



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".

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A Few Words from Edward Tick

Most of us have seen the image. A man stands in the foreground, face pallid, fleshless, almost a skull. Blob-like hands clutch sunken cheeks. Lidless eyes are wide in shock and startle. The lipless mouth is nothing but a dark oval emitting a silent cry. Around him, though nothing is heard, the universe seems to contort from his pain. This image is an 1893 painting by Norwegian artist Edvard Munch called "The Scream." Much has been written about this poignant portrayal of the anguish of our age.

I recently heard the scream again when I was interviewed on Wisconsin Public Radio with Ben Merens, host of "At Issue" - <http://www.wpr.org/merens>). The hour was meant to help inform the public about Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). We were only a few minutes into our discussion when the scream started to sound. Our first caller "just wanted everyone to know" that his nephew had returned from Iraq where his Marine unit had played catch with a group of ten year old boys, tousled their hair, gifted them the ball. They turned to return to their vehicle when they heard shooting and ducked bullets whizzing past them. They spun to see that same gang of young boys suddenly armed with pistols shooting wildly at them. "How can my nephew walk away from that a sane man?" he lamented.

Another caller announced, "I am a Vietnam veteran. I want everyone listening to know that I am a war criminal. I deserve to be tried, convicted and executed just like every one of our leaders who sent us to that damned and wrong war." The next caller echoed, "I agree with everything the last caller said. I'm a Vietnam vet too. I also deserve to be shot by a firing squad for what I did. We all do!"

Some callers labeled PTSD a disease. It is not. It is the normal response to abnormal, disordering, life-threatening conditions. It is sometimes called "the invisible wound." and has been identified in whales, chimpanzees, parrots, wolves, geese, and bees.

I emerged from the radio hour feeling like I had just returned from the scene of a gruesome accident. I was moved by the need of these strangers to witness and to confess. I was proud that we had given them the opportunity, sad to feel their suffering, and amazed that they would confess before a million strangers.

How badly we need this truth-telling and purging. On a one-hour radio show we achieved some semblance of the healing ingredients necessary to return from war and other trauma - cleansing and truth-telling before the public. I pray there are a little less pain and invisibility and a little more hope for these good and suffering people today.

The scream is always there to be heard. We must not be the bystanders. We must create opportunities for the scream to emerge from silence. We must have the courage and heart to stop and listen and feel it with those who suffer. This is the work of Soldier's Heart. If we do not listen and support the sounding, then, as in Munch's painting, the entire universe reverberates in distortion and the silent scream goes on.

Upcoming Events: for more info contact us at info@soldiersheart.net

Nov. 4 - 22 Healing Journey to Viet Nam

Dec. 7 - Healing and Reconciliation Through Poetry and Art - Kent State University

Dec. 8 - Healing the Heart, Restoring the Soul - Tallmadge Ohio

Dec. 9 - Professional Development Day - SUMMA Health Trauma Ctr. Akron, Ohio

Jan. 14, 2010 - Healing Our Veterans, Their Families And Our Communities - St. Francis Hospital, Hartford CT

Jan. 29, 2010 - Ed Tick visits Veteran's Heart Georgia, Atlanta
www.veteransheartgeorgia.org

Feb. 25 - 28, 2010 - SH Veterans' Healing Retreat - Dahlonega GA.

TATTOOED UNDER FIRE - To Premiere on Public Television
Beginning November 8, 2009 at 11 PM (check local listings)

Directed by Nancy Schiesari, this film centers on the military ritual of getting inked, interweaving the personal stories of six central characters-and their relationships to the war in Iraq-with the visual expressions of their tattoos. The film is an intimate, character-driven portrait of Iraq-bound and returning U.S. soldiers, professing their pride, sharing their secrets and confessing their fears as they go under the tattoo needle. What emerges is an evocative, poignant and highly personal look at the human and cultural cost of war.

DOWN RANGE: A Review by Kate Dahlstedt

DelanoCelli Productions has done a great job recreating the complicated struggles of military families in their new play, DOWN RANGE. Playwright, Jeffrey Skinner, spent months interviewing military men and women and their families before creating this intimate portrait of the lives of two couples. All too often, the effects of military life on family members is ignored or diminished. The general public has no inkling of the sacrifices that are made by the spouses and children of military personnel.

The premiere production of DOWN RANGE opens up a window that is compelling and informative, giving us a glimpse, through the fine work of the actors, of the human stories behind the uniforms and parades.

Anyone who is in the NYC region or visiting there in the next few weeks should make an effort to see this important new work. It will run until Nov. 14th. Not only is it a fine night of theater, but the proceeds from the run are a generous gift to Soldier's Heart from the producers, DelanoCelli.

Thank you, thank you, DelanoCelli!!

