, soldiers.

I'm from Oakland, California. And I'm from a big family, I'm one of six kids and we don't-didn't have money for college, right, so even though I was Student Body President of Antioch High School and a national level debater, Miss Junior Miss Whatever, blah, blah, blah, all this stuff, there's still no money for college and, um, when I got my acceptance letter from Stanford, and the, the scholarships I'd received ran out, um, I started panicking so, um, I started looking around for what my options were. Now, at Antioch High School the military recruiter is a constant- he is like a staff person. He has a desk in the Career Center. He was a really nice man. The kind of old uncle you never had, put his arm around you, "How you doin' in school, you studyin' hard?" So he convinced me that, um, I could get my education paid for because they had a GI bill program where I could get \$20,000 for college. And, um, I don't know about you, but \$20,000 sounded like an incredible amount of money.

I wanted to be a doctor at the time. So, the recruiter says, "OK, being a medic is gonna be a great, great match for you." But he, um, didn't tell me that a medic in the military is different than a medic out on the street, and— Um...you know, you go to the emergency room, if you have a broken thumb you wait for four hours because the guy with the gunshot wound goes ahead of you, he's more injured, and that's how triage normally works. But, um, when you're a combat medic, and if there's firefight and there's twenty people down, injured – we're taught to quickly assess, and the people who, uh, are treated first are the ones more likely to quickly return to support the military mission. So we prioritize people who were less injured for reasons of practicality, and we're actually taught to give soldiers a shot of morphine and to make them comfortable and allow them to die.

Even as a medic, you're always a soldier first. All these years after I went to boot camp I can still tell you the cadences, I can still stand parade rest, I can still do 50 push-ups. I can still remember how to clean my M-16. I can still tell you that, even though the, the mission of the military I found morally reprehensible, that there was some beauty waking at five in the morning and marching formation all at once. And that this training becomes part of your DNA. And for those of us who become conscientious objectors, we, at some level, are trying to extract something that cannot be extracted.

I joined the military in 1987. I, uh, was a Army Reservist, and during the Persian Gulf War, I had this revelation that, um, really forced me to acknowledge my own conscience in the face of war. I graduated from high school, and then the next week I went to boot

camp. I, y'know, I didn't fully appreciate the potential of going to war. I can remember as early as the first week, of really being bothered by the training, and, um... I thought I was stuck. I had no idea that it was every soldier's legal right to apply for a discharge.

When I became a conscientious objector, it was uh, very scary because it's like discovering you have a, you know, another limb or something that's, something that's moving and you can't control it.

Having gone through that amazing transformation, I felt an obligation to help the next generation of young people who are attracted to the military. I-I have, um, counseled dozens of conscientious objectors, uh, to support them as veteran to veteran.

Hart is an Iraqi war vet, and, um a few months ago he got his discharge as a conscientious objector, and um, I just started talking to him about his experience, and he was a 50 cal. machine gunner, riding on the back of Humvees. He talks about when they rolled into Fallujah and I said, "Were there any people there?" He says, "What do you mean?" I said, um, "Were there, were there *people* there?" And, um, he said, "I, I, I don't know. I can't remember."

I saw the pictures of dead children, people that soldiers murdered, you know, and um, he's never seen those pictures. And um, it's like that sense of, you know, that separation from, I guess reality. He's not at the place where he can even... he did what he could, right, he got out of the military, but it's probably going to be years and years before he can face, um, the devastation of places like Fallujah. He started sobbing and he says, you know, "Before I went to Iraq I got this tattoo, and I had no idea why, but I endured 17 painful hours to get it." And he lifted up his shirt, and it's huge, it's his entire back. It's a phoenix, red, orange and yellow. He says, "Rebirth. And, now it makes sense." So, for people like him, I keep working.

DAVID LEDESMA:

May 20, 1967, my oldest brother was killed in combat in Vietnam. Joseph Ledesma, Jr. It took me 36 years to get involved.

I've always wanted to write a book about my brother's life but I had never pursued it because I knew I'd have to talk about it and I always questioned whether he died the way they said he died. He was awarded the bronze star for valor and I just couldn't believe that he did what they said he did. I found four guys that served with him in Vietnam. In fact, I spoke with the medic that was 10 feet from him when he was killed, and when I read him the citation, I said, "Did Joe do that?" And, he just simply said, "That's not the way I remember it."

The military wants to lessen the blow I guess, and they want to glorify the deaths so you feel that there was a noble cause, to make you feel he was a hero. He was a civilian for 19 of his 20 years. He was drafted, um, out of college, into the army and then in less than a year he was dead. And, um, so I want to let people know his story, that, you

know, my brother didn't need to die in Vietnam to be a hero. He was a hero a long time before he went. To, to say that my brother's life is defined by Vietnam to me is an insult.

For about 20 years I used to have the same dream over and over again. It's based on things that really happened when my brother was coming home for his last leave before going to Vietnam. He called and told us kids that, uh, that I'm coming home on leave but don't tell mom. He knocks, you know, we open the door, my mom sticks her head out the bedroom, sees him standing there, she just runs towards him, jumps over the vacuum cleaner into his arms. Well, my dream is based on this same thing but the military made a mistake and my brother wasn't dead. And so in that same scene I can see my family is standing in the dining room and there's a knock, I answer the door, my brother is standing there with a big smile on his face, I throw myself in his arms, and I cry and I don't let go, and then I wake up. I had that dream for twenty years.

