

SOLDIER'S heart

Soldier's Heart is dedicated to our veterans' successful return. Soldier's Heart promotes and guides community-based efforts to heal the effects of war on those who served, their families and communities.

PO Box 8564 Albany, NY 12208

December 2006

www.soldiersheart.net

Remember Our Soldiers and Veterans This Holiday Season!

As our troops endure the hardship of being away from home and the constant threat of danger let's remember to send them our thoughts and prayers - especially in this holiday season. We've all heard the phrase "All gave some and some gave all" about the incredible sacrifice our soldiers give in service of our country. This holiday season please remember our soldiers and veterans by giving a donation to ***Soldier's Heart*** - in someone's honor or memory, or for yourself - to help them heal when they return home.

In order to provide services for returning veterans we need funding and volunteers for our programs. ***Soldier's Heart*** is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) project under the International Humanities Center. Checks can be made out to Soldier's Heart-IHC and mailed to PO Box 8564, Albany, NY 12208. Call us at (518) 463-0588 or email info@mentorthesoul.com if you can offer your time. For more information or to donate securely online visit our web site at www.soldiersheart.net.

"During the famous Christmas truce of December 1914, World War I enemies left their mud- and blood-soaked trenches to join together. British and German troops sang carols to one another, talked of home, exchanged gifts, competed in soccer, and helped one another recover their dead. At the close of the truce, they had to be forced...back into their trenches by their officers to fight again."

War and the Soul, pp. 128-29

Reminders: *If you haven't registered for the upcoming January Veterans Return Retreat please contact us at info@mentorthesoul.com or call (518) 463-0588. There are only a few spaces left!*

"The Making and Unmaking of a Marine" by Vietnam Veteran Larry Winters is due out soon! Check it out!

"Her whisper came again, "Breathe." Pushing my face into the table I muffled a high-pitched wail like that of a small child being hurt. My wail built into a deep belly sob that I hoped no one could hear as I mashed my face into the table. The war was crawling out of me, ripping its way up through my chest and out my throat. Faces of dead men I'd medivacked appeared in my head, treetops with tracer rounds flying at me like flaming birds, Napalm barrels floating in slow motion then bursting into liquid fire. I saw Vietnamese children smiling behind barbed wire fences, their middle fingers sticking up at me. She held tight to my feet.

I felt myself enter the fear of night after night of waiting to be killed and my shaking became unstoppable. I had no choice but to let it come. I no longer worried about what she or anyone thought. She let go of my feet and I drew my legs up under me... I didn't dare open my eyes for fear she'd leave."

For more information visit www.millrockwriters.com.

A letter of reflection from Ed....

Dear Friends,

We all think of December as the holiday season. Some holidays seem nearly universal as millions of people pause to reflect and celebrate. Other holidays are special occasions for a few. This Newsletter and our holiday season coincide with December 7th - Pearl Harbor Day. President Roosevelt famously called it "a day that will live in infamy." It was as shocking in its time as 9/11 was to us in ours.

This December 7th was the 65th anniversary of Pearl Harbor. For survivors of the attack, "it could have been yesterday." For that generation, it marks the time when the world was different forever. And for many millions, it marks the moment they knew that war was their inevitable lot.

This December 7th was different. For decades veterans of the attack have gathered at Pearl Harbor for memorial services. But the World War II generation is aging and passing. This year's memorial was the last that will ever be held at Hawaii. From now on, the remaining vets will have to remember at home.

What does this mean for the rest of us? I sat with two WWII vets, both in their 80s, during this holiday. They told me what they want from us: "We are fading and dying," they said. "We had experiences that robbed our innocence and taught us the ways of the world at a terrible price. We need the coming generations to carry our lessons and legacy. We are looking for people who are willing to face and know the truths about war."

Let us remember these words and this generation. The WWII vets said that in their time they did not know - nobody knew - about the psychological and spiritual wounds of war that we now call Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. It has taken all the last three generations to expose war's pain to this country - and we are just beginning. Our WWII and Korean vets carry old pain. Our Viet Nam vets are still in pain and trying to heal. And we have a new generation of vets from Desert Storm, Afghanistan, Iraq. In between we have vets from dozens of small, forgotten wars. All of them deserve to be remembered and honored; all deserve witness, storytelling and healing.

War is part of all our histories, and a much larger part of our lives than we might want to admit. Our holidays can help us to remember and honor this truth as we search for peace, love and healing. As we enter a New Year let us continue to work and pray for peace and healing.

