

# 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

November 2006

[www.soldiersheart.net](http://www.soldiersheart.net)

## ***We've opened up 10 more seats for the January Retreat!***

***The response for the first Soldier's Heart Veterans' Return Retreat has been so enthusiastic that we're adding ten seats!*** Call 518 463-0588 or email [info@mentorthesoul.com](mailto:info@mentorthesoul.com) to make your reservations. Please see final newsletter page for a tentative retreat schedule.

Since his book "War and the Soul" hit the shelves last November author Ed Tick has been touring the country talking about the needs of service people returning from war and how to address them. As a result, our not-for-profit ***Soldier's Heart*** - the name given to PTSD during the Civil War - has evolved as an initiative for creating safe return programs for our veterans and has generated an overwhelming response.

***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](mailto: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 IHCenter/Soldier's Heart and mailed to Soldier's Heart, PO Box 8564, Albany, NY 12208. Or you may donate securely online at [www.soldiersheart.net](http://www.soldiersheart.net).

***Thank you for supporting our veterans!***

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## **Ed Tick will visit the Lake House Health and Learning Center (Racine, Wisconsin) in January!**

Ed Tick will be traveling to southeastern Wisconsin January 26-28 for a weekend of training and workshops focused on helping veterans heal from PTSD. Call (262) 633-2645 or visit [www.lakehousecenter.com](http://www.lakehousecenter.com) for more details. These programs are co-sponsored by Sheepish and Lake House Health and Learning Center in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

## *A Letter from Executive Director Ed Tick....*

As you know Veterans Day is a 'high holiday' for veterans and warriors. One part of our healing task for vets and our nation is to return the reverence to this holiday. Parades and mall sales are not enough. War plunges us into the most painful and wounding of situations and we must counteract that pain with compassion and meaning. From the Ulster County Watch Fire to the Russell Sage College Reading of the Names and to many other recent efforts across our nation, we are helping to return meaning and sacredness to our veterans' holidays. May your remembrance time be blessed.

I have continued traveling all over the country nurturing Soldier's Heart programs and teaching war-healing work in different communities. We are very excited to announce that 2007 will see 3 major gatherings so we can bring people together from all over the country who want to do veteran healing and safe return work. In our last Newsletter, we announced our retreat for the first weekend of the New Year, Jan 4 - 7, here in Albany, NY. We already have about two dozen people from all over the country attending. We hope some of you reading this will decide to attend as well. Attendance at such retreats is important toward bringing our vets and their families healing, increasing training and awareness of the need for war-healing for all survivors, and creating a national network of those working together in this effort.

We plan to offer 3 national training events this year - January in Albany, NY, a summer week-long intensive at the rural and beautiful Theosophical Society retreat center at Pumpkin Hollow Farm in Columbia County, NY, and a conference at the Theosophical Society headquarters in the Chicago area co-sponsored by Quest Books. I invite you all to consider attending these events to help build a national network.

This Veterans Day is the one year anniversary of the publication of WAR AND THE SOUL. Since the late 1970s, I have been specializing in working with vets and other survivors and figuring out the mysteries of Post-traumatic stress disorder - what really causes it, how it can be healed, how it appears in other societies, times, places. Now more than ever this work is relevant. I have traveled all over the country and met so many caring and concerned people. I have stood before the new wall in Marseilles, IL with its almost 3,000 names of Americans killed in the Middle East. I have gathered with disabled and shocked vets in tiny crossroads coffeehouses in our rural countryside. I have grieved with church congregations around the country who have lost parish members and are trying to support their military families. I have met hundreds of old vets and their loved ones, or old activists and their loved ones, anxious to do something for the new generation of veterans who will need us upon return home. I have heard from scores of professionals that they are now, after lifetimes of healing work, feeling called to serve our traumatized vets. I have received phone calls from all over the country from families in crisis due to the present wars.

All this tells me that something is different in the national psyche. Perhaps we are in less denial about war pain than in the past. Perhaps we are finally transcending the alienation between vets and civilians. Perhaps we finally see war and its aftereffects as wounds and responsibilities belonging to everyone. Perhaps we cannot stand idly by while some of us are mobilized and sacrifice so much but the rest go about business as usual. Perhaps we finally understand that during times of war there is no such thing as business as usual. And perhaps political differences no longer separate us from the pain of our neighbors domestically and overseas.