I was 13 when he was killed. He was 20 years old, so he was big brother. You know, nobody ever talked to me about his death. I just stored it away in a place in my heart. But, uh, the lead up to the Iraq War just brought back all of my memories. So I called my sister, and I broke down crying and, um, I couldn't stop, and I hadn't cried like that in 36 years. I told her that I was going to get involved in the anti-war movement, because I wasn't going to, uh, you know sit by.

This is the first weekend in two-and-half years that I have not protested on the corner back home.

There was a poster in the laundry room, it said "Protest in Downtown San Jose." And I said, "I'm going, man". I had never, ever done anything like that in my life. I made a sign that said, "Bring the troops home now." I had felt really alone, and I was with thousands of people that felt the same way that I did. I wanted there to be a protest *every day*. So I said, "I'm not stopping". It's been two-and-a-half years and I've been out there every weekend.

I have a big poster board picture of my brother. I have signs put up on the sidewalk. People stop by and, I mean, I get flipped off, but I don't care.

One Vietnam War vet came by just as I was leaving, just barreling down the parking lot, and he parks right behind me so I can't get out. He says, "What is your problem?" I said, "I don't have a problem." And he says, "Well, they called me baby killer, they spit on me when I came back." And I said, "Hey, I never spit on anybody." So, as I explained to him why I was out there, I said, "You guys aren't the enemy. It's not your fault. It's the government's fault. You guys are doing your duty." And by the end of our conversation, he gave me a hug and he called me his brother.

I've had six Iraq Veterans home on leave come up and shake my hand. In fact, the last guy who came by brought me the last pair of desert boots he wore in Iraq. I don't even know these people. He said, "I want you to have these."

Pro-Bush people come out and they literally get in my face, and [yell all, racist stuff to me, "Go back to where you came from!" And] so this one woman said to me... well, I had

figured maybe if I open up a little bit, she'll understand where I'm coming from. I told her, "Look, my brother was killed in Vietnam." And she looked at me and she said, "Get over it." And, I thought, you know, I'm *entitled* to that, and when you try to strip me from my own emotions, that's somebody who is really twisted. All I say is, "Peace. Peace to you."

This one kid, he had this crew cut, he had this Marine shirt, and I said, "Excuse me, are you in the Marine Corps?" And he said, "Well, I just got out of boot camp yesterday." I said, "So, do you know where you'll be going." He said, "I want to go to Iraq." And I said, "What does your mom think about that?" He said, "She cried." So before he left, I said, "I want you to promise me one thing. I said, you write to your mother. You call her. Because it's always worse on the mothers."

I can still remember, seeing my brother laying in that casket in his army uniform, with a sheet of glass over his body. And you take that long, slow walk down that middle aisle, and the closer you get, you see the outline of the face, and then my mother, I thought she was going to go crazy. I mean I can still see her on my brother's coffin. We had to keep pulling her off, and the glass was stained with her fingerprints and tears.

I don't think it's a coincidence that Cindy spoke up. You know, you don't mess with a mom. You don't know a mother's pain.

JEFF PATERSON:

I was at the Veterans For Peace convention, uh, when Cindy got up there, and she's like, "I'm going to Crawford." And most people were like, "Well, good luck with that." (CHUCKLE) And it was like, "Hey, anyone want to come with me?" and a few people did. And, you know, and I went home. But then like, a week later, I'm like, "Damn." You know, she, she's gone on to something. So, what the hell, you know, I went ahead, got here on Tuesday.

I was, I was a Marine in the Gulf War. So I...I actually, no I take it back. I was a Marine *during* the Gulf War, and I refused to fight the war. And so I went to jail instead of going to Iraq.

I had spent four years in Okinawa, the Philippines, and Korea. So during my last few months, I was in Hawaii, I'm like, "Oh, I should go back to school", because as a, as an artillery man, um... there wasn't a lot of skills that were going to be um... you know, applicable to getting a job, in the real world. So I started hanging around at the college campus.

I met some activists, and you know, they're into things like 'U.S. out of Central America', and I, had spent all my years training to... um, intervene basically in Central America. So, you know, stuff didn't look that great in the Philippines, so I'm like, "Well, we really have no business, like, mucking up more people."

So I these people put some content behind my feelings, and... I wrote a little op ed that appeared in the military paper. It was basically we had no business being in there.

And...my commanding officer called me in the next day and was like, you know, "You ever do that again, I'm going to make your life miserable." And he's like, you know, "I'm not censoring you. You just have to... you have to let me read it first."

I was just, I had done my four years. I was getting ready to get out, go on with my life. And when the war started, they... It was the first time they ever used stop-loss, meaning that, like, "Hey, my get-out day is a couple weeks, and you're telling me that I'm in till this war is ended?" So.

