

Connie Fuller (1948-2012)

By Mary Beaudoin

Connie Fuller left us on Christmas Eve, December 24, 2012.

She had been extraordinarily generous with all of her resources—her time, energy, professional services, skills, etc. A certified public accountant (CPA), with a master's in business from the University of Minnesota, she volunteered in the WAMM office for several years, working on our bookkeeping, taxes and other financial issues.



Connie Fuller at an antiwar demonstration in 2007.

Photo: Tom Bottolene

Connie was a regular at the peace vigil on the Lake Street/Marshall Avenue Bridge, antiwar demonstrations, and events, participating with Women Against Military Madness, even when she became ill.

It was always uplifting to see her. She caused us to feel good, even when the world was in bad shape.

There are many things to remember about Connie--this is just one: Among Connie's strongly held beliefs was her opposition to young people being steered into the military where they were trained to kill or could themselves be killed. At the time of one incident, the military was finding it particularly difficult to get them to enlist. While U.S. military personnel were dispersed over hundreds of bases in other countries around the world,* many new recruits were sent to fight hot wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The military considered inner city and minority neighborhoods to be good areas to recruit in, as the youth in these areas were expected to have more limited employment options and so be easy pickings.

No doubt that's why Army recruiters set up shop at a table in the lobby of Sabbathani Community Center in Minneapolis.

But Women Against Military Madness had its office in the building. When we saw that the recruiters had stationed themselves in the reception area, we quickly set up a counter recruitment table across from them with our literature, explaining the hazards involved with enlistment. Connie dropped everything to make sure the table was staffed.

Seeing they had competition, the two military recruiters staffing their area went into action using what appeared to be the military tactics they were trained in. When Connie tried to encourage young people wandering by to come to our table, sometimes calling out or motioning, the soldiers got a huge, extremely loud fan to situate right next to us and drown out our voices (control communications). It was too heavy to move, but we succeeded in getting it turned off. Unable to block the sound of us, the recruiters tried to block the sight of us by putting up a screen around a chair where a potential recruit could sit (secure the location). The smoother of the two recruiters explained to us that the military had been a great career for him and he had never had to go to Iraq (try to get "the locals" to work with you).

None of this prevented Connie from motioning and calling out to the young people—mostly men--passing by, vigorously warning them about the hazards of enlistment.

Eventually, we WAMM staff needed to go back upstairs to work in our office. The community center staff were at the reception desk and Connie said she felt confident remaining at the table by herself.

A little while later, the door of the WAMM office burst open and there was Connie.

I caught a glimpse of camouflage and combat boots coming up behind her as, once inside, she slammed the door. Catching her breath, wide-eyed, as though she had

astonished even herself this time, she explained that a soldier had chased her up two flights of stairs and down the hall.

It was instantly clear what had happened: Connie, alone, had proven too much for a recruiting officer. The soldier had given pursuit to what he perceived as “the enemy.”

Soon after that, the recruiters folded up, left the building and dropped any overt attempts at recruitment efforts there. Apparently, they decided that it was not worth it to try to take Connie on. In the end, it was she, in fact, who succeeded in chasing them away.

We in WAMM will miss her terribly. Her plucky spirit will always continue to inspire us.

* According to an estimate by Chalmers Johnson, who embarked on the difficult task of calculating the number by studying official sources, there were 737 American military bases in other countries in 2005. *Nemesis, the Last Days of the American Republic* (American Empire Project). Metropolitan Books, Henry Holt and Company, LLC. 2007