Our nation is beginning to recognize how deep war wounds penetrate and how much loving attention they need to heal. For 2007, we are committed to continue to offer guidance, leadership, innovation, and the best wisdom and conditions possible to help heal all those wounded in mind, heart and spirit from war and violence. We look forward to continuing to work together with you on this noble and necessary task.

Thank you for your ongoing support - Ed

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These words were written by a Vietnam veteran traveling back to his old battle site in Vietnam with Soldier's Heart executive director Ed Tick in October 2006 to make peace with the past:

### *Praying*

*Never in my life did I pray so hard  
as that day, at the smoking bottom of this mountain, among giant boulders and fallen  
trees, when the enemy overran our wire and sprouted like berserk rice stalks no farther  
away than the length of my rifle and our muzzle holes became God's wrathful eyes;*

*Never in my life did I pray so hard  
until today, on the cloud-crowned top of this mountain, among smiling statues and wafting  
incense when their children took my hands and called me Uncle and monks bowed to me as if  
I were a saint and I embraced their dead as my true brothers and God's loving eyes gazed  
through my torn and mending heart.*

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### **Soldier's Heart Co-Director Kate Dahlstedt organizes 'Reading of the Names' for Veterans Day**

In honor of Veterans' Day Soldier's Heart co-director, Kate Dahlstedt, organized a memorial service and "Reading of the Names" of service men and women who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. The November 10<sup>th</sup> event was held on the campus of Russell Sage College in Troy, NY and was sponsored by the college's Jane H. Wells Spirituality Center.

The service began with opening words by WWII veteran Ed Bloch, who has been a life long advocate for veterans' rights and is the recent recipient of the regional Peacemaker of the Year Award. A "soldier's table", adapted from a POW/MIA honoring ceremony was presented. For nearly four hours students and staff respectfully read the names and ages of those who sacrificed their lives.

***Thank you to the Russell Sage College students, staff and administration for their support!***

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Try this from Xerox.

If you go to this web site, [www.letsaythanks.com](http://www.letsaythanks.com) , you can pick out a thank you card and Xerox will print it and it will be sent to a soldier that is currently serving in Iraq. You can't pick out who gets it, but it will go to some member of the armed services.

How AMAZING it would be if we could get everyone we know to send one!!!

It's FREE and it only takes a second.

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There's a new movie out called "Harsh Times" directed by David Ayers and starring Christian Bale as an Afghanistan vet who returns home to LA with psychological problems. It's intense and hard to watch. For more information visit [www.harshtimes.com](http://www.harshtimes.com).

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## **The Making and Un-making of a Marine**

By Larry Winters

Larry Winters is an L.M.H.C. and Senior Group Psychotherapist at Four Winds Hospital in Westchester and maintains a private practice. Larry is a poet, writer and Vietnam Veteran, who brings to his clinical and teaching work a rare combination of trust, inspiring strength and warmth. He is currently working on a nonfiction book titled "The Making and Un-Making of a Marine", to be published in January 2007. Larry can be contacted at [winters.lawrence@gmail.com](mailto:winters.lawrence@gmail.com) or visit [www.makingandunmaking.com](http://www.makingandunmaking.com). The following is an excerpt...

**O**ne November afternoon Gunny Web's voice boomed down the squad-bay "I want you Marines, with full packs and rifles, standing at attention in front of the barracks in two minutes." We started easy, Gunny talked softly, "You girls been doing nothing but lying around on your asses on the range. It's time for a little motivation. Those rifle scores were shit, girls." He scoffed.

He ran next to us gradually pushing the pace up to the point where we couldn't quite catch our breath. We ran on like this for a long time before he whispered, "Platoon, halt!" Only half of us heard him, so our formation fell into mayhem. We looked like we did the first night we came to boot camp, falling all over each other. By now we had perfected our marching so that we could perform a perfectly synchronized halt.

"You girls march like a herd of fucking sheep. Attention, Order, arms. Port, arms. Right shoulder, arms. Inspection, arms." He spat the commands in rapid succession.

For the past few weeks he'd become obsessed with drilling us in the manual of arms. No great guess that this was the next thing we'd be judged on. Every idle moment he was running us through a rifle drill. We did the manual of arms until our arms ached. I thought I could hear my muscles snapping over my bones.