As an artillery controller, they trained me to assemble the battlefield nuclear warheads. And um, and during one of the pep talks leading up to this war, our regimental commander, you know, made this big speech to, hundreds of us. And basically it was like, "We're going to go over there, we're going to kick their ass, we're going to take their gas, we're going to be home by Christmas." Everybody's like, "Yeah!" "But, if anything goes wrong over there, we'll whip out the silver bullet and we'll nuke all those ragheads until they glow." Everybody's like, "Yeah! Nuke 'em!" And I just realized, I was the guy that was designated to be the assembler of that tactical move. I was like...you know, I'm not going to do that. Whatever the military could do to me would be pretty minor compared to what I'd be doing to people, you know, in Iraq.

So, I held a press conference and said I was against it. I applied for a conscientious objector discharge. A couple weeks later the Marine Corps...uh, denied my claim. They said I wasn't sincere enough. And they volunteered me to be one of the first people to deploy to Iraq.

Um, so at that point — well, I stopped eating. But I was still running like five miles a day, because that was their training, um, I had lost a lot of pounds. You know, I wasn't that large in the first place (LAUGH). So I was a medical problem for them, I just looked anemic... And, and also I was holding press conferences whenever I could. Like I'd tell press to meet me at the gate, because I couldn't leave base, but I'd talk through the fence. That kind of thing. So I was sort of a pain in the ass.

A week later they took me to the airplane, ordered me on the plane, and I sat down on the runway. And the military chose to let me sit there. And the plane took off, and somebody scooped me up and took me to jail.

It was all pretrial, just about three months. And when my trial actually started, they decided that...there was too many things wrong with their case against me. And they chose to cut their losses and give me a discharge. It's called "other than honorable".

JEFF KEY:

I'm almost done with the Marines. I owe them 21 days of make-up duty.

When I got back from Iraq, I uh, you know, started to wake up about the whole sort of deception that led us there, and, and... I'm thinking, you know, how can I stay silent? So I went on, *Paula Zahn Now*, as Paula's guest and uh, came out of the closet as, queer.

And uh, used “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” to be discharged from the Marine Corps. I later found out that, you know, even though we do have a ban on gays in the military that you, you get to keep...being in the service until they finish your discharge. You know, so apparently we’re not such a, danger to the military, (LAUGH) that they don’t want us at work.

I mean, everybody hates me. I’m queer so the Republicans hate me. I’m pro-life so the, the lefties hate me. You know. I got no home! (LAUGHING)

I was raised in Alabama in the ’60s and ’70s and, you know, my parents... uh... took me to church and taught me, you know, to do what’s right and to stand up for what I believe in. When I was seven years old, mom pointed out to me that a lot of Marines from Alabama where I’m from, uh, were black. And, you know, when I started school, I was in the first decade or so of desegregated classes, uh, I heard “nigger” every day. Usually “nigger lover” applied to me.

So, seeing the veterans who were black coming back from Vietnam registered with me that that was something exceptionally noble, for them to serve a country, to sometimes make the ultimate sacrifice, for an America that still treated them like second-class citizens. And as a gay man, I could certainly relate to that. It was the only reason I was able to... go along with a, you know a policy that...sounds stupid to every thinking person I’ve ever met, uh...because I was fighting for the America we have the potential to become.

When I was in Iraq, I saw a lot. I mean, I, I never saw a dead body, and I never... uh, I mean, I may have been shot at once. He was a bad shot if he was shooting at me, you know, and uh...so compared to what they’re living through over there now, my time was a cake walk. I mean, conditions were rough, but, you know, it’s nothing compared to what other Marines go through to serve this nation – and some other service members. I pretend like the Marines are the only ones over there. Sorry. It’s a Marine thing.

I was supposed to leave Crawford three days ago. I uh, when I got to the Austin airport, you know, I was crying so hard I couldn’t see which sign was Avis. And I was like, what are you doing? You know, a Marine never leaves his troops behind. He never runs in the face of danger. And uh, so I traded my dirty rental car in on a clean one and left again, and uh, came to Crawford, which is where I’ll stay until, uh, George Bush’s vacation is over.

I’ve been infused with so much love. I mean, these people, all the moms who lost children over there...call me, uh, son. You know? Because theirs have gone on. And uh, and I call them mom. Or they, the Latino dads that were here last week, I called them “poppy.”

Now when Cindy showed up and...and uh, you know, George Bush called her “mom” when they met, I guess because he couldn’t think of her name, uh, and so I was a little... sketchy, you know, because it was such a sore spot or whatever. And so I just explained to her, you know, I’ve been calling all these other moms, “mom.” And uh, unlike Mr.

Bush, I know your name. But you know, if, if you could go along with that, the reason is because your sons were my brothers, you know? And it just makes sense.

She said, "Right on, son." (LAUGH)

She didn't have body guards or nothing. So I protected her from the people booing her at the airport, just because I'm a big guy. I, I know that uh... I know that Casey would have wanted me to do that. I mean, I would want him to do it for my mom, if the roles were, uh, switched. So there I was, you know, all the shots that went all over the world were of me and Cindy. Twelve minutes later – hah – I'm on an uplink to the AP, you know, and it's all over Camp Pendleton, me there in my Marine Corps T-shirt with this woman that a lot of, uh... You know, I'm going to get more shit from my Marines for being on camera with a unsat haircut than um (LAUGH), you know, being a lefty. There are a lot of people in the military now that are waking up.

