

Quaker House Newsletter

Front-Line Peace Witness Since 1969

February 2005

Fayetteville, NC www.quakerhouse.org

Chuck Fager, Director

COPING WITH THE PERSONAL & FAMILY COSTS OF WAR

A special report by "Joanna," a Quaker social worker/therapist whose practice is located near a large Army Base

Since the soldiers began returning from the Iraq war at the turn of the year, my therapy practice has been inundated with a variety of problems that come from the soldiers' experiences in this war. Chuck asked me to write about what I am seeing.

One result that all therapists expected was PTSD, post traumatic stress disorder. Symptoms may include nightmares, flashbacks (even reenactment), disturbed sleep and hyper vigilance. This can be caused by a variety of incidents, from life threatening experience for the soldiers themselves to the experience of a good friend or buddy being injured or killed.

But many soldiers I've seen have PTSD symptoms due to the inhuman things that they had to do in this war:

One was forced by his superior to run over a woman and child trying to stop a convoy on a road where many convoys were attacked.

Another shot into a crowd that contained women and children and saw children die.

Another was attacked by a kid he had befriended and given food to; then he had to kill the boy to save his own life.

One NCO had nightmares of watching two of his soldiers being blown up when they picked up what turned out to be a live bomb, on the orders of an officer who was collecting booty for his "trophy room." This NCO, a career soldier, then lost faith in the military when he was forced to lie about the incident to protect the officer.

Even jobs that some thought were "safe" from direct fire or war were not safe from this type of experience. One soldier in communications was stringing lines when he and his partner ran into an Iraqi soldier in a bunker.

They hollered at him to get out, but he didn't. Although he didn't actually raise his weapon to them, he continued holding it loosely, and the soldier shot him, again under orders. Then he was wracked by guilt that the Iraqi soldier hadn't understood, might have been saved if he had acted differently, that the



Showing the Flag at our 2004 peace rally.

March 19, 2005 – Come To Fayetteville

Join the largest peace march & rally in the Southeast! Last year, on March 20, 2004, we helped organize the largest peace rally in Fayetteville since the Vietnam years, calling for "Real Support for the Troops—Bring Them Home Now!"

Unfortunately, the war is still going on, so we are calling for all peace advocates to join together here on march 19 to repeat the call.

This year's rally will give special voice to veterans, military families, and resisters. We'll also have music and activities for kids.

For more information, click the link on our website:
www.quakerhouse.org

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PTSD caused by this type of thing seems to be more difficult to treat, more difficult to recover from than the usual war experience of fire fights, because the soldiers feel they have lost an important part of themselves and fear that they are damaged permanently by behaving against their core beliefs.

The violence of war creates violence at home when soldiers return. They most noticeable evidence of this is the dramatic increase in domestic violence, even the killings of spouses, since **More on page 2 >>**

GI Rights Hotline 2004: Another Record Year

Final figures for the GI Rights Hotline show that calls to this counseling network totaled 30487 in 2004, a new high.

The total for 2003 was 28822.

Quaker House counselors handled 5925 Hotline calls, or 19.4 %. This total is down from 2003, due mainly to our counselors' taking family leave in late summer when their baby was due. Quaker House also handles many more non-Hotline calls and contacts by email and letter.

Figures for January were not yet in at press time, but call volume since the holidays has been very heavy.

New On Our Website: A Counter-Recruiting Self-Study Course, for those who want to do something about pervasive military recruiting aimed at American youth. Find it at:
<http://quakerhouse.org/counter-recruiting-02.htm>

Therapist Report, cont.

the soldiers started returning. The soldiers tell me that the killing of spouses at military bases is at an all time high, but I have no concrete evidence to this effect, and the Army is pretty quiet about it. But I am sure seeing a lot of domestic violence in the couples here.

Connected to this in my mind is the anger. Most of the soldiers returning from Iraq or Afghanistan are angry. As a therapist, I have found many "reasons" for the anger - anger at the administration for getting them into such a war; anger at the Iraqis for trying to kill the soldiers who came to save them; anger at people over them for asking them to do dangerous and sometimes useless activities; anger at the administration for not just letting the soldiers go ahead and "finish" the war, etc.

But above all, anger appears to be a necessity to staying alive in Iraq. It is part of the ever vigilant watching, not knowing where the next attack will come from. However, they cannot simply turn off the anger when they return. Spouses and children often complain that another person returned from the war, that they do not even recognize this angry, short tempered person who seems to have lost capacity for humor, empathy and love. They come to me for marital or family therapy, but I often have to see the soldier alone first to work on the anger.

