



# LIKE WANDERING GHOSTS

AMANDA ALLEN

# EDWARD TICK ON HOW THE U.S. FAILS ITS RETURNING SOLDIERS

DAVID KUPFER

**E**dward Tick began counseling Vietnam veterans in the 1970s, at a time when the nation was trying to put the Vietnam War behind it and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) wasn't yet a diagnostic category. Since then he has treated veterans of numerous conflicts, from the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s to the Iraq War of today. His methods are based on his study of worldwide spiritual traditions, indigenous cultures, mythology, and the role of the warrior in society. Key to the healing process for veterans, he says, is for them to experience the emotions that they could not allow themselves to feel in the war zone and to address the spiritual damage that they suffered during combat.

Tick turned eighteen in 1969, at the height of the Vietnam War, but he had a high lottery number in the draft and did not have to serve. Though he was against that war and active in the protest movement, he says he felt compassion, not anger, toward the soldiers who came home. In 1975 he moved to rural New

York State and began working as a psychotherapist. He had not planned on specializing in veterans and trauma, but the region he had moved to was home to many who had served in Vietnam.

Tick has an MA in psychology from Goddard College and a PhD in communication and rhetoric from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He is also an ordained interfaith minister and has undergone a thirteen-year apprenticeship with a medicine man. He lives in Albany, New York, where, along with his wife, Kate Dahlstedt, he directs Soldier's Heart ([www.soldiersheart.net](http://www.soldiersheart.net)), a nonprofit initiative to establish veterans' safe-return programs in communities across the nation. "Veterans need a safety net when they come home from Iraq and Afghanistan," he says, "so they won't crash and burn like so many Vietnam veterans did. People in the community should be waiting to catch them."

Tick's first book, *Sacred Mountain: Encounters with the*

Vietnam Beast (Moon Bear Press), chronicles his early years working with veterans. Subsequent titles include *The Golden Tortoise: Journeys in Vietnam* (Red Hen Press) and *The Practice of Dream Healing: Bringing Ancient Greek Mysteries into Modern Medicine* (Quest Books). His book *War and the Soul: Healing Our Nation's Veterans from Post-traumatic Stress Disorder* (Quest Books) is used by combat soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as by veterans, military chaplains, social workers, and healing professionals. His latest, *Wild Beasts and Wondering Souls* (Elk Press), deals with shamanism in the treatment of PTSD.

*Tick has led numerous reconciliation trips to Vietnam, not just for veterans and their families, but also for peace activists. He is cofounder of the Sanctuary International Friendship Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps the Vietnamese recover from the damage caused by the war. He and I sat down to talk last October, a few hours before he and his wife were to fly to Vietnam to lead a seventh reconciliation tour. Tick had just spoken on "the warrior's path to redemption" before thousands at the Bioneers Conference in Marin County, California. We found a sunny spot overlooking the marshland near San Pablo Bay, and I turned on the digital recorder. Like the veterans he works with, Tick sometimes finds it painful to relate the horrors he's encountered in his profession. At several points he choked back tears.*

**Kupfer:** Though you treat PTSD, you've said that it is not a mental illness. Why do you believe this?

**Tick:** We pathologize everything in this culture. We think anything that ails us must be a medical condition that can be treated. Veterans are angry or sad because they have been through horrors, but we say it's got to be a pathology. This is exacerbated by a profound alienation between our warrior class and our civilian class, which have almost nothing to do with one another. We don't even think we have a warrior class, and we don't teach our service people to think of themselves as warriors, even though societies throughout history have almost all had warrior classes and reciprocal relationships between warriors and civilians. Soldiers have a responsibility to defend their country, and it is our responsibility as citizens to heal those who have put their lives on the line for us, even if they fought a war for the wrong reasons or for lies. And we're not doing that. Many sincere people in the veterans' healthcare system want to do well, but the system is doing an awful job. We need to keep veterans in the community and develop new ways of responding to their pain and suffering.

**Kupfer:** Besides the inherent medicalizing of suffering, is there anything else wrong with a PTSD diagnosis?

**Tick:** PTSD is presently classified as a "stress and anxiety disorder." But "stress and anxiety" does not begin to describe the emotions people experience during warfare. We don't really have words for it. Also PTSD classifies veterans as "disabled" by how far they are from the civilian norm. But veterans are



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not disabled civilians. They are war-wounded soldiers and have different values and expectations about life. When we require that they get on with "business as usual" now that they are home, we put the blame on them for having broken down in the first place, and we pressure them to take sole responsibility for their healing. But everyone who participates in a war is changed. No one comes through unscathed.