And I try to uh, I try to find common ground, with those people across the street who are...behind the President's decision all the way. You know, I've spoken with some of them. I went over and I said, "You know, our politics might...might be different, but I understand that you're here because you want to support the troops. And as a troop, that means something to me. And I appreciate it."

You know, we do taps every night, I play taps over the crosses. And Joan Baez showed up out here. She's this, this, uh, peace warrior veteran. And so I just asked her if she would stand by me when I honored our troops that night. And, and she did. And, and afterwards, she was laying back there just sort of chilling, and I just...laid my head on her stomach. And, and she stroked my hair, and uh, I was so clear in that moment that that was a reunion and not a meeting. You know, that, uh, our souls have traveled this path together, long before this.

I've always regretted being too young to...sit with Gandhi or, or to be shoulder to shoulder with the mine workers, or walked that bridge in Selma with Dr. King, you know. I would give anything to have been there. This is my Selma Bridge.

I'm just a man trying to do what's right. And I'm so clear my, my involvement is not about me. It is about...something greater. You know? And if the Man can say, "Of myself I am nothing; it is the father within that does the work," if Jesus could be that clear about it... I know I am just I'm, I'm so blessed that uh, my presence here has been able to help some people open their eyes to another way of looking at things and, bring my boys and girls home, before another one dies.

Everybody's got their own thing, you know? Some people can use a pair of scissors, and they're over there cutting out little signs for the crosses, and, and uh...I can play the trumpet. Everybody's got their own voice. There are a lot of kinds of activism, I guess. Main thing is just get off the couch. And start speaking.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 3: ACROSS THE DIVIDE

CHARACTERS:

Barbara Cummings, Cheryl Norris, Johnny Wolf, Lucy Ross, Steve Silvas, & William Moore

BARBARA: I must say that personally at this point I have very little tolerance left for people who still support George W. Bush and this war. Friends that I've had my whole life, I, we just have no common ground. It's the same with family members: You're with us or you're against us.

CHERYL: I actually know Bush. Or at least have met him. My mom worked for him when he was Governor. She was one of his, uh, Health and Human Services policy advisors. I voted for him the first time. And now he terrifies me, so the next time I actively opposed him. You know, I counsel gang leaders. I am really tough to scare.

BARBARA: My brother was taken over by Rush Limbaugh. And even more sad, my two nieces, to whom I've always been Auntie Barb, you know, I taught them both how to swim. The last email I got from one of them said that all my friends believe in Satan and they want us all to be lesbians and gays, and umm, I, I said, "Christie, that's just, I mean, re-read what you wrote to me. I mean, you've known me since you were born. H-how could you— you know, the hatred that your email represents, it is just... I-I-I don't know what I can say to you anymore."

JOHNNY: About two and a half years ago, we started organizing a rally when Tony Blair came to visit with President Bush, to consolidate their plans for the invasion of Iraq. So we brought almost 2,000 people to Crawford, where they gave us the football stadium. Before that, their largest protest had been 15 people. And we, we came down, and we met with the Chief of Police, and trying to talk about logistics and peacekeeping. We were scared and intimidated to come to Crawford — and they were scared of us too. You know, they even decided to have metal detectors for everybody that came into the stadium, and I think we only had one pocketknife out of the whole crowd.

CHERYL: I mean, I've been to protests, anti-war protests in Houston. But I've never done anything like this. I mean, has there been anything like this to have done?

JOHNNY: The idea was to set up a home here for alternative points of view, to run press conferences for the media that is landlocked here. But also, people would come out and sit in the yard on Sunday afternoons, and, and have interfaith worship and read poetry. Our message in what the Peace House does is, is about, umm, positive alternatives to war. And confronting the cult of war up the street.

The house that we bought, it didn't even come out on the market. People wouldn't sell to us. They turned it over to a real estate agent, she called me up. I closed on the house on Friday, and on Monday, the *Dallas Morning News* printed an article about the Crawford Peace House, and that article went around the world. And so we still had the people that were living in the house before, hadn't even moved out yet. We told them they could have another week to move out, and when they read the paper, they just left.

They left everything. They were terrified because there were, there were veiled threats in the article from the, from the people of Crawford.

We tried to have an interfaith worship. And none of the churches in Crawford would participate with us. But I think they recognized that we were hard-working people. In some ways, we've proven to be, you know, what they expected — *and* I think that we've proven ourselves to be different.

CHERYL: I had a run-in, first negative thing, was someone at the Peace House. A kid walked by wearing a cowboy shirt and a hat and I overheard the exchange, which was basically her tirade of profanities to him. I realized that he was trying to get across the street to the other camp, and she was just going at it. Um... you know, fuck you, blah, blah, blah, blah. And he was just kind of laughing at her. And I immediately stepped up and said, "Stop immediately." And she's like, "He initi—," "I don't care. Hush. Just breathe. I need to talk to you." She's like, "No, I don't need to talk, I'm fine." I'm like, "You're going to talk or I'm going to get the police. Because this is not about you and your feelings. This is about retaining the dignity of Cindy and her cause." I'm like, "Look, are you here supporting Cindy?" She's like, "Yes." I'm like, "Okay, what's the likelihood that someone driving by to the pro-war side, have a video camera or tape recorder?" She's like, "Huge." I'm like, "Astronomical. So why would you want to possibly give any fodder to them?"

