

SOLDIER'S *heart*

Soldier's Heart is a veterans' return and healing project addressing the emotional and spiritual needs of veterans, their families and communities. Soldier's Heart promotes and guides community-based efforts to heal the effects of war based on strategies presented in "War and the Soul" by Edward Tick, PhD.

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Upcoming Events...

June 13th – 17th 2007

Soldier's Heart Veterans' Return Retreat
Pumpkin Hollow Farm, Craryville, New York

Since the book “**War and the Soul**” hit the shelves in November 2005 author Ed Tick has been touring the country talking about the psycho/spiritual needs of veterans when they return home from war. In response to those who would like an in depth experience Soldier's Heart is offering a Veterans' Return Retreat Wednesday, June 13th through Sunday, June 17th. It will be an experiential, intensive retreat calling on the essential healing elements described in “**War and the Soul**”. Areas to be addressed are: The Old Identity, Being Called, Boot Camp, On the Home Front, War Madness, Homecoming, and Warriorhood. The retreat will be held at Pumpkin Hollow Farm, a peaceful, rustic setting nestled amidst the Berkshire and Taconic Mountains. The Soldier's Heart Veterans Return Retreat is open to *all* veterans and their support network. For more information and tuition costs or to register for the retreat please call (518) 463-0588 or email info@mentorthesoul.com.

September 13–16, 2007

Healing Veterans from PTSD: A Three Day Workshop for
Soldiers, Their Loved Ones, and Helping Professionals
Olcott Campus near Chicago IL

‘Healing Veterans from PTSD’ is an intensive healing and training workshop providing experience in the groundbreaking healing techniques developed by Dr. Ed Tick. The workshop is open to veterans of any war and their families, counselors, therapists, chaplains and clergy.

The workshop is co-sponsored by Quest Books and Soldier's Heart. It will be held September 13th –16th 2007 at the Olcott campus of the Theosophical Society, 1926 North Main St., Wheaton, IL. For details visit <http://www.theosophical.org/events/conferences/soldiersheart.php>. To register, or if you have questions, please call Christine Pomeroy: 800-669-9425, ext. 350, or email cpomeroy@theosmail.net.

November 9-11, 2007

Southeast Regional Conference: Social Action As Spiritual Practice
Atlanta, GA

Presenters (Ed Tick among them) have been invited to share their unique expertise of living in the service of their most heart-felt convictions. For more information contact Diane Eisenberg at 1-800-669-1571 ext 320.

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WAR'S HIDDEN COSTS

By Edward Tick, PhD

By now we have all heard the new revelations regarding inadequate housing and care delivery to our wounded servicemen and women at Walter Reed Army Hospital. We should all be shocked and concerned. We must not cast negative judgment on the many dedicated front line health workers at our veterans' care facilities. And we must not discount stories from vets of receiving excellent and caring health services. Rather, we should look more deeply at the scope of the problem and its direction from above. Our service people offer their sacrifices of life and limb, time and mental health, family and profession, and much more. They deserve the best, most attentive and compassionate care our society can muster.

The new revelations not only traumatize those directly affected, but also other veterans from both present and past wars. Just this week, as the revelations became public, I spoke with vets of four earlier wars. They all remembered red tape, long delays, inadequate responses, or poor housing during and after their times of service. They each felt concern and compassion for the new veterans, but also felt betrayed in that they believe our government and military are once again failing its charge to give the best to those who have given the most. 'Neglect', 'abandonment', 'betrayal' were common words in veterans' responses.

Unfortunately, the Walter Reed revelations are just the tip of an iceberg of needs and concerns we must have regarding our returnees. A new report released last week by the American Psychological Association now estimates more than 30% of returnees as having Post-traumatic Stress Disorder. It simultaneously cites a severe staffing shortage at military mental health facilities; there is a

40% vacancy rate in active duty psychologists, with many shipped to the war zone. The result is disastrous to both returnees and professionals. Military mental health personnel are overwhelmed as they do their best to respond to overwhelming need. One-third report burn-out and more than one-quarter report low motivation.

Another recent report cites the numbers of killed and wounded American civilian contractors in Iraq. According to the Associated Press, in addition to our 137,000 troops in Iraq, we have 120,000 private contractors doing jobs that used to be performed by our military. There have been 800 deaths and over 3,000 wounded among these civilians. This brings our actual combined force in Iraq to over a quarter million and significantly adds to our casualty rate. Who will honor these fallen and who will provide and pay for their health care needs upon return?