"Girls, the object is to feel the weapon as if it were part of your body, it is pain that makes this happen. Stack arms!" He finally ordered. With his hands behind his back he walked up and down our ranks inspecting weapons stacked in tripods. He stopped and looked at my rifle. Slowly raising his head he stepped towards me and put his mouth to my ear and whispered, "Retrieve your weapon, Turd."

I broke formation and reached for my rifle, the two men adjacent to me were forced to break formation to retrieve their rifles so they wouldn't fall. The moment I had my rifle in my hands I saw that the safety was off.

Gunny stood back and smiled, then lowered his head so the broad brim of his hat hid his face. I was trying to figure out how to put the safety on when he jerked his head up and roared, "Present Arms." I was so scared I didn't understand the command so made no response. He screamed, "Present arms, you fucking worm!"

Weeks of discipline took over and my rifle cracked from my right shoulder to the position of present arms. My legs were shaking. Gunny's arm shot out like a rattlesnake grabbing my rifle by the barrel and flinging it into the sand. I stared at my rifle lying in the dirt; it was sacrilege for a Marine's rifle to be dirty. It was drilled into me that a dirty weapon equaled death.

"Retrieve your rifle!"

When I picked it up sand streamed out of the barrel.

"Attention, Turd! Port, arms."

Gunny stood in front of me. I studied his face without moving my eyes. He was a short man who had to stand on his toes to reach my ear. He walked over to an ammo box and sat down. "Give me your rifle, son," he said in an endearing voice.

I pushed the rifle out from my chest for him to take. He laid the rifle across his knees.

“Come here, son.”

I stepped towards him. Looking up into my eyes he said, “At ease. Pull back the operating rod.” I bent over the rifle and pulled back the operation rod. I heard the sand grinding against the steel as the bolt locked in place.

“Put your thumb in the chamber, son.”

Why was he having me do this? I thought.

“Release the bolt.”

I remembered reading in the Marine manual that fifteen pounds of spring tension forced the M-14’s steel bolt into the chamber. I wanted to ask Gunny why the hell would I want to do such a stupid thing? My fingers trembled as I released the bolt. The driving steel cylinder sunk into my thumbnail. My arm muscles danced spasmodically causing the operating rod to push further home. Gunny Webb smiled. The seventy-five-man platoon stood at attention a few yards away.

“Pull the trigger, son.”

In that instant I started hating him. “What!” I snapped, quickly adding “Sir.”

“Pull the trigger,” He still spoke in a soft voice.

“But, Sir?”

“Pull the Goddamn trigger or the next thing you’ll be doing is putting your cock in the chamber.” He screeched in a falsetto.

Reaching across my body I put my index finger in the trigger guard and pulled. A faint click sent the firing pin into my thumbnail. Pain raced up the bones of my arm as if I’d stuck my thumb into an electrical outlet.

Sinking to my knees, my weapon still lay in Gunny’s lap. Tears ran down my cheeks. I worried they’d drip on his trousers. With my lip between my teeth I tried to bite back the pain. When I closed my eyes all I could see was Gunny’s thick red neck. It was happening, I could feel it coming, a few more seconds and I’ll kill him. Not him or any man or group of men would be able to stop me. Swallowing lumps of pain I forced myself away from the image of his neck.

“Stand up, son.”

When I straightened, the rifle lifted off his lap. Searing pain ran into my forearm and shoulder and circled inside my skull.

“Attention, you fucking Turd! Forward march! Not that way Turd, out there in front of my girls. Show them that filthy rifle, you worthless Shit!” Gunny’s face was contorted. “Listen to me, Turd! Sing the Marine Corps Hymn.”

“Yes sir,” I whimpered, thinking he must know me better than I do. He was still alive and I was doing what he told me. He knew just how far to push. I reached to support the rifle with my free hand. Blood was dripping from the barrel. “Get your fucking hand off that weapon, Turd. You jeopardized the lives of my girls. Keep your fucking hand off that weapon or we’re going to be here all night.”

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## **SOLDIER'S HEART VETERANS RETURN RETREAT**

*Thursday, January 4<sup>th</sup> - Sunday, January 7<sup>th</sup> 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)*