JOHNNY: Somebody once asked me, he said, "Your neighbors think you guys are a bunch of old hippies." And I said, "Yeah. And for about eight hundred dollars a month, we can confront the leader of a superpower."

LUCY: The t-shirts just came in a few minutes ago. "You've Made Your Point, Now It's Time to Move On." Oh, take a picture. They're fabulous.

JOHNNY: We all love this country. Everybody in Crawford, every article I've ever read say they support our right to free speech. We agree about that. But the Mayor says, "Well, what happens if I bring everybody from Crawford to your farm? You know, we bring 700 people to your house for the weekend?" And I said, "Well we'd take care of you. We'll cook for you, and we'll have portable toilets, and we'll try not to get your kids in the fire ant mountains."

LUCY: I'm southern, and I believe in southern hospitality. But these folks didn't- weren't invited to our little party. They just showed up and they, as far as... After three weeks, you're vagrants now. (laughs) They- you know, if we were having a plantation party, or a campout, and we invited you, y'all come, fine. But these people just showed up. And I say, we've been hospitable. We're not hurtin' at 'em. But it's like come on.

JOHNNY: You know, we've had all kinds of folks come — a lot of conspiracy theorists, people that believe that folks are out chasing them around. Uh, ex-military people that felt like they had top secret information that they would only be safe at Crawford, where they could speak.

LUCY: The first time I came was a couple Sundays ago. I had just gone to a right-to-life meeting when I came out here, so my wounds were right up, up, up. And the first time one of them said something rude, I went, 'You don't even know me! How can you talk to me like that?' I was wearing a, a Texas flag shirt, and it said 'Love ya, Dubya" on the top, and they say 'Who's Dubya?' And it's slang- Southern slang for George W. Bush. They didn't have a clue what that was.

JOHNNY: We had somebody stay with us that — actually was asked to leave some of the other establishments in Crawford, and the police brought him to our house. And he was a friend of ours for a while. We try to welcome people.

LUCY: Walking through here, I called it 'walking the gauntlet', cause there were about four hundred people crammed in that little space, in this triangle. And some were very nice, some of them thought I was the confused one, and some were just outright belligerent. And there were quite a few old veterans from the Vietnam age that just had never gotten over that.

JOHNNY: You know, to have a forum at the Peace House, we really ask that people work with our principles.

LUCY: Some of these people just assumed I was the enemy. And I went, "Dude, I'm just here to meet ya."

JOHNNY: We don't promote violence, we don't promote hate speak. Our biggest goal is to treat everybody here with as much respect as possible.

LUCY: I do remember this one lady had the gall to be singing a hymn three times as I went by there. She- I'd be talking to somebody and then she'd be starting this hymn, and if I'd had the presence of the Holy Spirit to tell her... Apparently, I had the presence of the Holy Spirit to shut my mouth and not respond to her.

JOHNNY: I think conflict is a process, of chaos, where the truth becomes revealed. And so as people from divergent backgrounds come together, the idea of conflict is how, how things are brought to the light.

LUCY: But she kept singing this hymn, and when I left, it just hit me. That woman is using a hymn about my Jesus Christ as a weapon against me.

JOHNNY: You know, different times in my life, I've been able to make statements, that went around the world. And, I'm not that smart. I'm not that good at what I do. But if the Divine can make something like this happen, then I have faith.

STEVE: Well, I uh, I came out here with the intention of joining the support people. But our numbers were so small that I overlooked them my first turnaround. I saw that big group across the street. I didn't even see this side. Because it was, all we had was just these two tarps. You know, we're not funded, like they are over there. And uh... I turned around at the barricade to the Bush's ranch, and I was fixing to head back... And then I thought, "No, I'm not going to give up that easy. I'll go down another back road, and see

if I can find somebody.” And that’s when I noticed that the supporters were on this side. I’ve been here ever since.

BARBARA: We had some really interesting characters here. They, tried to set up, uh, housekeeping on our front yard with their horses, dogs, guitars, and “We love our President”. They were doing some rap. So um, since it was private property, we asked them to leave. They refused. So the police actually did have to come. And they put up a bit of a fight, but they did leave.

STEVE: I see some people that feel strongly in their beliefs. I don’t all agree with their tactics. You know, they yell at us over here. If you look, and compare the two groups, you will kind of see that uh... we’re a little more clean-cut over here. And, we look like uh... regular Americans, instead of throw-backs to the ’60s, like some of those people there. You see all these peace signs, tie-dye stuff. You know, it’s, it’s like they’re trying to make this another Vietnam.

LUCY: We’re just nice people, and please be nice to us as well. We’ve had enough negative press, thank you very much.

STEVE: We’re uh, just a bunch of individuals out here that uh, we’re not associated with any affiliation. We’re not here to heckle anybody, disrespect anybody. The other side was born with the right to do what they’re doing, and we respect that. Uh, we’re not here to protest. We’re here to show support for our troops and for the President.