My best understanding of what we call "PTSD" is that it is an identity disorder and soul wound that has its source in moral trauma. It is also a social disorder arising from the broken relationship between our society and its veterans. The standard clinical viewpoint on PTSD is that there

can be management and control of symptoms and readjustment to life, but no healing. I believe, though, that if a veteran makes the difficult inner pilgrimage to discover the sources of the suffering, and works hard to give meaning to the wounding, and finds ways to reconcile and forgive, then healing is possible. I have seen a number of veterans fully heal their PTSD. They have satisfying lives, marriages, and jobs. They are of service to their communities. And they sleep like babies.

**Kupfer:** Is there a stigma attached to having a "mental disorder" rather than physical wounds?

**Tick:** Yes, mental disabilities are far more difficult for both the survivor and the society to accept. Veterans often feel they should be stronger, or that their loved ones don't believe they are suffering because there's no visible wound. Many veterans hate the PTSD label and prefer other terms, like the Civil War-era expression "soldier's heart," because it is symbolic rather than medical.

**Kupfer:** Vets used to be honored in this country. When and why did that change?

**Tick:** Actually veterans in the U.S. have been honored only while they are serving, to keep the patriotic fervor up, but not after a war is over. The World War II veterans' welcome home is the exception, the only time in U.S. history when vets were thanked and honored and given decent benefits. The typical treatment of veterans, from the American Revolution to the present, has been denial of their pain and refusal of support. Veterans of World War I were not given benefits, and when they protested in the streets of Washington, D.C., some of them were shot. There are two holidays honoring veterans in this country, but we have betrayed their sacred meaning. A lot of veterans are angry that Veterans Day, which was originally called "Armistice Day," has become an excuse for patriotic displays. We have a parade and shoot off fireworks, which scare the hell out of many veterans. A better way to honor them would be to listen to their stories. We should give them new ways to serve and an honorable place in our communities.

**Kupfer:** How did you get into this work?

**Tick:** In the mid-1970s I heard a public-service announcement on the radio. The U.S. Veterans Administration [VA] was looking for volunteer therapists to work with returning Vietnam veterans. Though my regional VA did not need me, they

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passed my name on to Vietnam Veterans of America [VVA]. One veteran who came to me for therapy was an old high-school friend I had last seen on the softball field. He and I had similar backgrounds, but when he walked into my office, the difference between us was obvious. War had turned him into a ravaged shell of a person.

I was so disturbed by the suffering of the veterans I was treating that in December 1980 I wrote an editorial for the local newspaper about how difficult Christmas was for them. Post-traumatic stress disorder had just been added to the diagnostic manual, and the president of the local chapter of the VVA read my editorial and invited me to talk to the veterans about this new diagnosis. I said I wasn't qualified: I had treated only a handful of veterans. He said, "That makes you a regional expert!" No other doctors or therapists in the area wanted to touch the issue. When I told him I just couldn't do it, he said nobody had asked *him* if he wanted to go to Vietnam; he'd been drafted. The moment he said that, I felt called to serve.

I wanted to know more about what my peers' experiences in Vietnam had done to them. I certainly didn't love war, but I did have a deep love of warriors, and I saw important values in them: self-sacrifice and devotion to each other and to some higher ideal. These are values that we need as a society, but the ends to which they are applied in the military are often horrific. On the other hand, many civilians and people on the Left desire good ends but lack self-sacrifice and discipline. I take my values from both camps, and a lot of vets have told me that I am proof a civilian can understand them.

**Kupfer:** Even though you're opposed to war.

**Tick:** Yes, I am still protesting the Vietnam War, and all war. There are two things we have to do as a culture to end war: One is to take full responsibility for our wounded. It's not enough just to "bring the boys home," because they aren't boys anymore, and getting them home physically does not do it. We need to help them heal and help shoulder their burden. The other thing we need to do is take responsibility for the damage we have done to other countries and their people. I bring veterans to Vietnam to heal not only them but also the Vietnamese. Americans do not realize the monstrous damage we do with technological warfare. I want to

bring that reality back home and educate Americans about civilian suffering in war.