Estimates on the lifelong health care costs for our new generation of veterans range from \$300 billion to \$14 trillion. These numbers are huge. Not only our military but our entire social system is understaffed, underfunded and unprepared for the aftermath of this war. If the revelations at Walter Reed demonstrate some of the most flagrant neglect and unpreparedness, imagine the scope of the needs and the astronomical resources, expertise, time and costs it will take to adequately care for all our wounded and their families. We at Soldier's Heart will do all we can to help our deserving veterans and military families. It will take sacrifice on all our parts to adequately respond to the size and scope of this wounding to our veterans, their families, and our country.

Can't Forget the Fourth

By John W. Fisher, Vietnam Veteran the author of two novels: "Angels in Vietnam" and "Not Welcome Home". His contact information is surfchiro5@aol.com.

I am a Vietnam veteran/warrior with combat duty in 1968 with the Fourth Infantry Division. Ironically, or maybe not, the "Forgotten Fourth," nicknamed during WWII, was relocated to Ft. Carson, a 90 minute drive from my home. Over a year ago, I had the pleasure of meeting a soldier from my old unit just before he was deployed to Iraq. We became close friends over the cyber waves. He wrote of his missions as an interrogator in Bagdad and I shared my adventures with Dr. Tick. While he was gone, I found "**War and the Soul**" and participated in the January 2007 **Soldier's Heart** Veterans' Return Retreat in Albany, NY. Now that my young friend has returned home, as one can imagine, we have much to share. His name is Aaron.

We reconnected shortly after his homecoming. With our first meeting, I concentrated on listening, honoring and welcoming him home. Sharing my work with **Soldier's Heart** would come soon, however, with another meeting, this time with a friend of his from the Fourth. As it turned out both men were recently home from war for the second time. Both had enlisted because they thought it would provide job security while figuring out what they wanted to do in life. Neither joined to fight in a war and now that they have fought, both feel it is a hopeless cause. Unfortunately, both understand they will be going back. Aaron brought his buddy, Josh, to meet me because he was having PTSD symptoms and needed to talk to someone. Turned out Aaron needed to talk, too.

We swapped stories and some of them seemed the same. Some of them evoked the same emotion from both the elder and younger. We were all blown away at how comfortable and cool it was to be together. Sometimes the age difference was not even noticeable. However, other times it was quite noticeable as the young warriors looked up to their elder warrior and listened, sometimes seemingly in awe. What an honor-what a pleasure-to be associated with these young men who are only trying to do their best in life. Then again, sometimes trying to do your best in combat goes against natural reasoning and it is impossible to keep from cracking. The biggest dilemma I had was in knowing both of them have to go back.

The boys returned to Ft. Carson and spoke of me to the unit chaplain. We all have an appointment to meet next week. The chaplain seems very interested in **Soldier's Heart** and I am very interested in sharing. It's a win-win situation - sharing helps ease my own pain. I spent 38 years trying to figure out what was happening in my head after the Vietnam War. With Dr. Tick's help, I have finally opened the space necessary for my soul, lost from combat, to return. There is still pain, but I sleep at night and I want to help our new veterans accomplish the same, before the years mount up needlessly. Helping these young warriors, and warriors from all wars and altercations, is an honor. We are all in this together, my brothers and sisters. There are many souls needing to come home.

Khe Sanh Address

by Lawrence Winters

"Abraham Lincoln went to the battlefield at Gettysburg to give his address. He stood on blood-soaked ground. No American that I know spoke at any of the battlefields in Vietnam. Unable to stand at this battlefield, I honor the men on both sides of the Khe Sanh siege for their giving of life and limb..."

For the complete *Khe Sanh Address* visit:

• [Go to the essay on the Voices in Wartime web site](http://voicesinwartime.org/Home/Article/DisplayArticle.aspx?AuthorID=109757&TypeofContent=Article&ArticleType=2#369839)

<http://voicesinwartime.org/Home/Article/DisplayArticle.aspx?AuthorID=109757&TypeofContent=Article&ArticleType=2#369839>

One More Drink

By Hugh Scanlen, Vietnam Veteran

I'm tempted by the promise of feeling better fast.
A few shots of booze should do it..... but I know it will not last.
But to hell with what it's doing to my family and my health.
It's tearing up my liver and eating up my wealth.
But I'll drink as long as I have the coin to put upon the bar.
And when I think it's time to quit, I'll stumble to my car.
I'll fiddle with the locks and slip behind the wheel.
I'll launch this deadly weapon, four thousand pounds of steel.
I'll pray to God I make it home without getting stopped tonight.
Then...before we go to bed, we'll have our standard fight.
She doesn't think I'll ever change. I see no reason to.
She's the one who's got the problem... Just look what *I've* been through.
It's *my* life and I deserve a drink if that is what I chose.
To meet the boys and have some laughs...to drink my choice of booze.
If I broke her jaw or cracked some ribs, I'd bet she'd listen then.
And stop with all the questions...with whom and where I'd been.
So watch your soaps...and feed the kids...Do what you should do.
I'll be home after one more drink, no more than just a few.

LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA

Review by Kate Dahlstedt

Told like an old fashioned WWII story, the recently released movie *Letters from Iwo Jima* puts a human face to men on the battlefield. Only this time, the men whose stories are illuminated are the brave soldiers of the Japanese forces.

This unique look at those who are generally thought to be “the enemy” is all the more poignant because of the common humanity portrayed in them. We see them as soldiers who just want to survive and get home to loved ones. We see them scared. We see them brave. We see them act foolishly. We see them carefully strategize. We see them defeated and we see them determined against all odds.

Although the characters were not well defined and the dialog lacked the depth and poetry that might have made this movie a must see, the attempt to portray the truth about the real people we fight when we go to war is to be commended. What better time to explore honestly the humanity of those we have labeled “the enemy?”

Clearly, this movie works because it is a glimpse of a different war in a different time and place than the circumstances we now face in Iraq and Afghanistan. And yet, we cannot help but make comparisons to all wars. This is a universal story. It depicts the human spirit at it's most honorable. We are shown ordinary people from a strong culture, with a long history of tradition and national pride, willing to do whatever it takes, including giving their lives, to repel the invader and defend their beloved country.

The action, though not gruesome, is graphic as it becomes more and more evident that there is no hope of these men prevailing. However, the actual fighting that took place on that small island was, in fact, quite brutal on both sides. Despite the U.S. forces and fire power that greatly outnumbered the Japanese, it was a long, hard battle that lasted many weeks. This being the case, it was odd to see the American GIs at the end of the movie shown in clean pressed uniforms. These were not the same men we saw in *Flags of Our Fathers*, the companion film that came out earlier this year that tells the story of U.S. troops in the same battle.

Although *Letters from Iwo Jima* is not a great film, it goes a long way in showing viewers the inevitable tragedy and personal costs of war. It reminds us that there are real people behind all of the statistics, on both sides, and that most of those people are just like us.

Soldier's Heart Retreat & Workshop in Racine/Milwaukee, WI: Jan. 25-29, 2007

By Emily Mullen, publicist, Quest Books

A few weeks ago I had the opportunity to attend a series of Soldier's Heart events led by Dr. Ed Tick in Racine and Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As the publicist for Quest Books, the publisher of Dr. Tick's acclaimed book *War and the Soul*, Ed and I toured the Wisconsin region just over a year ago to launch the book. Since then what has evolved from publishing the book has surpassed our expectations by leaps and bounds.

When I went to Wisconsin I went not only as a representative of Quest and the Theosophical Society in America but also to get a personal view of Ed's healing work and see how it has affected the community in just a year. I had been on the road with Ed to promote *War and the Soul* several times prior to this trip but I had never experienced firsthand the transformational power of Ed's work.

The series of events over the course of the weekend included a public forum at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside in Kenosha, a meeting with local clergy and spiritual leaders from various faiths (several of which immediately adopted the program for their own congregations and practice), a recorded interview of Ed for a documentary on PTSD by a filmmaker from Milwaukee, a two-day healing retreat, an all-day workshop at Marquette University in Milwaukee, and a roundtable discussion with about 30 local veterans and healing professionals.

I can't tell you every story of hope and healing I witnessed throughout the weekend, but instead I'd like to share the one that resonated with me the most. It embodies the true meaning of Soldier's Heart and gives us a glimpse into the future of the program.

An injured combat veteran of the Gulf War told not only of his own hellish nightmares but also of his nephew's pain, a soldier with two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan. The younger veteran was released from military service without treatment for his PTSD. After a long battle with drugs, alcohol, and what is called "extreme (street) fighting," PTSD finally killed him.

"I have much shame and guilt in my life and my nephew's death adds to it," the Gulf War vet shared. "Neither his father nor I could help him, although we tried. And that responsibility brings me here today. He explained further, "This presentation hurts; the old wounds open and bleed. But I am alive and seek to help those who suffer from PTSD and any form of dehumanization."

This was the first time the elder veteran ever spoke publicly about his own trauma and shared the tragic story of his nephew. He reported the next morning at the veterans' meeting that that night for the first time since the Gulf War he didn't have a single nightmare. And I'm happy to say that he continues to have peaceful nights.

Telling his story almost immediately made him feel transformed. As explained by Ed in *War and the Soul*, storytelling is the second step in becoming a "warrior." We initiated several warriors that weekend, each with their own compelling and ultimately triumphant story, each just as significant. Though most of the men and women in our group had never even heard of the concept of warriorhood, every wounded soldier could finally hear the call and return home.

Check it out...

<http://www.posttraumaticpress.org>

...contains prose, poems and visual art by men and women with direct experience of war. Visit the site for guidelines to submit your own poems and stories.