Blessings,

Ed Tick

For back issues of the Soldier's Heart newsletter visit www.soldiersheart.net

Soldier's Heart Hosts Veterans Return Retreat

Soldier's Heart, Albany, NY, is hosting a Veterans' Return Retreat in January 2007. It will be open to veterans, therapists and community volunteers who want to learn about and experience a safe return program. Dr. Tick will be addressing issues such as 'Boot Camp', 'Homecoming' and how to create a safe return program. We will also be screening "Voices in Wartime", an educational film featuring poets writing about war and its effects on communities. For more information please see the retreat schedule at the end of the newsletter or email us at info@mentorthesoul.com. We hope to see you there!

We need your help to make the ***Soldier's Heart*** Veterans Return Retreat a success. Our goal is to offer **tuition scholarships** to veterans who need assistance to attend the retreat. The cost of sponsoring a local vet for the 3-day retreat is \$400. Any size donation will go a long way in helping our veterans and will be **greatly appreciated**.

Soldier's Heart is a not-for-profit 501(C)3 project under the International Humanities Center. Please consider a tax-deductible donation to support our veterans' programs or to sponsor a vet for our upcoming retreat. Checks can be made out to Soldier's Heart-IHC and mailed to Soldier's Heart, PO Box 8564, Albany, NY 12208. Or you may donate securely online at www.soldiersheart.net.

Thank you for supporting our veterans!

Ground Truth

A review by Kate Dahlstedt

Recently I had the opportunity to see the independent film ***Ground Truth***, a powerful documentary that explores the experience of our soldiers who have been in Iraq and Afghanistan. Interviews with military men and women of many different ranks, as well as their family members, were interwoven with illustrative actual footage. Without numbing the viewer with impersonal statistics and percentages, this movie uses personal stories from soldiers about their experiences at boot camp, in country and after returning home.

Over and over again we hear about military training that strips away one's individuality to create a unified military "machine." Soldier after soldier tells us about the military indoctrination that teaches hatred of Iraqis and forces troops to sing songs about killing children in the schoolyards.

Story after story informs us of the extreme danger that our soldiers are in all of the time. There is no safe place, no moment to relax and regroup. Everyone everywhere is a potential enemy, and consequently is treated as such. Soldiers are instructed to "do what it takes" to stop enemy fire, even if it means killing everyone in sight. And they all admit that despite their determination to maintain their own compassion they became numb to what they were doing.

Once they are home, soldiers begin to feel again. The memories haunt them. They talk about wanting to go home to "the way it was," but they cannot. They know they will never be the same again. And they tell us how little is available to help them deal with and heal the "unseen wounds" they now carry in their psyches.

I highly recommend ***Ground Truth*** to anyone interested in understanding war related PTSD. The film could be a great training tool for community groups organizing community return programs. It provides insight into how normal, intelligent, loving, compassionate people can be "broken down" and reconfigured to do horrendous things, and how difficult the struggle is for them to reclaim their humanity.

***** Fortunately, that's just what ***Soldier's Heart*** is all about. *****

“Voices in Wartime” to be shown at Veterans Retreat

*Soldier’s **Heart** is honored that executive director Andy Himes will be screening “Voices in Wartime”, an educational film featuring poets writing about war and its effects, at the January Veterans’ Return Retreat. For more information visit www.voicesinwartime.org.*

Voices in Wartime has a simple, innovative, and subversive idea: Use art and education to transform the consciousness of young people. Give teachers and students a way to explore the most important and terrifying issues of our day. Create a dialogue in which all voices can be heard, and all points of view included, without engendering fear, hatred, or anger.

This fall, a class at Shoreline Community College in north Seattle is using the **Voices in Wartime Education Project** to spark deep discussions about a painful topic. To the complete surprise of the teacher, almost every student is attending every session of a class at 7:30 AM. For many, this is the first time they have been prompted to think seriously about a subject they have previously avoided.

“Wars seem to create a lot of negative emotions like anger, guilt, shame, loss of innocence, hatred...” a student named Richard reflected. Yet because of this class, Richard “can really feel what the soldiers went through in combat and how it affected their body, soul and spirit. My heart goes out to them for the pure hell a lot of them have gone through. I will try to keep these physically/emotionally troubled veterans in my prayers.”

During the whole of the 2006–2007 school year, a campus-wide program sponsored by the Center for the Liberal Arts at Bellevue Community College near Seattle is incorporating **Voices in Wartime** into its programming and events:

- Teachers from a broad mix of arts, humanities, and social sciences will be using the **Voices in Wartime DVD, Anthology, and Curricula** in their classes, including English composition, literature, sociology, history, political science, communications, drama, and English as a Second Language.
- In a program called *BCC Reads!* thousands of students will read and discuss an extraordinary novel, *The Things They Carried*, by Vietnam veteran Tim O’Brian.
- The campus radio station, KBCS, will broadcast a 25-weeklong series of **Voices in Wartime** stories told by students who are witnesses of war, whether they are combat veterans or family members of veterans, war refugees, or their relatives.
- The weekly student newspaper, *The Jibsheet*, will publish **Voices in Wartime** stories from students based on their experiences and reactions to war.
- A BCC faculty member, acting as a story curator, will work with other teachers to help a thousand or more students publish their essays and narratives on the **Voices in Wartime** website.