**Kupfer:** Do you think veterans have been made scapegoats for the U.S. government's foreign incursions?

**Tick:** Yes and no. Certainly the Vietnam veterans were made scapegoats for many of the illegal and brutal tactics of that war. Then there are the veterans of all the little forgotten wars: Grenada, Somalia, Lebanon, El Salvador, the secret ops in Africa and Eastern Europe. They are like wandering ghosts, neither honored nor recognized. Many of them are not even classified as combat veterans. I worked with one man who'd been in Somalia and taken part in the fighting around the U.S. Black Hawk helicopter that went down there. He isn't classified as a combat veteran, and other combat vets don't accept him because he was "in the shit" for only thirty hours. But anyone who knows the story of what happened that day in Mogadishu can see that it was enough to traumatize anybody.

The one thing we may have learned from Vietnam is not to blame the veterans for decisions made by our leaders. By and large the country is not blaming Iraq veterans for this war, but they still suffer terrible neglect upon their return. The burden of this war is falling on the shoulders of a relatively small number of people, who are sent on multiple deployments so that our leaders don't have to institute a draft. This itself is a form of scapegoating.

**Kupfer:** Tell me about some of the other veterans you've worked with.

**Tick:** I know a forty-year-old army captain who's been back from Iraq just a few months. He's a history teacher and has studied warfare all his life. He says he joined up because he wanted to be at a battle like the Bulge, the Somme, Gettysburg, or Thermopylae. He wanted to experience one of the great human adventures, something unforgettable, something with meaning. But all they gave him was "this dirty, stinking little war in Iraq, meaningless, based on lies." He felt betrayed.

Another soldier, age twenty-one, has done three combat tours — two in Afghanistan and one in Iraq. This young man was able to resist committing atrocities when others in his unit were committing them. Sometimes he'd put himself between soldiers and civilians, or he'd get the information the



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soldiers wanted without killing anyone. He held his PTSD in check until he returned stateside. Then he lost it on his base and destroyed some property. At his court martial, the military prosecutors did all they could to deny and disqualify PTSD as a defense. The military's position is that elite troops don't break, and the atrocities he witnessed never happened.

Another Iraq veteran carried his personal camera everywhere in-country to document the lives of the Iraqi people. Some of his buddies made fun of him, but he says that getting to know the people and taking their pictures was his best protection against dehumanizing them. It reminded him that the Iraqis are fascinating people with a rich and ancient culture. By protecting their humanity, he was also preserving his own.

I've worked with an Afghanistan combat marine who was the first person in his state to enlist after 9/11. He saw severe combat, but he also learned to speak Pashto and in his off time dressed like an Afghani and made friends with the villagers. He, too, would not let himself dehumanize them. Upon his return home, he developed an obsession with guns and began collecting them — a common symptom of PTSD. He was busted by a federal agent who posed as a Vietnam combat vet with PTSD and asked to buy a gun, claiming he needed one to feel safe. The marine thought he was helping a brother. Now

he is fighting federal weapons charges as part of our "war on terrorism." He is a sweet, sincere, harmless, patriotic young man who deserves our gratitude and support, but he may go to prison instead.

**Kupfer:** Would you say that most veterans' injuries are psychological?

**Tick:** Disabled American Veterans says the PTSD rate in modern wars is 100 percent. It's not whether you get PTSD; it's how severe your case is. The VA, of course, tries to keep the numbers low, but they are counting only the cases they have allowed into the VA system. Everybody who goes through a war is traumatized, unless they were already psychopathic or sociopathic.

**Kupfer:** Are the symptoms you've witnessed in combat veterans also present in the American civilian psyche?

**Tick:** All the symptoms of PTSD — substance abuse, domestic violence, sexual promiscuity, child abuse, employment difficulties, intimacy problems, high divorce rates, suicide, homicide — *all* are epidemic in our population. If we can diagnose an entire culture with PTSD, then the U.S. has it. The illness of the culture may be related to the way we are practicing war against other countries and the planet while denying responsibility for it.

Moral and spiritual trauma is at the core of PTSD, and

# IT'S NOT ENOUGH JUST TO "BRING THE BOYS HOME," BECAUSE THEY AREN'T BOYS ANYMORE, AND GETTING THEM HOME PHYSICALLY DOES NOT DO IT. WE NEED TO HELP THEM HEAL AND HELP SHOULDER THEIR BURDEN.

no matter how well-intentioned various therapies are — such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, stress-reduction techniques, and medications — none takes on the moral and spiritual dimensions. Therapies like these can sometimes be helpful in restoring everyday functioning, but they do not bring healing. We need public apologies, public confessions, and public grief for all that we have done to our veterans, to other nations, and to the earth. When my wife and I make trips to Vietnam, we are not just trying to help our own wounded, but also giving back what we've taken from that culture and from the earth itself.

