Can you talk to me?

I can only imagine what you saw...
...and it still wouldn’t be enough.
I can cry with you now but I wasn’t there,
.. when you cried first.

Sometimes alone, cold, hot, dirty, confused and afraid..
...but still standing tall, looking for dignity, reason and home.

Can you talk to me?
Expressions in Recovery Mission

Our mission is to promote hope, faith and a belief that together in this journey of healing and growth, of recovery and resilience anything we strive to achieve is possible.

To facilitate this mission, this newsletter—your newsletter was created. This forum was created by and for those in recovery to give a voice to our concerns, hopes and talents.

Rules for Submission

Art, poetry, prose, true or fictional stories are welcome. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide hope, faith and information. In keeping with the spirit of this endeavor all contributions must be free from profanity and vulgarity.

Department Descriptions

Here and Now
Brief statements or paragraphs from people in recovery describing their current state of mind, progress, and future outlook.

Feature Stories
Actual life experiences including individual recovery struggles and triumphs.

Expressions in Recovery
Poetry, prose, art etc...

Last Word (in closing)
Editor or guest contributor’s inspirational summary.

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For additional copies of current and past issues visit
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Volume 10, 2013

Editor’s Note

This issue is dedicated to the men and women in our armed services...Past and present.

They often sit alone, staring out of a window that we often do not and cannot see. They bear unfair burdens that they fearfully may not share. They often sit alone, staring out of a window that we often do not and cannot see. They bear unfair burdens that they fearfully may not share.

They are seldom talked about without judgment, opinions and inaccurate information. We assume and guess at their reasons why. We often choose to judge them according to our values and what we think is right—forgetting they are flesh and blood just like us. They are rarely given a voice to educate us on who, what, where and why they were there and where they are now.

They are among us, often quiet, hurting, traumatized, lonely, disillusioned and misunderstood. They have seen horrors we cannot imagine, isolation from home and family we may not have been able to have withstood and too often...dreams deferred as they are forgotten much too quickly. Let us listen as they tell their stories on the pages of “Expressions in Recovery”

Gil Gadson
Still
It’s been so many years, but it’s still like yesterday in my mind. It’s scary that I can go back there so easily and so quickly. People wonder why I get so angry and short patient. If they had something inside eating at them for years. I’d like to see how they handle it before they talk about me. I don’t wanna’ be this way. I wake up some mornings just angry at who I am now and where I’m at…

Keith Mickers

Nothing to prove
I was thinking in something to prove to myself, to family and just people in general and then once I got there, I realized that This was about life and death. The weird thing was that the thought of going to fight wasn’t what scared me the most. It was the people around me who had all kinds of different reasons for being there. It was the different looks in their eyes that scared me. There were those who couldn’t wait to fight. They had romantic visions of medals being pinned to their chests and coming home a hero. But I saw the ones who went home missing things and coming home feeling like a stranger.

Karen Hawkinson

My Father
My father could be terrifying. He was also a totally clean, I’m always neat and pressed. I told a sergeant once that order that was instilled in me. My room is always set of rules that are designed to keep you alive and strong. It’s been many years since I left the Army but I still have that order that was instilled in me. My room is always clean, I’m always neat and pressed. I told a sergeant once that he always looked like he never sat down because his clothes never had a wrinkle or were out of place. He looked at me very seriously and said “Son, whenever you step out in public, you are presenting yourself to the world. never forget that son. How you present yourself has everything to do with how you are treated and respected.

There are a lot of negative things I could say, but I choose not to. The Army gave me dignity no matter what and I will always be grateful for that.

Anthony Jordan

Sometimes I wanna’ go back
Sometimes, I wanna’ go back. I wanna’ go back where there was honor, a code, sacrifice and real courage. I miss walking alongside men who didn’t hesitate. men who’s yes was yes and their no was no. I miss people who kept their word and you could depend on them. Other stuff just didn’t matter, we had each other’s backs. When someone was afraid , you understood it and we still pushed on. Things here get complicated and stupid sometimes.

