

1968

For Tom Way

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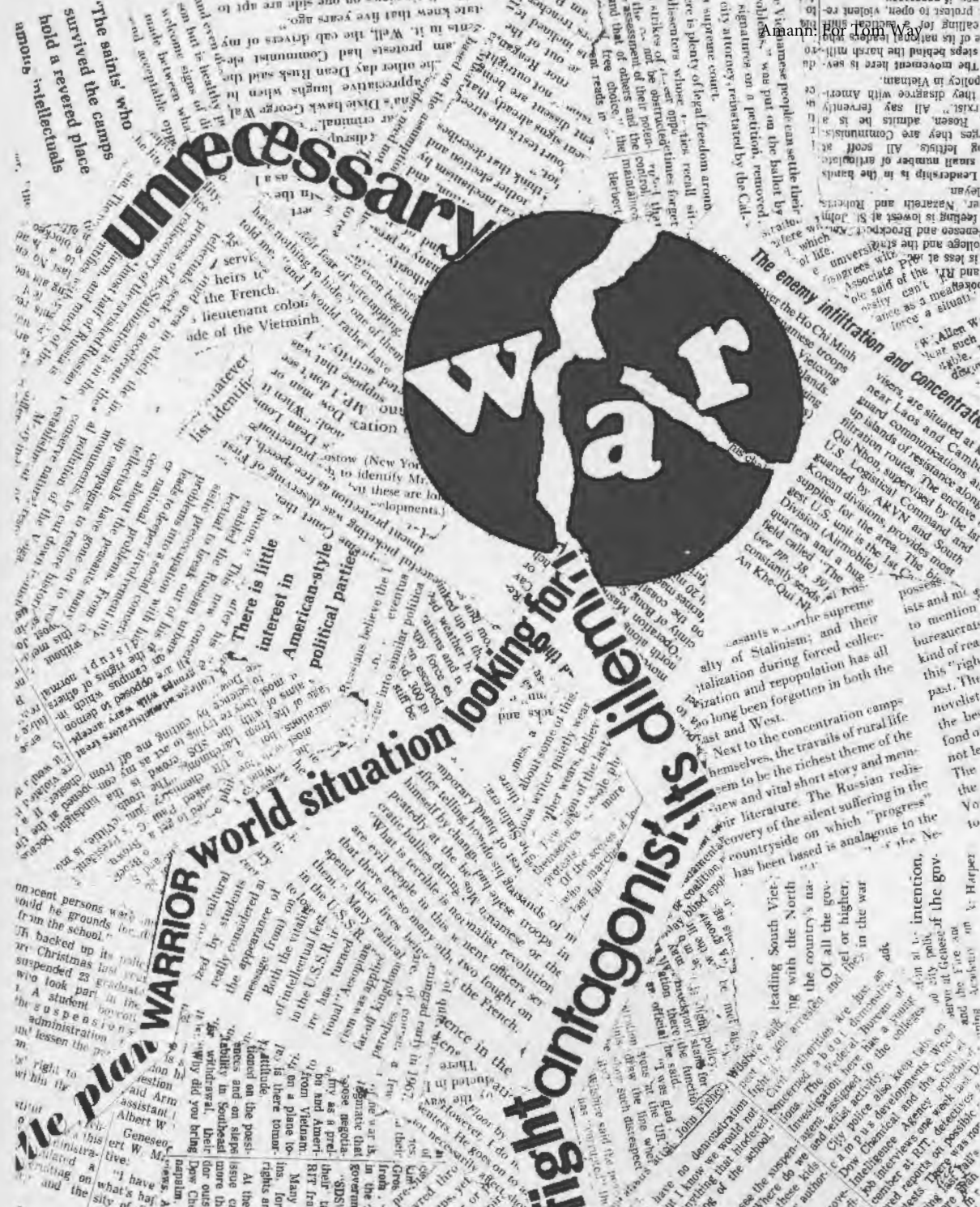
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For Tom Way

Cover Page Footnote

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SITTING ON CANNON SQUARE WHEN YOUNG

We are all turning khaki green
 from washing our clothes in red cross puddles
 from sitting on cannon square when young
 and smashing scientific pacemakers
 with memorial mounds of chocolate cement

We are all turning khaki green
 from cutting naked army mess lines
 from playing taps on civilian coat hangers
 and thinking soldiers are only stunt men
 in summer reruns of gunsmoke

We are all turning khaki green
 from an undeclared state of kill
 from an uncashed G I bill
 and sweating alcoholic history
 in antiseptic volumes of suburban libraries

We are all turning khaki green
 from pulling dead toes of coagulated votes
 from singeing the ganglion of conscience
 and cooling our tired feet
 in a bucket of programed poker cards

We warm our hands in our armpits
 waking up stung from a wet dream of peace
 asking with our dark eyes
 to the G I Joe
 when his black haod will freeze the air

We warm our hands in our armpits
 staring in horror through reflecting windows
 asking with our dark eyes
 to the G I Joe
 when he will send his soggy package of care

We warm our hands in our armpits
 we gather our shrinking skin
 we wait
 we wait on the complacent rattle of natural causes
 we wait for the homecoming of a wasted generation
 we wait for generals to melt their stars
 and recast a cannon plaque to
 : his reign was mild

All war hero museums
 should be treated as jealous concubines
 and drowned in ten cent comic books

THOMAS HUGHES



JOE RUFFINO

FOR TOM WAY

KILLED VIETNAM, OCTOBER '67

JIM MAYS

The spoken
 and unspoken "whys"
 will not be answered

To men
 death is never *timely*

In battle and violent
 and paling the full flush of youth,
 it abhors the sensitive,
 ridicules the statesman
 oppresses the philosopher
 strains the theologian
 confounds the scientist,
 mocks the smiling promise
 of a youthtime given to lights,
 stifles with all-engulfing darkness
 a youthtime given to lights
 and joy and hope

And yet
 how better bear
 the burden of penultimate despair
 than summon Him
 whose death seized ultimate hope,
 whose symbols all
 proclaim
 that death's not all
 nor life here

To Him
 death is never
untimely!