**Kupfer:** The title of psychologist James Hillman's most recent book is *A Terrible Love of War*. Is there something in us that loves war?

**Tick:** I am convinced there is much about war that human beings love, seek, and crave. War provides challenges and rites of passage. It unites people who would otherwise be at odds. It gives us our most intense adrenaline-rush experiences. Nothing, not even the most passionate sex, comes near the intensity of the combat experience. War fosters the strongest brother- and sisterhood bonds that most people ever experience. There is an erotic dimension to war, to the taking of life, to having so much power at your command. It is seductive and addictive.

So, yes, there truly is a terrible love hidden in war. One Israeli paratrooper told me, "I both love and hate war. I both love and hate my PTSD. How can I heal from it when I still feel so much love for it?" We must develop peaceful practices that bring us as much love and solidarity and purpose as war does.

We could have a huge national service corps and train people to serve the planet in dangerous situations. We could call them into service during peacetime. We need people to work with gangs in the inner cities. We need people to respond to the crisis the earth is experiencing. We need people to go to disaster areas like New Orleans and repair the damage. But we have a long way to go, and we have to heal from wars as a first step on the way to peace. Since we have not had a generation without war, we don't even know what peace really looks like.

**Kupfer:** What approaches do you take when you work one-on-one with veterans?

**Tick:** I use treatments given to warriors in traditional cultures, which expected that the invisible wounds of war would be deep, penetrating, and transformative. Indigenous cultures

limited the extent of warfare and its damage, and they watched over their warriors in the midst of battle and after their return. For example, among the Papago people of the American Southwest, after a warrior had his first experience of combat, they held a nineteen-day ceremony of return. He might have been in battle for fifteen minutes, and for that he'd get almost three weeks of ritual healing and community support. He'd be put in isolation and not allowed to touch food or feed himself, because he'd been poisoned by the war experience. He couldn't see his family, and he certainly couldn't have sex with his wife, or else he would bring the war pollution back into the community. Elders and medicine people used purification techniques to cleanse him, and also storytelling techniques, which we would call "expressive-arts therapy." The war dance wasn't what Hollywood portrays it as: a bunch of savages whipping themselves into a frenzy before battle. It came *after* battle and was a dramatic reenactment of the conflict for the tribe.

Instead of having a parade and going shopping, we could use our veterans' holidays as an occasion for storytelling. Open the churches and temples and synagogues and mosques and community centers and libraries across the country, and invite the veterans in to tell their stories. Purification ceremonies and storytelling events are also opportunities for the community to speak to veterans and take some of the burden of guilt off them and declare our oneness with them: "You killed in our name, because we ordered you to, so we take responsibility for it, too."

The final step is initiation into the warrior class. We need to train our veterans in the warrior tradition and not just expect them to behave as typical civilians. Many of them can't, but they are looking for ways to be of service. Labeling a veteran "100 percent disabled" only ensures that he or she is not going to do anything for the rest of his or her life.

Traditional societies understood that warriorhood is not soldiering but a path through life — a "warrior's path," not a "warpath." In traditional societies, warriors strove to live up to the highest moral standards. They hated the destruction caused by war, and they sought to preserve what was precious to them. They served as police during times of peace and used violence only as a last resort. They had responsibilities that kept them busy throughout their lives, including mentoring younger men.

We could have a veterans' service corps that would help

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other vets or go into the inner cities and the schools. The ability to serve on the home front would give the war experience meaning and let veterans demonstrate that they still have skills we value. When I take veterans back to Vietnam, we engage in philanthropic activities. When a Vietnamese child calls a veteran “Uncle” or “Grandfather” and thanks him for giving the community a school or feeding the child’s family, that is transformative.

**Kupfer:** Do you encounter much resistance to your methodology from more-macho veterans?

**Tick:** Some deny the PTSD wound altogether, believing it to be evidence of cowardice or weakness. One veteran left a phone message for me recently, saying all my theories were “bullshit” and “the only cause of PTSD is losing.” Some think PTSD is real but don’t want to risk revealing their true feelings.