I also miss the people over there sometimes. Sometimes we were treated like we were special and different. I remember Rambo saying in his movie that he could drive million dollar equipment over there but here he can’t get nothing and most of all, no respect. I don’t wanna’ die but sometimes I wish I was back there instead of here it was simpler and back there I felt like a man.

Wayne Collins

They don’t get it
When I try to talk to people about being a soldier, all they can focus on is whether it was right or wrong. They miss the whole idea of order, of having a regimen and having a set of rules that are designed to keep you alive and strong.

Kimberly Winyard

40 years
PTSD, drug abuse and homelessness, that was my life for 40 years. I left the service in 1976. When I came home, I came home feeling deserted, betrayed and let down. I went in the service clean and came back with a monkey on my back… Here it begins.

Due to my addiction, I stole, I lied , and I cheated on myself and my family and burned every bridge I had. They disowned me. I ended up alone, homeless, broke and with a raging heroin habit as well as my PTSD. In those days there was no awareness, recognition or name for PTSD. I saw many others like me who were homeless, suffering and were veterans too. It seemed to me that back then, most of the homeless I met and saw were veterans and there was nothing in place at that time to help any of them.

Today, in 2013, I’ve been clean for two years. My biggest regret is in knowing I carried my family with me through my addiction and episodes. They still don’t really trust me. That hurts but I’m learning to accept that only my consistent positive actions will win their trust.

I’m currently at Impact Services, I’m going back to college for Business Administration and also to get a degree in the social work field. In all actuality, I hope I end up as a counselor, a Peer Specialist and/or a Recovery Coach. I believe God kept me here this long for a reason.

Now my job is to find out why
John Tomys

Still a Soldier
If you ever notice, there is a dynamic amongst those who’ve for periods of time returning home, silence and isolation was forced upon us due to our experiences. We walk the streets, ride the buses and trains and listen as people discuss lives that we once had that are so far removed. We listen as people talk about trivial things and complain about politics, social ill, bills ,their children, their mares and money all relevant issues, however, in our minds, most of their concerns are trivial and petty because our daily experiences in service was pure survival. Imagine going through a day with your primary concern being not walking on a land mine and losing your legs or life. Imagine acquiring a fear of friendship because that friend could possibly die at any moment while at the same time being responsible not only for your life but his life too.

I am now a Peer Services Coordinator and a coordinator for Taking Recovery to the Streets for The Department Of Behavioral Health and Intellectual Disabilities.

I’ve met others who were in service and we always discussed the challenges of readjusting, we discussed how our worldview has changed. how were in places where people were concerned with simply acquiring fresh water, simple shelter and a bite to eat. We would talk of how blessed we are in America, in spite of our view of current politics or lack of care and understanding.

We spoke of how people called us heroes, and we would smile but beneath that smile we were remembering our true heroes, the ones who were maimed and disabled and the ones who gave the ultimate sacrifice, his or her life…to us, they are the true heroes.

My life these days revolve around helping others. In this, I have found purpose, I have found fulfillment. I can actually bring things to fruition and feel a feeling of true accomplishment. And in doing this, I can still be a soldier. A soldier fighting the war against the personal ills that may plague each and every one of us…each and every day.

Jimmy Members

Feature Stories

Angry too long
I had a very abusive childhood. I can’t even remember how many severe and brutal beatings I received. I now know that this was the beginning of my anger. Fortunately, when I was still young a stranger rescued me and took me under his wing. The only problem was that he was a collector for some shady people and he did hit his job well. He proceeded to teach me the fine art of violence.

At the age of seventeen, American hostages were taken in Iran. I got this romantic notion in my head that I would join the service. go to Iran, rescue the hostages, kill everybody else and die a hero. Of course things didn’t work out that way. I arrived drank my first day in the service. The sergeant promptly made me do pushups from the moment I got there until, as he stated, all that liquor was out of me.

