



## Our Soldier's Heart Community Grows

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Earlier this month Ed Tick presented his work at the Southeast Regional Conference of the Theosophical Society in Atlanta. The conference was well attended and the Atlanta community received him well. As the weekend progressed, a core group of folks came together to commit themselves to creating veteran return programs in the Atlanta area. Hooray Atlanta!

As fantastic as that is, even more has developed! Conference participants from Florida have since connected with our other Soldier's Heart friends there to develop a Florida program. Hooray Florida!

Soldier's Heart staff is looking forward to working with these two new groups to help them spread their wings!

### **2007 Journey To Viet Nam**

Some were nervous, some were downright scared as we gathered together at the San Francisco airport. Jokes that implied we still had time to bail out abounded. But when the time came, all of us filed onto the plane. That's how we began our incredible journey to the beautiful land of Viet Nam.

In the two weeks that followed we had many adventures, some planned and some spontaneous, but all magical and healing. We met with scholars and peasants, shopkeepers and farmers, fathers and mothers and many more. We walked through rice paddies, visited homes, donated water buffalo, were chanted to in Buddhist temples, visited with school children and took an amazing afternoon boat ride through Ha Long Bay.

We returned to old battle sites and conducted rituals. We talked and hugged, laughed cried and sang with former NVA and VC, male and female. We spent the night in a traditional Montegnard village where we danced with the chief, slept on mattresses on the floor under netting and attended a Sunday morning church service. And we ate and ate magnificent fruits and specialty dishes at every meal.

Most of all, we opened our hearts and were welcomed by friendly, curious, loving Vietnamese, who celebrated us everywhere we went. When our time was up, one of the veterans was incredulous. "Holy smokes, I'm in Viet Nam and I don't want to leave!"

Here is what another traveler had to say:

### **A Warrior's Journey Home**

By Michael Broas

I recently returned to Viet Nam, after being there 37 years ago. I journeyed with Ed and Kate, my wife Valerie and 10 others, four of whom were other Viet Nam veterans. I am not the same person I was before going.

I read *War and the Soul* in July and from that time on, my life took a direction all of its own. Something deep within me was touched. For years, I never even considered the thought of going back to a country that for me represented so much lost innocence, grief, terror and confusion. There was a place tucked deep away in the folds of my heart that was dark and bitter. I have done a lot of therapy since being diagnosed with PTSD in 1996. I have worked very hard to somehow feel into and recover what I felt I had lost as a result of my experiences in Viet Nam as a young man. I never even considered that the dark hole in my heart could or would, ever be so deeply transformed.

From the instant my soul said "YES!" to going, the journey back started for me. My heart had been opened while reading Ed's book. Life took over and I followed. The money came, my friends and family were tremendously supportive and on October 22nd, I stepped out of a plane and onto the ground, once again, of Viet Nam. The journey for me, of past meeting present, began as I looked upon the Communist flag flying at the airport.

We visited many places as we traveled; schools, museums, Buddhist Temples, peasant homes, cities, countryside and old battlefields, to name just a few. Our journey throughout these places soon took on a mythical dimension, guided by an amazing grace and synchronicity that infused the journey with mystery and healing. At times, the others and I would just shake our heads in amazement at the divine grace unfolding. The seemingly small, insignificant moments were ripe and full of boundless mystery and healing. The script of the journey was being written by powers much greater than us. The Warriors Journey home was very evidently underway.

As I moved along the sharp edge of past and present, that dark and bitter place in my heart was gently nudged, then slowly softened and gradually opened. And what poured in was the forgiveness, peace and beauty of the people and country of Viet Nam. I heard words of understanding and even compassion from VC and NVA veterans. While praying in a Buddhist temple in Pleiku, I was grieving for brothers lost and those still suffering. I looked up and looked into the eyes of a fierce warrior statue, standing guard over the gentle nature of the Buddha. An arrow of understanding pierced my heart. In that moment, in the fierceness of those eyes, I understood that it takes fierceness in life to protect and preserve all that is good and just. My heart and soul were permeated with a deeper understanding of the true nature of the Warrior

Spirit.

One evening, also in Pleiku, while sitting around a fire under the full moon in a Montegnard village, I was swept away into another world by the enchanting gong music and rhythmical, magical dancing of young maidens. Later, while walking down a trail with a few others, we looked up to witness the heavens and stars in a mystical alignment. There was the radiant beauty of the full moon, caressing her benevolent light on us all with soft blessings of peace and forgiveness. The constellation Orion appeared, yet somehow looking different from this side of the earth...with sword sheathed! And then Mars, the god of war appeared, nestled in the middle of the path we had just walked down and away from. I understood in that deeply magical and mystical moment that the entire universe aligns itself and supports any Souls intentions of peace and healing.

These and many other healing experiences touched the depths of my soul. Throughout the entire journey in Viet Nam, the very palpable feeling of a country at peace, without the terror of war, touched the depths of my heart. That dark and painful place that had been tucked away for so long dissolved from the constant barrage of beauty and the friendly, welcoming eyes and smiling faces of the people and especially the children. It was in those eyes and faces that I experienced the “welcome home” that I have for so long desired.

The grace of the journey continues. I am more at peace now than I have been in a very long time. I have a deep sense of purpose and I now walk with renewed passion in my heart. The Warriors Journey home has only just begun and will not be complete until I bring all of my brothers home with me. I trust that the Spirit and Grace that I became aware of in Viet Nam will continue to guide and support me. That dark place that was in my heart now is a awakened and is a source of tenderness, strength and peace. My heart beats with a fullness that reverberates in the depths of my Soul. I am filled with gratitude.

**MORE. MORE. MORE.**

**Seattle Workshop & Retreat**

Soldier's Heart announces an Educational Workshop and Veterans' Return Retreat in Seattle, Feb. 8-11.

- Feb. 8: The Friday Educational Workshop will focus on Dr Tick's unique therapeutic interventions for PTSD, and will be held at Antioch University Seattle. Cost is \$130 general, \$120 Antioch alumni, faculty and students.
- Sat. Feb 9: The Veterans Return Retreat will begin Friday evening and end on Monday, February 11th. It will be an experiential, intensive retreat calling on the essential healing elements that are described in “War and the Soul”: We will share storytelling, healing rituals, ceremonies and teachings. The retreat portion will be held at Fremont Abbey Arts Center, 4272 Fremont Ave. N. in Seattle. Cost is \$350 for the weekend, including meals.

The retreat is open to all veterans and their support network. For more information and tuition costs or to register for the retreat please call: (206) 905-4036 or email [Sallyjog@earthlink.net](mailto:Sallyjog@earthlink.net)

Stay tuned for more information on our Veterans' Return Retreat in Holyoke MA– Feb 28 - Mar.  
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**Save the date!**

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