I often have to prove myself to veterans. They need to see that I am not afraid of them, that I have done my own form of service and walk in solidarity with them. I must accept the rage they sometimes direct at me, which they often feel toward society or protestors. I have to demonstrate that I will not break or abandon them. I strive to live up to their highest standards and to be worthy in their eyes of serving them and serving *with* them.

**Kupfer:** You write that war inverts good and evil. How does that affect a soldier’s understanding of right and wrong?

**Tick:** Almost all of us want to be agents of good. For many soldiers the motive for being a warrior is not to kill and destroy, but to preserve and protect. Then they find themselves in immoral wars where they are forced to be agents of destruction. I was recently discussing this issue with army chaplains, and I asked what they did to counsel soldiers who have just come back from a firefight or have committed atrocities. One chaplain said, “I teach my soldiers that they have to renegotiate their covenant with God.” The assumption that God’s going to forgive us for, say, killing a child just because we had no choice doesn’t wash with many soldiers. Their relationship with the divine is quite often damaged. As the chaplain said, they have to renegotiate it. Veterans and soldiers have to find ways to reconnect with the divine and undo that moral inversion and

become again agents of creation.

**Kupfer:** You’ve written a book about dream healing. What is it?

**Tick:** Dream healing is practiced in many cultures around the world, but the tradition that I studied and wrote about is the ancient Greek version, well over three thousand years old. The Greek god of healing was Asclepius, and he visited his patients through dreams and visions. There was an extensive network of three hundred Asclepiad sanctuaries around the Mediterranean, from Egypt to Portugal, and from the Balkans to North Africa.

Dream healing was reserved for people for whom no other healing methods would work. They could travel to the sanctuaries of Asclepius and participate in a ritual process called “incubation.” First they were cleansed, purified, and treated with hydrotherapy, nutrition and exercise, acupressure, color therapy, and so on. These were used not as healing methods themselves but to prepare the patients for the vision quest. Then the patients would enter into incubation chambers, which in the earliest times were caves or holes carved into rocks. In later years the patients were swaddled on couches. Either way, they were put into intense isolation to fast, pray, and wait for a dream or vision in which the god of healing, or some surrogate, came and either healed them in the dream or gave them a prescription for how they could heal themselves later. We have records of more than a thousand of these prescriptions dating from 600 B.C. to 500 A.D., when the tradition was destroyed by the early Christian church. Then the church started to do its own form of dream healing, but now it was Christian saints who came instead of the Greek gods.

**Kupfer:** Have you found dream healing useful in your work?

**Tick:** Yes, I lead trips to Greece for veterans and nonveterans, and I use Asclepiad dream healing there. The healing dream is not an ordinary dream. It is a visit from an archetype. Jung said most of our dreams are minor, but occasionally we get a major one, which is a visit from an archetypal power or presence. Veterans often experience some form of warrior or war chief or medicine man coming to them.

The word *psychotherapist* comes directly from the Ascle-



piad tradition. It means “soul attendant.” *Psychology* literally means “the order and meaning of the soul.” It didn’t become a science until Freud and his followers arrived out of the medical tradition. Modern psychology left the soul far behind and has not yet reconnected with its spiritual roots, though it needs to, because psychological healing occurs at a spiritual level.

**Kupfer:** What is an “archetypal power”?

**Tick:** In neo-Jungian psychology there are four formative archetypes: the warrior, the magician, the lover, and the king or queen. All archetypes have their light and shadow sides. We need mentoring and initiation in order to become spiritual warriors. The shadow side of the warrior is violence and aggression and force and selfishness, all of which are rampant in our culture. Gang members are shadow warriors initiating themselves in the absence of an initiation by the elders. But the shadow warrior doesn’t always take the form of criminal activity or abusive or addictive behavior. Men in our culture, by and large, feel lonely, disconnected, and disempowered. That, too, is the shadow warrior.

**Kupfer:** And the archetypal warrior is betrayed by modern warfare?

**Tick:** Yes, our soldiers are not taught to behave as mythic warriors. The principles of the mythic warrior are that you never kill for vengeance or out of emotion. If you have to fight and kill,

it is always for a cause that is morally sound and higher than yourself, such as defense of home and family. I know Vietnamese veterans who were at war for twenty-five or thirty years against the Japanese, the French, and the Americans. They are now healthy, happy men with no PTSD. I think this is because they were only defending their homes against invaders. PTSD seems to be more severe in the side that invades rather than defends.