And the reason I’m here is, my brother is in Iraq. I uh, was reluctant to come out here, ’cause I didn’t want him to uh...to suffer in any way extra, for, for something I do over here. And I emailed him and told him what I was thinking about doing, and... and he emailed me back and said, “Make sure they spell my name right.” So that’s why I’m here.

And my brother’s name is Sergeant First Class Sandy Silvas, and he’s in charge of about 37 people. And he says morale is high.

BARBARA: Another neighbor, he came down with his son a couple of weeks ago – and I’m not going to mention his name, because I’m afraid that he would... face retribution. And he said, “I’m going to pledge to you that I will come every night after work and help y’all. I’m a machinist and a welder, I can do carpentry. My son wants to help.” And I said, “You know, what about your wife? Isn’t she, scared for you?” And he said, “Well, she’s a little bit scared, but you know...” He said, “I can’t have my boy in Scouts, I can’t have my boy in Little League, I’m afraid they’re going to make my boy just like them. And I want my boy to see what a real man of Texas is all about.”

WILLIAM: *My* belief – this is *my* opinion as a Texan... Cindy Sheehan— her son went on his own accord, an’ he died, for his country. An’ she’s disrespectin’ that. That’s horrible to me, a mother doin’ that. I think she’s a kook.

STEVE: I mean, I can understand Cindy’s grief. I can only imagine her pain. But uh, I’m not here to disrespect her. She had... noble intentions and all that, but it’s gotten away from her. It’s not about Cindy anymore.

WILLIAM: I feel sorry for 'er, 'cause I think she's lost her way, I think the liberal press has really sucked her into this role, you know?

LUCY: You've made your point. You've gotten coverage around the world. Can you go home now?

JOHNNY: One of the neighbors just had enough, and shot his gun in the air. And he's actually a Democrat that — didn't support the war, was just tired of people being around here, and wanted privacy in his own space. And, some of his cousins have some land over here, and they were really embarrassed at his actions, and came over and said, "You know, you're safe to come stay with me."

WILLIAM: It's not like they're sufferin' out in that field. I mean, she is being, taken care of by the, uh, liberal side.

LUCY: Have you been down to the tent over there? Let them feed you! Are they feeding you very, very well!? We're having some fried chicken and whatever was donated.

BARBARA: Local Crawford residents come by with homemade brownies. Um, homemade bread. There's a pie shop in town, and one of the people who stopped through here wanted to bring a bunch of pies over one night. And when they went to pick them up and the pie shop owner heard that they were coming here, he took all the pies out of the boxes with his name on them and put them in a plain brown box so that his name would not be seen at the Peace House.

LUCY: We appreciate any donations too. They're getting funded by MoveOn dot Com. Those folks. (*giggles*) Which is why our t-shirts say "Move On".

STEVE: Embarrassing the President, that's all it is.

LUCY: This is my president's vacation month. And they know that, that's why they're out here causing trouble. And uh, you know, Bush met with her one time— ah, that's more times than I've met him. I've been wanting to be invited to the ranch for for the last five years! (*laughs*) But I'm not busting down the walls to go visit my president.

STEVE: You know, if Cindy had been an Iraqi mother, and her son died, would Saddam Hussein have given her a meeting? Would she be able to... camp out across the street from his palace? You know, these are all rights that people take for granted over here.

WILLIAM: It bothers the soldiers that they see so much goin' on over there that's positive and not bein' reported positive. They're building schools an', uh, getting electricity everywhere, water purification. I mean, it's-it's- not gonna be an America, you know? It's not easy to invent a President and a Legislature out of whole cloth.

STEVE: My brother sent me back a bunch of pictures from Iraq. There's one, where this kid is... is giving a troop a — you know, giving him five. And th-the trooper is in full battle

gear. He's even got his M-16 on. And this kid is not scared. He's standing right there giving him five with a big smile on his face.

LUCY: We have people from all over the country— and, and uh, *out* of the country. If you want to talk to Akif, he was born in Haifa. And, and you really need to see his little stuff down there on the other end. It is just fabulous, the way he's, uh, built memorials. There's pictures of children from Iraq saying "Thank you for coming, so we don't have to be killed by Saddam Hussein. Thank you for coming."

WILLIAM: I consider myself a supporter. An activist tries to change things, I try to get things to be as they should be, *my* opinion of what they should be, but I, uh-uh...I guess I'm a little bit of an activist here an' there. I don't want to change for the bad or anything. There's too many people jumpin' up with all these crazy ideas, and all I wanna do is just say, "Hold it!" (*laughs*) "That's not the way America feels!" And, I think I speak, uh, pretty much for the way most Americans feel in the rural areas.

I don't mind 'em thinkin' we're a buncha ol' hicks down here, I mean ya know, they, they think Bush is stupid, too, ya know. And he got elected twice. And he's done a whole lotta good for this nation. And if they think that's stupid, cool. They think we're hillbillies and such, yeah. You see, I also lived down in Mississippi, and you know how they speak. They thought I spoke kinda strange, like I was tryin' to be a professor or something.