A Pilgrimage to Valley Forge and Gettysburg

This month marked the first Soldier's Heart domestic healing journey as 15 members of our Master Classes traveled together to visit our national battlefields at Valley Forge and Gettysburg. After visiting the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall in Philadelphia, we drove to Valley Forge and learned a great deal about the sacrifices our early ancestors made to create this country, the determination, the risks, the hardships and the losses.

We then drove on to Gettysburg to explore the bloody three-day battle that took place there, turning the tide of the war. Standing at battle sites, we were in awe of the incredible dedication of the soldiers on both sides, their deplorable living conditions, the brutality of their fighting, and the huge losses they suffered. .

Along the way we created rituals of honor, healing, mourning and blessing of those who fought and their families. Standing in the pouring rain, we stood together and alone contemplating the gravity of the battlefield. In the cemetery, next to the spot where Lincoln gave his famous address, we circled around a grave marker for 411 unknown soldiers and sang and cried and prayed.

Look forward to our next newsletter for more about this unique and exceptional journey.

Siegfried and Me

By Jeremy Stainthorp Berggren (aka Jerms)

I recently attended a Soldiers Heart retreat in Wisconsin, and this was a powerful time for me. The last several years I have been harboring a lot of anger, guilt, and frustration - not from going to Iraq, but for *NOT* going. My unit was activated and told we had orders to train in Mortuary Affairs (MA).. We trained, but there were no deployment orders. So the Marine Corps started splitting my unit up and I went to NC. I missed the remainder of my unit going by about 12 hours. Then I got a message: "*Corporal Stainthorp, this is Sergeant Kubie, uh, they aren't sending any more marines from our battalion, you can go back to your normal life. If you have any questions call the unit.*"

"Normal life!?! I lost my job, where I lived, and had to drop school because of this, I didn't have a normal life. My normal life was waiting for orders. I immediately became very angry, and very guilty, for not being with my unit. The entire time my unit was in Iraq I had a difficult time sleeping and that included many nightmares about things my unit was doing. I have just started speaking about this.

I think something traumatic - in some ways good and in some ways morbid - was training in MA. That's when and how I got to know Siegfried Sassoon. Philip Caputo introduced us through his Vietnam memoir, A Rumor of War. I was immediately taken to Siegfried. Part of this was from a poem he wrote, called *Suicide in the Trenches*. You see, a few years earlier a sergeant in my unit committed suicide. Sergeant Dixon left on a Friday, and Monday we found out he was dead. Two days later we found out it was

suicide, and his father had found him, on Fathers Day. That was traumatic, the funeral was traumatic, and aftermath was traumatic, and even today sometimes I feel like the only one who understands is Siegfried. This is changing some since my experience at the Soldiers Heart Retreat and as I befriend other vets and we open up to one another. But Siegfried has really been there for me; I hope you have someone like that for you.

He also did MA, as did Caputo. I was taken aback to know that Caputo did this in Vietnam, but even more so that Siegfried had been in the shit since 1915. You see, Siegfried Sassoon is a war poet from England that fought in WWI. He wrote a ton of poems and even fictionalized memoirs of his time in WWI, where he was nicknamed "Mad Jack." One of his poems, *I Stood With the Dead*, ends with something that just hits me - like even back then it seemed like no matter what went on, there was still this weird sense of importance of pay, and orders, and formations, and just that crap you deal with on a daily basis that no one else understands.

"I stood with the dead...

They were dead; they were dead;

My heart and my head beat a march of dismay:

And gusts of the wind came dulled by the guns.

'Fall in!' I shouted; ' Fall in for your pay!'"

Vigils 7 has always resonated with me since first reading it. The poem starts with " *They were not true, those dreams, those story books of youth; I left them all at home; went out to find the truth;*" and he leaves his youth behind searching for everything the world tells us it can offer, things marketing agents continue to tell us to this day. Eventually he comes to the conclusion "*that life, encountered and unmasked in variant shapes, dissolves in dust and cloud, and thwartingly escapes.*" He ends with "*But in remembered eyes of youth my dreams remain. They were my firstling friends, I have returned again.*"

I think I like *Vigils 7*, even though it is somewhat depressing, because it reminds me of Sergeant Dixon leaving and never coming back - like he never had that conclusion. His conclusion was to leave. I think deep inside I know I have to also come back...not really to who I was...but to who I really am. It also keeps me checked, right? Like dreams are really important. Not just the sick ones, the ones that keep you up, that wake you up in a sweat or screaming, but the ones we have deep down, or what we dreamed as a kid, the ones we also repress. The ones that, even if our soul leaves us, have the capacity to come back in some form when we get that soul back.

At Soldiers Heart I opened up a lot, and gained a lot. This has helped, and also hurt. The wounds become reopened, then we go back to our "normal life," right? But it isn't normal, because we've just had this awesome, heavy, intense, session with everyone. People finally opened up. People finally listened. These beautiful people stopped to

listen. At our retreat we had some other vets with old friends, like Beowolf, and Odysseus, the berserkers of Norway. Some talked about King David and PTSD. One carries great burdens but creates music that would please an angel. Some never trust but trust enough to write and write and write truthful things. So we were all introduced to Odysseus and Beowolf, musicians of old, and old healers like Sitting Bull.