After that, I dove into all the required trainings and actually excelled. I developed into one of the best trained soldiers they had. despite the fact that I was getting into fights all the time. I was picked for a special unit called S.E.I.E.R., which stood for Survival, Escape, Extract and Recover.

While in Germany, my addiction to alcohol took a frightening foothold. After being in the army for two years, I was discharged.

In the years since, I’ve been in straight jackets and restrained in all kinds of ways. I’ve been in rehabilitation at least 12 times. I’ve been arrested over 40 times and I can never count all the fights, cuts, stabs and bruises that I got and gave.

In 2012, I went to a program where I started learning a whole lot of new things. I met people who just really cared about what was happening to me.

I remember the process of me beginning to heal. I was told by my therapist to call my mother and forgive her for all the abuse. This was supposed to help free me from all the anger and pain that I carried because of her extreme abuse. I called her and before I could say anything to her, she proceeded to tell me all the reasons she had done bad things and abused me the way she did. She laid out all of her history and bared all of her shortcomings.

Sadly, I don’t believe she ever got to know what she did that day. That was when my healing began, however it didn’t do me much good.

From there I came to where I am now at Impact Services, I’ve been clean 10 months now and I’ve gotten to the root of my anger and my addictions. I’ve developed a great relationship with my children and grandchildren.

My dream now is to retire from the roofing business, move to Florida, get a little house, buy a little boat and just go fishing with my children and grandchildren…that’s all I want.

Dave C. Dunn
Still here…..

I volunteered to go into the army. My favorite uncle died in the military, so my cousin, my brother and I all joined up together. I had already done ROTC in high school so I knew how to march and drill already and basic training was easy. I hadn’t even finished high school.

Things in the army were going okay until after I had been there awhile, and an incident happened that would snowball into a life-changing event. Some of my fellow soldiers attempted to rape a young woman I knew. I intervened and saved her. Initially we were all going to keep it quiet until my fellow soldier threaten me. That angered me besides what they had actually attempted so I told my captain. He called someone to address what had happened. There was a court martial and sentences were given out.

Needless to say, I had to get transferred. I was asked where I wanted to go and I chose Germany. I was sent to the worst assignment that we all had to work under which was often outside in knee-deep snow. Things got to a point where I knew I had to leave. I found a statute which enabled me to get out. However, the reason I gave was...” I was severely depressed: anxiety had set in along with the drugs as I tried to forget. No honor or respect came until a decade later. And it came from people who actually knew nothing about Vietnam. We marched in what was to me hopeless parades. To me it was a joke. And even then I knew I’d never be the same young man who went in as a teenager. The hurt, anger and depression are still here waiting. It’s just not right that a man or woman in his or her later years should still have to go through things that were not their fault in the first place and lose their youth.

One of the fortunate ones

I initially went into the service with huge vivid dreams of travel and adventure. The whole idea was very exciting. Even today my actual memories of the adventures I had, and the different places in the world I went to being so far away from home. The only things I didn’t like were the early mornings before the sun was up and the constant atmosphere of being ordered around. I was 16 when I went in, bright-eyed and full of wonder. I guess on some relatively small level, I may have forever been changed, but only as to discipline, order and focus. I left the service seeing it as a good experience and basically it was...but I was a kid.

Today, I still carry those good personal memories but they are often drowned out by the way I see the world now. I see the ones who never talk about it. I see their anger, their pain and their loss. I see those that are ignored and forgotten and I see mostly that I was one of the fortunate ones. I found my life long faith and purpose when I first came home wondering why, feeling guilty all the time and was waiting. It’s just not right that a man or woman in his or her later years should still have to go through things that were not their fault in the first place and lose their youth.

I found a statute which enabled me to get out. However, the damage was done. All these years since I left the services, I’ve suffered in numerous ways. I’ve suffered from different types of physical damage, insomnia, depression and anxiety.