LUCY: I am not the most vocal person. In fact, I'm generally rather shy. But um, sometimes you have to stand up. Not just fold your hands and hope it gets better tomorrow. I, I, I have, I have family that's in the military. I had one that's just returned recently, and I'm grateful to God. I prayed every day, and I'm so grateful.

WILLIAM: We don't want the servicemen t' come back and be like Vietnam again. It's a dishonor to-to-to the fallen heroes. I served '73 to '75. Army, heavy artillery. Those of us that remember those days back then... (*laughs*) Never again. I mean our soldiers are, are... heroes. And they need to be honored as such.

BARBARA: The veterans have been making crosses as the soldiers are killed in Iraq. We try to add their names as quickly as possible. We actually had one of the neighbors who lives behind us walk over the other night. Uh, he said, "Ma'am, my best friend was killed in Iraq last year. And, I wanted to know if, if he has a cross. And if not, could I buy one? And I said, "You don't have to buy a cross, and if you give me his name and the date that he was killed, I will make sure that your friend has a cross." They're like 23 years old, and neither of them have teeth. They were like all rotted off. And it, it made me very emotional. A mile from the President, there are people who have no teeth who think they have to pay for a cross.

WILLIAM: There's another gentleman back there that lost a son, go back there and ask for Gary. He'll-he'll-he'll tell you the whole bit about how he went out to talk to Ms., uh, you know, Cindy Sheehan – he went out there to ask her not to do this about the soldiers. They made a cross with his son's name on it, and that was a complete insult. Gary went and got the cross— he's gotten three of 'em they've put up with his son's name on it.

And the people that, that have seen the bit on TV about what he's done, they've called and asked him to go out there and get their son's cross.

STEVE: I met a woman, a couple days ago. She had been in the Marine Corps. She was over here looking for her husband's cross. And uh, she found it. She just removed the name.

BARBARA: They were trying to tromple through the crosses and take the names off. So there was some friction there. Um, someone was arrested for "sassiness", kind of an arcane, uh, crime. But "sassiness" was the charge.

STEVE: I think that maybe what they should have done was leave the crosses up, if they'd have just left the names off, if they didn't have permission, that that would have been okay.

LUCY: This is not a Democrat/Republican issue. It is a— Do you believe that, that even if you didn't agree with the war, are you decent enough to say, "Our guys are over there, let's not just say we support 'em. Do it." Don't be trying to bash 'em while they're over there.

CHERYL: Right before the last elections, I asked my mom if she was going to vote for Bush. Um, because I knew she didn't like the war. And she said, "Yes, I am." And I asked her why, and she's like, "Well, we have to. We don't have any other choice."

WILLIAM: Right now I can't do much anything else, so I just do what I can, you know, support the President an' such. Even if yer just an' ol' coot like me, drivin' aroun' town here, passin' out cards, that's support. Ya' ain't gotta be rich or nothin', jus' do what you can.

CHERYL: When I came up here, I called my mom. And she said, "Don't get arrested." And I said, "Mom, you told me when I was eleven that you'd get me out of jail once, no questions asked. I've never used it. I expect you can still honor this." And she said, "All right fine, you can get arrested." So um... she called back about six hours later. And she said "Honey, I'm proud of you. I'm really proud you're there. And I just wanted you to know."

WILLIAM: Want a good laugh? Here's my laughing card. This is ta' break the ice with th- with the liberals and everybody. 'Kay?

BARBARA: On the front of the card, it shows George W. Bush, and next to him, the state of Texas, and then you turn it over, and it says, "We are Texans before we are Americans. We love our state more than we love the country."

WILLIAM: A lotta people, they're actually keepin' 'em as souvenirs! You know, there's a seriousness behind 'em, but it's trying to do things in a way that's havin' fun.

BARBARA: And then it said, "If this stinking bitch thinks she can bring her liberal friends in here and change our way of life, she has another thing coming. And we hope the President does meet with her and takes her out, Texas style."

WILLIAM: That's the way the United States is. We have an ability ta'-ta' disagree and state our view. That's what's wonderful. Where else can you do this?

But on the other hand I don't appreciate people that when they drive by an' they holler "F Bush," you know, I have not done that to them. I don't appreciate when they start acting threateningly toward me for voicing my opinion! And I've had that several times.

Yesterday a lady just about went off on me. And her hat flew off and she was all, I mean almost foamin' at the mouth, runs over to me an' she says, "I voted for Bush twice, includin' his Dad! And, uh, he, uh, Bush said he wasn't gonna be a nation-builder!" And she run over here to her vehicle, and then hollered back at me, "I'm a veteran!" and, uh, jumped in her car and burn out. And, uh, I mean (*laughs*)...whew. She needed help.

I just showed her my cards, and uh, I guess that upset 'er. Apparently she doesn't appreciate my opinion.

JOHNNY: You know, I'd love to be irrelevant. I'd love to not have the, have the house in Crawford. You know, I spent the first year, paying the rent and all of the bills out of my own pocket. And then we had uh, *Fahrenheit 9/11* last summer.

They couldn't show the film within 100 miles of, of where the President lived. No theater would take the film. And then Michael Moore said, "You guys throw up the bed sheet on the side of the barn, and I'll bring in the movie." And uh, you know, it was an amazing experience. And we earned seventeen thousand dollars from that. And that paid the bills for a year.