Older warriors there also listened and helped carry all of this. Maybe we finally got introduced to what could be in ourselves as well. And when it comes down to it, that's why I like Siegfried so much. It's like he knows. After all, he lived it, with the anger, the guilt, the frustration. And because he trusted the paper enough it could come into the hands of some Marine almost a century later. That's why I wanted to introduce you to him, maybe you can also learn or share something, or even take his lead and start writing for the warriors to come.

Dreamers

Soldiers are citizens of death's grey land,

Drawing no dividend from time's to-morrows.

In the great hour of destiny they stand,

Each with his feuds, and jealousies, and sorrows.

Soldiers are sworn to action; they must win

Some flaming, fatal climax with their lives.

Soldiers are dreamers; when the guns begin

They think of firelit homes, clean beds and wives.

I see them in foul dug-outs, gnawed by rats,

And in ruined trenches, lashed with rain,

Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,

And mocked by hopeless longing to regain

Bank-holidays, and picture shows, and spats,

And going to the office in the train.

A Veteran's Response

by **John W. Fisher, D.C.:** to article written in last newsletter by Gene Tick, "*Did Our Children See What We Did Not? Ghosts at Gettysburg.*"

I am not sure what other veterans felt when reading about the souls of the dead remaining on the battlefield, but it made my skin crawl. It's something that I've always thought about; *what happens to the souls when human death is so violent?* Gene's story was most revealing. Sometimes in Viet Nam I wondered if my fallen buddies, even the enemy, were still about. I even thought I saw one once. But in the Nam you think you see and feel a lot of things and you never know what to believe. Reports of sightings on battlefields throughout the world however, are convincing.

I'm just as nerve racked about it all though, as much as I ever was in the bush. What am I supposed to do with this information? The war after the war has been tough enough without worrying about this issue. After all, I haven't had my own soul for most of my 40 years home from the war. But wait a minute, if I've been estranged for that long, where has my spirit partner been all of this time? If we are separated with the devastation of carnage and continue to live a life with PTSD, are all the souls from either dead or alive soldiers left stranded together?

Could it be that souls alienated at Gettysburg are wondering because they cannot determine whether their physical partner has deceased or not? Apparently we humans can go astray, oblivious to the alienation of soul. The Vietnamese believe that the psyche of their loved ones never ascends into the heavens without proper ceremony and respect, which leaves those of the M.I.A. left high and dry on the battlefield. As for the soldiers that return alive after combat, their communities nurture and share the burdens to allow the souls to return.

This is what the Soldier's Heart Method for a safe return is all about. Ancient Greek methodology and Native American ways are the basis of Dr. Tick's research for "*War and the Soul*," but so also is his study of the people during his pilgrimages to Viet Nam. Perhaps the souls estranged on the battlefield wander, not knowing if their hearts have gone through transition or simply continue to thrive, although broken. Some of us veterans have discovered that when our hearts have healed we may be reunited with our souls.

Now what of the souls left behind when the bodies have perished? Apparently Gene's boys know the answer as they saw the spirits while visiting Gettysburg, although nearly 150 years after the actual battle. In my family I have two descendants that are veterans of that battle. Were they as estranged with their souls on "Little Round Top" as perhaps I was with mine at "Dak To?"

IN MEMORY

Ed Freeman

You're a 19-year-old kid. You're critically wounded and dying in the jungle in the Ia Drang Valley, 11-14-1965, LZ X-ray, Vietnam. Your infantry unit is outnumbered 8-1 and the enemy fire is so intense, from 100 or 200 yards away, that your own Infantry Commander has ordered the MediVac helicopters to stop coming in.

You're lying there, listening to the enemy machine guns, and you know you're not getting out. Your family is half way around the world, 12,000 miles away and you'll never see them again. As the world starts to fade in and out, you know this is the day.

Then, over the machine gun noise, you faintly hear that sound of a helicopter and you look up to see an unarmed Huey, but it doesn't seem real because no Medi-Vac markings are on it.

Ed Freeman is coming for you. He's not Medi-Vac, so it's not his job, but he's flying his Huey down into the machine gun fire, after the Medi-Vacs were ordered not to come.

He's coming anyway.

And he drops it in and sits there in the machine gun fire as they load 2 or 3 of you on board.

Then he flies you up and out, through the gunfire to the doctors and nurses.

And he kept coming back, 13 more times, and took about 30 of you and your buddies out, who would never have gotten out.

Medal of Honor Recipient Ed Freeman died on Wednesday, June 25th, 2009, at the age of 80, in Boise, ID. May God rest his soul.

**Medal of Honor Winner
Ed Freeman!**

**THANKS AGAIN, ED, FOR WHAT YOU DID FOR OUR COUNTRY.
RIP**