Even if they were not clinically traumatized or meet the definition of PTSD, the experience of being a soldier in Iraq seems to be traumatic on an emotional or spiritual level. This is also isolating in that the soldiers feel that their spouses, wives, families do not understand them and stick with their war buddies who shared the experience. Some individuals are able to let go the anger, get over it faster than others. Some still hang onto the anger and are now being redeployed to Iraq. I am frightened of what they will be like when they return next time.

More Addictions—Women At Risk

One reaction to the war came as quite a surprise to me – a dramatic increase in sexual addiction. A year or more deployment is a long time to be away from family, wives and girlfriends. There are few opportunities for sexual encounters in Iraq. So many soldiers got onto the internet for pornographic sites and satisfied their needs with masturbation. But then they became addicted, which means that they become totally absorbed in their own orgasm to the detriment of interaction with another.

This was not an area of expertise for me, so I have had to learn rapidly. All addictions end up in social withdrawal, but sex addiction begins with it. The addict cannot have a meaningful emotional relationship much less sexual relationship.

Recovery from this takes time and therapy. It begins with the acknowledgment that the individual is addicted, and this is a difficult first step for many. We are trying to get a Sex Addicts Anonymous group started in this area to help. But many marriages are ending before the soldiers have been treated.

There are reports in the press and by the soldiers of American female soldiers in Iraq being raped by American male soldiers. I have no idea of the frequency of this and have not treated any women who suffered rape. But I am seeing numerous female soldiers who hated Iraq in large part because of the way they were treated by American men, and Iraqi men too – constantly stared at and watched. As I understand them, it is like being treated as an object all the time.

One woman walked past a mess tent and described what it felt like when everyone in the tent (males) stopped talking and turned to watch her pass by in silence. She was in her BDU's (Battle Dress Uniform), not dressed or outfitted provocatively. Most of the women I have seen complain of unwanted approaches, close to force, by American soldiers, often men of higher rank. When they complained, nothing happened. So the women took care of each other, all going to the bathroom with one person who needed to go for her protection. One woman who is readying for redeployment told me she is taking several cans of mace with her.

This experience has also been felt by female officers. One West Point graduate said that it changed her life, that she had decided to leave the Army after having planned a career in it. Indeed, she felt that she would require years to be able to trust men again, as well as herself. She

An Email to Quaker House

whom this may concern:

I'm a pfc in the marine corp who just finished basic training. I'm on leave from basic training and I have decided that the military life is not a life for me. I just got married on New Years Eve and I know that I could never go to war and kill someone else or even leave my wife for long periods of time. I was told by other people not to go back to SOI [School of Infantry] training on Jan. 18th wait 6mo. til they title me as a deserter and then turn my self in. Would this be a smart thing to do? Your help is greatly needed and will be highly considered in my decision thanks for your time.

P.S. I have prior service experience in the US Army reserves I don't know if that will play a part in your reply or not! thanks so much for your time.

PFC -----

was in charge of a detail to rebuild something, maybe a school. They had Iraqis working with them. But the Iraqi men refused to acknowledge her orders, so she had to have a male NCO or even private instruct them although she was the one who spoke the language. She reports getting angrier than she has ever been in her life, even fantasizing about shooting these unarmed Iraqis in her fury. This scared her and made her realize how dangerous the situation was for her mental health.

Families At Risk Too

Families have been damaged in more ways than I can describe. Many young soldiers marry in haste before being sent to war. They fantasize about wife and home their year away and carry on romantic communications by phone email and regular mail. When they return, they find an all too real scenario – a wife who may have spent all of their extra duty pay or had an affair or had a baby. Even career soldiers with previous deployments to Korea, Germany, etc. find this return much more difficult than previous ones.

As sad as the break up of marriages is, the very worst thing I see is the deployment of both parents and the child or children being sent to various relatives, often separated. One mom who just returned from Iraq brought in her three year old daughter because the child was totally out of control and ignored her completely.

Well, her behavior was understandable. To the child, this was a complete stranger who just picked her up at grandma's and started telling her what to do. This child had spent less than two months of her life with both parents and less than 8 months with either parent separately. She had been raised by what must have been a bewildering constellation to her – mom and dad, then mom, then grandma, then dad for a month before he decided he couldn't cope alone, then an aunt, then grandma again, then another aunt, then grandma and finally, mom.