And the, uh, the Freepers and the Protest Weenies showed up to, to picket us, and they were going to get arrested for not having a permit, so we told the police they were there under our permit. And we gave them a free speech zone. And we made sure they had ice water, smuggled them fruit and snacks. So we tried to take care of our opposition. And we had it if you were a Republican, that you could come watch the movie for free. And so out of the four thousand people, maybe three or four hundred of them were Republicans that wouldn't pay to see the movie, but who came and watched it.

STEVE: I've been here since Monday. A lot of them people over there have been here longer than I have. But they've noticed that I've been here. And a gentleman stopped me, he said that uh, he's glad that we're here, because we're showing support for our country. So uh, you know, we... we shook hands about three or four times, we hugged a couple of times, and uh, we're, we're both glad that each side is here.

BARBARA: My own personal goal is to... have conversations with three strangers every single day. In San Diego, I wear a T-shirt that says, "Got Oil?" It's a take on the "Got Milk?" and it has a picture of George Bush with oil on his face. And as I'm out in the

community, umm, like right before I left, I had my grandson, and we saw a fire engine parked in the shopping center, and I said, "Scotty, you want to go see the fireman?"

So we walked over there, and, you know, I said, "Wow, can he see your truck?" And of course, they're really stoked, and we chatted about this and that, and I saw him looking at my shirt, and I said, "How do you feel about this?" And he said, "Well, I'm on the other side. I'm a Christian, and I stand with the President, but I respect your views." And we were able to, you know, have that dialogue.

CHERYL: There was a woman wearing the big red, white, and blue heart earrings, and all clothed in red, white, and blue. And she took a picture, of the crosses. And, she walked over to me and she said, "Is this camp for the troops, or is this camp against the troops?"

And I smiled real big and took a breath and I said, "This camp is for the troops." And she said, "Good." And I said, "And we're against the war." And she kind of looked confused. And I said, "We don't think that they need to be being killed, for the reasons that they're there." And she got a little bit upset, and she, got in her car, um, and dug around and pulled out a letter. That was on paperboard, nicely printed out, in all these colors. And she said, "Please give Cindy this letter." And I looked down and realized that the letter was not signed. It was something "Gold Star Mothers Against You" or "You Don't Speak in Our Name", but it was anonymous.

So I ended up talking to the lady. Basically, she um...she said, "You know, I'm a Gold Star mom, and I don't appreciate you disrespecting my son's memory." And I said, "I'm sorry. We're not trying to disrespect anyone." And she said, "Well, I don't understand. Cindy's son volunteered to go to the, to fight. So what's the problem?" And I said, "Well, may I answer? Or was that a rhetorical question?" She said, "Fine. I want an answer." And she listened.

My impression was that, what I was saying was making sense to her, except how could she possibly, in such a brief period of time, abandon everything that she believes in? Because then what did her son die for? You know, she's a grieving mom, and I think it was really disconcerting to her that what I was saying actually made sense.

But in between each question, she said, "I really need to go. My husband's getting very angry." And her husband was in the car, and he just looked like, in the cartoons, when the smoke comes out of people's ears. He was hunkered over the steering wheel, and just tapping his finger, 90 to nothing. And two little poodles were in there, just barking away, which were not seeming to help him in the least.

So finally she said, "Well, just give that to Cindy." And I said, "You know, I'd really like it if, if you would sign it and let her know how to reach you." She said, "No. No, I won't." And unfortunately, people gathering around us said, "Yeah, sign it. We don't want to take a letter without it being signed."

People from our camp, we're hot and we're angry. And, we're not feeling heard, and, you know, everybody's fuming. Instead of seeing the, the courageousness of her stopping

and talking to me in the first place. And I turned to them and said, "You know what? I don't think that's what Cindy stands for. We will take a letter in any way that you feel comfortable giving it to us."

And finally she said, "Fine. I'll give you my name and number."

And um, as she got in the car, she said, "Thank you for talking to me. And, and, then she kind of stared off into space, and she said the most amazing thing. She said, "So, we are all fighting for the same cause, aren't we?" And I said, "Yes, ma'am, I believe we are." And she said, "Okay," and she got in the car.

END OF SCENE

EPILOGUE

OTIS: I don't know your persuasion. But we've broken the ice with each other. And I don't, doesn't mean we have to agree. Because if we relate one to another...uh, we'll find certain areas that we will agree on. From the most obtuse angles.

There's nothing like sitting down and just letting someone just... from their heart, they're getting to speak. And typically they don't ever speak from their heart until after you get past their head.

What it boils down to is this: if I'm going to lead you somewhere, I have to, you know, approach you the same manner I would a horse. I simply call it horse sense. That means, we begin to...kind of sidle up to each other. I don't chase you. I don't push you. I stroke you. You're a human being, you're created in God's image. You're worth stroking. When you begin to look for that, that part of a person, that person begins to open up to you. And will reveal itself. Not totally, but enough, that, that you're able to share. And in order for him to reveal, *you've* got to reveal. To give, also.

Sometimes it takes a while. And...and I, I love to see... people changed. Not because I change them, but because they find something in themselves.

END OF PLAY