It’s now 2013. I’m still dealing with all these things every day and I’m constantly seeking better care. All I can do is remain hopeful and never quit.

Richard D. Bolton

Even still

Barley 8 and scared to death when the draft notice came. So many know nothing of the fact that there was a time that there wasn’t a choice as to whether you wanted to go into the service or not. You were drafted at the tender age of 18. I reported, was processed and the next thing I knew, I was uniform. I didn’t know anyone and nobody knew me. Then I learned how to kill and not be killed myself. I was terrified.

Within weeks I lost all contact with the outside world in terms of life and living...completely. Being here was transforming me and I made many mistakes and then I went AWOL, I was brought back, retained and shipped to a foreign land to battle in a war that to this day, I never understood. When I came home from this internationally unpopular war, I was called a murderer, a baby killer and made to feel ashamed forever for wearing a uniform. No one talked to me: there were no fair discussions and no parade. There wasn’t even honor and recognition from family and friends. All I had was a GI bill. that’s it.

I came home wondering why, feeling guilty all the time and with bad habits. People were talking of starting a new life. I was thinking “ with what?” I was severely depressed: anxiety had set in along with the drugs as I tried to forget. No honor or respect came until a decade later. And it came from people who actually knew nothing about Vietnam. We marched in what was to me hopeless parades. To me it was a joke. And even then I knew I’d never be the same young man who went in as a teenager. The hurt, anger and depression are still here waiting. It’s just not right that a man or woman in his or her later years should still have to go through things that were not their fault in the first place and lose their youth.

Jose Torres

Imagine

There are things in my head that won’t go away. I’ve had therapy and medicine, each and every day. I got memories of places that were not mine. Hidden meanings and faces, that I can’t even find. I got illusions and delusions of where I am now. I cause everyone around me just don’t know how to listen and imagine where I’ve been. They sit scared and confused, not knowing where to begin. So listen.

Imagine strange faces and places, in a land not your own. Imagine walking for miles, but not headed home. Imagine battling in a field of thouands...

...to my soul. Where are the friends and men that I thought I’d have to the very end.

Maria Ramos

Talent, ability, truth and the beauty of expression reside in every facet of life. The human condition be it good or bad, has always been shown through mediums such as art, writing, singing, poetry and speaking. The following pieces exhibit the innermost thought of those who wish to share...
THE LAST WORD

I HAVE ONLY SCRATCHED THE SURFACE. When I asked men and women to share their feelings about being in the armed services, there was an avalanche of responses and I got the same thing everywhere I went from our men and women in service. They all felt like the populace has no clue to how they really feel, what they really want and what it’s like after coming home.

I’ve known quite a few people, my father included, who were in the different branches of service and I thought I knew a few things. Talking to the men in this issue has left me with another mission and another insight. These men and women are among us and for the most part are being ignored. I have found that in the final analysis, their politics, yours, mine and ours, do not matter at all in relationship to what they’ve given which some have adequately called the ultimate, and for some… final sacrifice.

So many of these brave men and women have become silent and resolved in the belief that either no one will or can care or no will truly ever listen and address the things in their heart and mind. For those of us who have never been in their shoes, we must open our hearts with an empathy as never before. Another great thing I learned was that many of these individuals had tragic, unfair and problematic lives before they went into the service. Some went due to poverty, abuse, incarceration, dreams, hopes, glory, family tradition and the dreaded draft system just to name a few.

Many came back to more problems than when they went in and came back emotional prisoners due to physical, spiritual and economic difficulties and setbacks.

These are our mothers and fathers, our sisters and daughters, our grandparents, our sons and brothers, our uncles, nieces and nephews and those that we just choose to care for and love.

And every last one of them need us and they need us now.

Ask around. You’ll be shocked at how many people around you were in the armed forces and are suffering alone and not talking.

Let’s start listening............................Thank you

Gil Gadson,
Editor
Expressions In Recovery