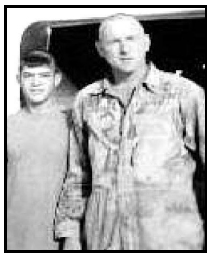
That child probably hasn't had a chance to form normal attachments necessary for emotional growth. As I began to educate the mom on attachment needs for child development, she cried and realized what damage she and her husband had caused their daughter. She decided to try to get out of the Army, but I don't know what became of her after I saw them the few times we had approval for. The child calmed down, had gotten better. But I still dream of her – this is the therapist's PTSD or what is called secondary trauma.

As a Friend, I have always been opposed to war because I believed that we do not have the right to extinguish that piece of God in others. After my experience as a therapist for soldiers, I understand George Fox's opposition to war much better. He pointed out the damage to the self, the soul, that occurs when we take another life. We humans pay a terrible personal price when we do that. I pray that these soldiers can recover their humanity, their belief in themselves and their God.



This billboard, which hovers above Bragg Blvd. near Ft. Bragg NC, expresses a sentiment that we agree with: Kids DO need heroes. And while it is traditional to look to the military for heroes, today we find these heroes marching to a very different drummer. Here is a gallery of some of today's new military heroes .

A Parade of the New Heroes for Peace: Support These Troops - Stop the War!
A Tribute From Quaker House: www.quakerhouse.org – Please Copy and Post



Sgt. Kevin Benderman, Ft. Stewart GA.
 Refused a second deployment to Iraq. Awaiting court martial.

WHAT ABOUT CANADA?

There is a sharp difference of opinion among those who deal with military dissenters over the wisdom of seeking refuge in Canada. On one side, J.E. McNeil, staff attorney with the Center on Conscience & War, calls exile an “urban myth,” because laws there are more restrictive than during the Vietnam War. The full article is at: <http://nisbco.org/UAA/09232004.htm>
 A very different view is offered by Gerry Condon, who spent several years in Canada as a Vietnam-era deserter.



Pablo Paredes,
 refused orders to board his Navy ship, carrying Marines to Iraq. Awaiting court martial.



Brandon Hughey
 left Fort Hood Texas, where he was training for duty in Iraq, and sought refuge in Canada.

Acknowledging that regulations are now tighter there, he argues that “. . . it is still possible for war objectors to come to Canada,” and asserts that “long-term prospects [for exiles] for remaining in Canada are quite good, though not guaranteed.” His article is at: <http://www.join-snafu.org/canada.htm>

Jimmy Massey
 served with the Marines in Iraq. He came home to denounce war crimes and torture, and battle PTSD.



Joel Klimkewicz,
 and his wife Tomima. He refused to pick up a weapon, offered to clear landmines in Iraq unarmed. Now serving seven months in the Marine brig.



Carlos Mejia. refused a second deployment to Iraq. Serving a year in the Army brig.



Jeremy Hinzman. Refused orders to Iraq, sought refuge in Canada. His refugee case is pending

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February 2005 – INSIDE:

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Quaker Chuckles

Anger Management

Friends nowadays often berate themselves for not knowing how to deal with anger. In an earlier time they did not have this problem, as is shown by the comment made by one Friend to another in a moment of heat:

“Obadiah, thee knows that I do not believe in calling anyone names. But, Obadiah, if the chief of police came and said to me, ‘I want thee to bring me the biggest liar in this town,’ I would come to thee, Obadiah, and I would lay my hand on thy shoulder and I would say to thee, ‘Obadiah, the police chief wants to see thee.’”

Plain Speaking Defined

During World War Two, Philadelphia Friend William Bacon Evans, took a carload of Quaker conscientious objectors from a Civilian Public Service camp to pay a visit to the nearby county jail. The warden was surprised to see the large group, and asked where they were from.

Evans replied that they had been at Quarterly Meeting, and added “We would be grateful if thee would let us talk with thy prisoners.”

“What’s that?” said the warden. “What did you say?” Evans repeated his request, but the warden was just as confused the second time. Then Evans grinned and said, “Oh, thee see, we are Quakers and we have a testimony for plain language.”

“Oh yeah?” retorted the warden, “Well, your language will have to be a whole lot plainer than that if you expect me to understand you.”

Out of the Closet

It was also Bacon Evans who rose to speak once at Haverford College, at a Fifth Day morning Meeting, which all students, Friends and otherwise, were required to attend. Many students chafed at this requirement, and showed their displeasure by reading newspapers, making rude noises and so forth. His message was brief, and long remembered: “Two skeletons were hanging in a closet. One said to the other, if we had any guts, we’d get out of here.”

Your tax-deductible donations make the work of Quaker House possible.
Have you considered including Quaker House in your estate planning?