Men’s-movement leaders, such as Robert Moore, Robert Bly, and Michael Meade, have been trying to bring back the idea of initiation and restore the spiritual warrior to American men. I have worked with Native American veterans who failed to find healing in the VA system, so they went back to their reservations and worked with their elders and did achieve healing. There aren’t enough people working to bring spiritual warriorship to our young men, our veterans, and our inner-city populations. We need more.

**Kupfer:** Now that women are on the front lines, how can they fit into the traditionally male warrior role?

**Tick:** Many women are suffering terribly in the combat zone. One woman veteran I’ve met returned home from Iraq in a horrible depression because she had machine-gunned women and children. She refused help and was redeployed. She told her family she wanted the Iraqis to kill her as punishment for

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what she had done to them.

Some women veterans suffer because they feel they were created to be life givers, not life takers. So the moral trauma of war is more severe for them. But if we understand the warrior's role to be not destroying and killing, but preserving and protecting, then we can find many women serving honorably in our military. Some of the most admirable women I have ever met are combat nurses, chaplains, and career officers.

There have been traditional cultures with women warriors and chiefs. Some Northwest Native American tribes had women warriors who were combatants. Among the Iroquois, clan mothers were given the ultimate power to declare war, because they were the ones who'd given birth to those who would be sent into battle.

**Kupfer:** Do you think war is innate to the human character?

**Tick:** Yes, in the sense that competition is built into nature, and we are a part of nature. Darwin said that if you want to understand war, look closely at a square foot of English lawn and see how the creatures there fight and devour each other. But the way we practice war is not the same as the competition for survival that we see in nature, because nature does not destroy more than it needs to in order to preserve itself. We've taken the competition and strife that is inherent in nature and inflated it to massive dimensions. And war is so damn seductive, because many of our primitive needs are met in its pursuit. We need to transcend both our innate tendencies toward competition and our socialized love of war.

**Kupfer:** What impact has this work had on you personally?

**Tick:** I have learned through all this that wounds are initiatory. When young men go through rites of passage, they need to be wounded in order to understand the fragility of life and to develop the powers and skills of full men. I've also developed secondary PTSD along the way. Psychologists can be traumatized by exposure to other people's trauma. For a decade I had nightmares of war, sometimes intense combat nightmares. They helped me understand what veterans experience and what moral issues they have to work out. I can now tolerate even the most horrific war stories and stay connected to the heart and soul of the person telling them.

**Kupfer:** War is such a painful subject. Does it really help to keep talking about it?

**Tick:** Ironically, the way to heal pain is by diving deeper into it. Most of the pain we are in is caused by our resistance to and denial of it. To get off the suicidal path we are on, we have to feel the pain that we are in, that the earth is in, that our communities are in.

I fear for us, because the way we practice war is destroying everything. When we keep our mouths shut and don't do anything about it, it damages every one of us, which creates more pain that has to be buried. It's either dive into the pain or die from refusing to face it.

There are signs that people are coming to this realization. I am meeting activists on the Left who, frustrated that we have not been able to successfully protest this war and this administration, are turning their energy instead toward helping veterans. I also see people concerned about helping Iraq restore itself right now, and not waiting several decades, as we did with Vietnam.

Some in the military are saying that we need a military-civilian coalition to address the enormous problem of caring for veterans. That is good, because it truly is our responsibility too. Healing needs to be, in part, taken out of the hands of specialists and put back into the hands of the tribe, which can do a lot of things that specialists can't. There is now less long-term isolation of veterans and hopefully less alienation among them. The public is more aware of PTSD and its consequences, such as veterans who commit suicide and homicide.

**Kupfer:** It must be hard to do this work. Why do you stick with it?

**Tick:** After the first Gulf War, I didn't want to work with its veterans. I was war weary. I still am, but I am part of a brotherhood, and I have to keep serving. As I've gotten to know and respect veterans, their situation has become intolerable to me. They are home in body, but they can't come home in mind or heart or spirit. My goal is to provide a road map to lead veterans and other survivors of trauma back into society.

So much love comes out of this work: the brotherhood that I share with veterans, the incredible forgiveness that we experience when we go to Vietnam. There are flowers in the depths of hell. Sometimes people have to walk through hell together in order to reach the deepest level of love and connection. That love is bigger and stronger than the anguish we face. ■