The **Voices in Wartime Education Project** is using art, dialogue, and education to create healing and social change - in the midst of an ongoing war. Our focus this year is to build a powerful and successful model in the Puget Sound region – an educational program using the **Voices in Wartime DVD, Anthology, and Curricula** that can have a deep and lasting affect on thousands of students and teachers.

For more information visit www.voicesinwartime.org.

Links to important recent articles on veteran issues:

"Shafting the Vets" -- the tragedy over benefits.

<http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=51&ItemID=11458>

Effects of war on noncombatant males and why some people fake a military history, including interview with Ed.

<http://www.chicagoreader.com/features/stories/noncombatant/>

Introducing a New Series on Veterans and Healing

by Shawn Nelson. For a previous article by Shawn Nelson see the October 2006 Soldier's Heart newsletter on our web site at www.soldiersheart.net.

On the Edge – A Series on Veterans and Healing: PTSD and Nutritional Supplements

By M. Shawn Nelson

In this first column we will focus on Rhodiola Rosea. This supplement consists of four unique ingredients - two modified vitamins, one amino acid and a Siberian plant root known as an “adaptogen” (a plant that enhances a human organism’s ability to adapt to its environmental stressors) similar in function to ginseng.

The interesting thing about this particular root and its benefit for combat veterans with PTSD are its effects on increasing resistance to a variety of stressors on the human organism. Let me explain some background on this root, its history and use in Russia and Asia.

Rhodiola Rosea is a plant that has adapted itself to live in the brutal environment of the Siberian high altitude plateaus and mountains. In Siberia, Russia, and China, this plant is known as “Arctic Root” or “Golden Root”. It is often taken as a tea, made from shredded roots and sometimes the actual leaves and flowers are taken too. The Russians found out about this plant from native Siberians and researched its effectiveness for decades, starting in 1931. The Russians were looking for a plant, similar to ginseng, that would increase their athletes’, soldiers’, pilots’ and cosmonauts’ abilities to handle stressors and perform at higher levels of exertion under any given conditions. Instead of using pharmaceuticals, the Russians turned to nature for a solution. They found it in Rhodiola Rosea. Two classes of compounds extracted from Rhodiola

Rosea – Rosavin and Salidroside - seemed to provide the adaptogenic traits that were being sought. (Information will be provided at the end of the fourth column on where this data can be found and where to find Rhodiola.)

Why is this root, Rhodiola, of such interest to combat veterans with PTSD? It has been observed by Russian, Chinese, and European scientists to decrease depression, enhance work performance, eliminate fatigue, and prevent high altitude sickness. As a combat veteran with PTSD, I have used Rhodiola Rosea in several forms for the last decade. In my experience it delivers positive benefits for the management of my own symptoms and helps in managing stress.

Before purchasing any new supplement and integrating it into your regimen, it is best to educate yourself. It is well worth checking with your primary health care provider on the benefit of any new supplement, especially if you are currently taking other medications.

This is only a brief overview of Rhodiola Rosea with more to come in the next three columns. I have found this supplement to be very beneficial in my own PTSD regimen. I use this formula daily and it has helped me to adapt to stress as I begin college as a freshman at 36 years old! I look forward to next month and sharing more information from “**On the Edge.**”

Happy Holidays from Soldier's Heart!

Have a blessed holiday season!

Ed, Kate and Maureen

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SOLDIER'S HEART VETERANS RETURN RETREAT

Thursday, January 4th - Sunday, January 7th 2007

Albany, New York

THURSDAY: *Welcome Supper and Opening Experience*

FRIDAY: 8-9 *Breakfast*

9-12 *Old Identity, Being Called, Leaving*

12-1 *Lunch*

1 - 4 *Boot Camp, On The Home Front*

6-7:30 *Dinner*

8 *Voices In Wartime – Video, Poetry Reading*

SATURDAY: 8-9 *Breakfast*

9-12 *War Madness*

12-1 *Lunch*

1-2 *Plenary with Ed Tick*

2- 5 *Homecoming, Warriorhood*

6-7:30 *Dinner*

8 *Music, Social Time*

SUNDAY: 8-9 *Breakfast*

9-12 *Welcome Home*

12-1 *Closing*

1-2 *Lunch (optional, and for those who are staying)*

2-5 *National Networking (optional)*