

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

October 2006

www.soldiersheart.net

Welcome to the first edition of the Soldier's Heart newsletter! Periodically (hopefully monthly!) we will update everyone on our efforts to guide communities in welcoming our veterans home with respect, gratitude and healing. Please send your stories and ideas for the newsletter to info@mentorthesoul.com and put SHNewsletter in the subject line and we will print as many as we can.

Soldier's Heart Announces its first Veterans' Return Retreat

Since "War and the Soul" hit the shelves last November author Ed Tick has been touring the country talking about the psycho/spiritual needs of veterans and how to address them. Everywhere he speaks people want to know how to implement the ideas he presents in his book. As a result, our not-for-profit, *Soldier's Heart*, has evolved as an initiative for creating safe return programs for our service people and has generated an overwhelming response. We now have programs establishing in New York, Washington, Wisconsin, Colorado and Indiana and we have additional contacts all over the country willing to serve this important mission.

In response to those who want more in depth experience, *Soldier's Heart* is announcing its first Veterans' Return Retreat. We will gather in Albany, NY on Thursday evening, January 4th, 2007, for a special opening experience and spend an intensive 3 day weekend, ending on Sunday, January 7th. We will share storytelling, healing rituals, ceremonies and teachings. It will not be a traditional

conference, but an experiential, intensive retreat calling on the essential healing elements that are described in "War and the Soul". Areas we will address are: The Old Identity, Being Called, Boot Camp, On the Home Front, War Madness, Homecoming, and Warriorhood. For those who are interested, we will offer a Sunday evening planning and support session for creating veterans' safe return programs in your home communities.

The conference size will be small and personal to encourage a safe, intimate and inspired experience. Tuition will be \$295.00 for the course plus travel (to Albany International Airport) and lodging expenses (\$69.99 per night.). We will offer scholarship aid for veterans who need assistance to attend. All proceeds will benefit *Soldier's Heart* and are tax deductible. Please reserve your space with us as soon as possible since space is limited. Please call (518) 463-5088 or email info@mentorthesoul.com for details. We look forward to seeing you there.

Please see last page of newsletter for a printable tentative retreat schedule

Ed Tick to manage project with EXPLORE: THE JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND HEALING

Starting with the January 2007 issue of EXPLORE: THE JOURNAL OF SCIENCE AND HEALING, we are going to begin publishing a new column about medicine from the front lines. The column is being managed by Ed Tick, PhD, author of *War and the Soul* and founder of Sanctuary and Soldier's Heart. The first column is from an army captain in Afghanistan. Upcoming columns will cover things such as the current use of acupuncture and herbs to heal the ravages of Agent Orange in Viet Nam, and a report

from Africa where doctors are dealing with the AIDS crisis.

Here is the column description:

The front lines of health and healing today are everywhere around our country and the world where individuals, societies and ecosystems are at risk. On these lines and often unheralded, courageous healers and communities utilize traditional, scientific, humanistic, communal, holistic and spiritual resources to address our most pressing global health issues. *FIELD REPORTS* offers reports from these front lines about significant health crises, concerns and healing approaches that occur beyond our usual horizon of vision. Our concern is for world health. We seek to hoist flags of hope.

The idea is to increase our social relevance and to report on an aspect of medicine that no one else is covering. It fits nicely into our mission and connects on many levels with consciousness, spirituality and the environment, as well as CAM.

If you have ideas for this column or know a front lines person who would be good to connect with, please communicate directly to Ed. His contact information is below. To subscribe to EXPLORE please go to www.explorejournal.com.

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A remembrance.....by Shawn Nelson - veteran

I am a veteran of "Task Force Ranger (TFR)." Seeing the picture of Mrs. Elmi's home, with the remnant of a Blackhawk helicopter, ("Mogadishu Journal," *The New York Times*, Sept. 28) took me back 13 years to my service in the combat raid in Mogadishu. With the passage of time, I reflect on war anniversaries and memorials and observe how two different cultures, the U.S. and Somalia, honor the warriors that protect their countries. I am flooded with memories of our action in Somalia. I remember climbing through the crushed wall of Mrs; Elmi's home with a broken Blackhawk helicopter lying in it. Then it was a brick wall and the side of her home. Now it is a hovel of debris, barely strung together. I believe she is the same woman who had an infant and three other children that my fellow soldiers hid in a small room for protection while we savagely fought for our lives around them.

It amazes me that she and her family survived, along with my comrades and me. We fought one of the most intense combat actions in U.S. history;

many compare it to the Alamo. Unlike combat seen in Iraq or Afghanistan, we members of TFR did not have "outside" support. Politicians in '93 decided that diplomacy had failed and the situation warranted a special operations task force, comprised of Rangers, Seals, SOAR helicopters and other Army special ops units. They did not allow any critical support, like armored vehicles or air support from a C-130 SPECTRE gunship. This political "short changing" is the root cause that led to the debacle seen on televisions across the globe. Viewers saw a dead soldier beaten and dragged through the streets of Mogadishu. This is an atrocity in any culture where warriors *choose* to fight, whether it is tribe, clan, or nation. I was saddened when I realized that a 61 year old woman with four kids makes her living by charging people to glimpse a scrap of the shot-down Blackhawk that smashed her home. This is the ugly truth of life in a third world country and helps me appreciate our American standard of living.

After viewing this new picture of my old combat site, I ached to share my sentiments but realized, looking around the bustling Starbucks I sat in, that no one would want to hear about this forgotten battle. As I have for the 13 years since, I honored the fact that I was alive, alone and privately, with a toast to fallen comrades. It may seem strange to the public or even to veterans of major “media-covered” wars but, in fact, this isolation is normal in the harsh and austere realm of special ops soldiers and our small wars.

I remember the men I fought against; the Somalis were warriors in their own right. It seems irrelevant now that the warlord then, Mohammed Aideed, is long since dead by the actions of fellow clansmen. What is relevant to me as a veteran is Mrs. Elmi and her fate. I want to ask her what she may need as restitution for what she endures as she cares for her family in some of the world’s most brutal conditions. Why? Because our war-making, with me in its terrible heart, spilled-over and killed her two non-combatant young sons.

In the course of “warring” for my tribe, the U.S., I hold myself responsible for my actions as a warrior. If the result of my actions causes devastation or loss to people other than combatants, there should be restitution. This issue should not be swept aside under the political language of “collateral damage”. While the fellows I fought in Somalia did shoot down our helicopters, it is the ultimate responsibility of the U.S. government, since they brought the war to Somalia. Did our

nation not rebuild Japan after we “nuked” them? What about our actions with Germany after World War II? No matter how large or small, the responsibility is the same.

Currently, Somalia is a place that makes Liberia, Beirut, or Harlem look like a tranquil paradise. Most Americans have no idea how brutal Somalia, particularly Mogadishu, really is. It has only gotten worse since '93.

Mogadishu is a hotbed of volatile temperaments. Clan tensions, fueled by the narcotic weed, Khat, usually equate to one thing -- sorting out differences with AK-47's. Blood flows and life goes on -- until the next disagreement or the Khat wears off or the call to prayer intercedes. This is life in Mogadishu, something most Americans cannot understand.

Mrs. Elmi’s “museum” pays tribute to both cultures and the fighting in 1993. In Somalia, the anniversary is called “Ma'alinti Rangers” or “Day of the Rangers”. The “memorial” Mrs. Elmi stewards in Somalia reflects the culture, an actual relic of the hardware of war, raw and bare for all to see, for a price. Here in the U.S. there is neither public anniversary nor memorial, nor should there be. The monument is in a place most people will never see. It stands in the spirits and memories of the veterans. We carry it like the weight of the lead bullets we fought with, neither a trophy nor a burden. It is simply the load we bear, every day, in our souls.

An Update from Ed Tick on the Viet Nam Typhoon Disaster

Dear Friends,

I send a great thank you to all of you who responded to our emergency aid call in answer to Viet Nam's recent typhoon. Thanks to your help, my group is carrying some much needed relief to Viet Nam next week. Here is an updated report on the situation in Viet Nam:

My friend and guide Song lives in Da Nang. He says, "My family is all right but my neighborhood is like what we see in Liban (Lebanon) or Irak! My wife Lan's school stopped teaching for 4 days because of the damage of her school building!

And this is the most recent report of flood damage:

- 45 people killed.
- 220,000 houses blown off, destroyed or seriously damaged.
- 370 fishing boats destroyed or missed.
- 250,000 trees collapsed.
- 15,000 schools and clinics damaged.
- Rice crop damage: not known yet.
- Estimated cost of the damage: 25,290 billions Vietnamese dong (equivalent to 1,58 billions US dollars).

Viet Nam is still one of the poorest countries in the world and is still working to recover from decades of war. Many people who worked for 30 years to recover have seen all of their efforts destroyed in moments.

If you can assist further, please do. Even a few American dollars go a long way in Viet Nam. Please send even the smallest tax-deductible donations to my non-profit Sanctuary International Friendship Fund. You can make a contribution to this emergency appeal on line by credit card at www.ihcenter.org. Look up Sanctuary International Friendship Fund under groups, follow directions for Donate. Or you can mail a check or money order payable to: **International Humanities Center or IHC/SIFF**. Please specify SIFF/Vietnam on the payee line or memo section on your check. Mail to: **International Humanities Center, P.O. Box 923, Malibu, CA 90265**

Thank you for your generosity. This helps heal the world and certainly contributes in a big way to healing our wounded past history with Viet Nam.

Blessings,
Ed

...from the Seattle Post-Intelligencer about the Safe Homecoming conference (in Seattle) in August!

“The gathering was aimed at raising public awareness about soldiers who return from the battlefield. Conference-goers hope to build a strong foundation of resources for veterans, their families and the broader community. Many vowed to get involved with the local chapter of "Soldier's Heart," a relatively new organization that helps soldiers adjust to coming home.

...(T)he event... drew more than 100 people on a sunny weekend to discuss grief, loss and resilience, ways to heal military families, mental health among vets and substance abuse.

Powerful stories were told in quiet wood-paneled rooms, including one about a soldier who saw a buddy in Iraq get blown up next to him. I hope this young man, like so many who have seen the unthinkable, gets help to deal with his deep, lingering anguish.”

To Contact us at Soldier’s Heart:

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Just in, from a Viet Nam combat veteran:

"Blessings my brother, I didn't think someone who wasn't there could get 'it'? I'm happy to say, you have so very eloquently proven me wrong."

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SOLDIER'S HEART VETERANS RETURN RETREAT

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

Comfort Inn Airport and Conference Center, 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)*