

Editorial Note

The general focus of this issue of the Journal is on the secondary impact of traumatic events. The issue also includes an introduction to a new way of helping others recover from primary as well as secondary traumatic stress symptoms. The final article in this issue is about the Green Cross Foundation, the non-profit organization that owns and is responsible for this Journal and that provides support for the Academy of Traumatology.

I would like to share a story about my first encounter with secondary traumatic stress reactions and the start of my career as a researcher. It provides an appropriate background for this issue.

In April 1971 I participated in a demonstration against the American war in Vietnam as an ex-Marine who served in that war, as did John Kerry who co-lead the demonstration. (U.S. Senator John Kerry is expected to win the Democratic Party's nomination for President to run against George W. Bush in November of this year.) Visit my web site to read more about it and my experiences at <http://mailer.fsu.edu/~cfigley/CRF/VVAW71/Story.html>.

I was a graduate student at Penn State at the time and on full fellowship. It had been over six years since I landed in Hue, South Vietnam with the 3rd Marine Amphibious Force and four years since my leaving the Marine Corps to complete an undergraduate degree (first at Ohio State and then the University of Hawaii, from which I graduated in 1970).

For the first time in my life I was participating in a peace demonstration and potentially breaking the law through acts of non-violent dissent. My first and last effort was on the steps of the Supreme Court. All forty of us were sitting on the steps as two school buses marked Park Police showed up with around twenty Park Police. They started at the bottom of the steps with those just joining us. Each vet was handcuffed, photographed and led to the bus. It was at that moment that I ended my tour as a war demonstrator. There was no way I was going to get arrested. After all, I had to complete my master's thesis on time!

Soon I found that my skills as a demonstrator and stomach for protest served the anti-war effort far less effectively than my abilities as a researcher. Though still learning how to be a social scientist, I feel that my career began on that day. On the same day as this revelation I was asking combat vets about their lives and how they had been affected by the war.

The first vet I interviewed was a corpsman assigned to a combat unit in the First Marine Division. After asking his permission to interview him for research purposes, he told me about his enormous responsibilities to the wounded and injured: how he had many feelings of regret, shame, and guilt about those who died under his care—no matter the number of lives he saved. He had absorbed the pain and suffering of his patients during the war and, for the most part, he had remained burdened by it since then. I did not recognize at the time how different his war experiences were from the ones of those who had been directly engaged in combat. Only later did I determine that what he suffered from most at that time was secondary traumatic stress or "compassion fatigue" -- the distress of caring for those in harms way, the secondary traumatic

stress of helping the suffering and the sense of obligation to do more when there was nothing else one could do. Thus my career as an academic researcher and my life-long interest in trauma started with its secondary effects and only after my failing as a peace demonstrator.

In the first article of Volume 10, Issue 1, *Secondary Traumatic Stress Response in Fire Fighters in the Aftermath of 9/11/2001*, Randal D. Beaton, Shirley Murphy, L. Clark Johnson, and Marcus Nemuth report on the results of a study that is quite timely. Just prior to the terrorist attack in New York City in 2001, they were surveying a cohort of urban fire fighters in their home state, personnel who were attending a multi-day event. The survey focused on post-traumatic stress reactions (PTSR) in fire fighters. The investigators returned to the same venue to survey a similar group of fire fighters after the attack on New York where 343 New York City fire fighters died in the line of duty. The investigators predicted that they would find significantly higher rates of PTSR after the death of the New York City firemen than in the pre-attack cohort. Their findings not only illustrate the esprit de corps among professional fire fighters in the United States, but also represent the enormous secondary impact of the 9-11 attacks nationally.

The second article in the issue, *The Relationship Between Combat Exposure and the Transfer of Trauma-like Symptoms to Offspring of Veterans*, by John M. Suozzi and Robert W. Motta, also focuses on secondary traumatic stress reactions. Here, the authors investigate how the trauma first experienced by a father is secondarily experienced by his children. As with the fire fighters, the grown children of Vietnam War veterans report significantly more secondary traumatic stress reactions among those with fathers reporting high combat intensity, compared to children with fathers reporting low combat intensity. Even so, the investigators found the offspring to be relatively well adjusted despite their fathers' problems with PTSD and other mental health challenges. Also the study confirms the utility of the emotional Stroop test as an additional test for traumatic stress symptoms and the subtle transfer of emotional effects from a traumatized parent to his child. This study suggests an entire program of research focusing on the crossover of traumatic stress reactions first seen in parents and later found in their children. Investigation is needed into the transfer of traumatic experiences and reactions to the children of those experiencing prolonged exposure to death and destruction—both human caused (e.g., the Holocaust, extended family violence) and naturally caused (e.g., massive flooding with temporary relocation).

The third article of this issue of the Journal is titled *Numerical Distraction Therapy: Initial Assessment of A New Treatment for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder*, written by John S. Isaacs. Isaacs suggests a new approach to helping people suffering from PTSD and related symptoms such as secondary traumatic stress reactions discussed in the previous articles. He presents evidence for the utility of a new approach to desensitizing stress reactions. The approach, numerical distraction therapy (NDT) involves “dual attention” as a therapeutic mechanism in helping clients change their visual recollections of traumatic events and diminish the intensity of their negative feelings associated with traumatic memories. Isaacs discusses NDT in terms of other therapies being used to treat PTSD and suggests directions for future research.

The final article, *From Necessity to Reality: The History, Philosophy, and Programs of the Green Cross Foundation*, by Charles R. Figley, discusses an institution that cares about all

the questions addressed in every issue of *Traumatology*. The Green Cross Foundation has provided a home for the Journal since 1997 and continues to support it financially. The author traces the state of the art in the field of traumatology since 1997 and reviews the Foundation's response to the necessity of supporting both researchers and practitioners.

As I write this I am at the University of Kuwait with the support of the Fulbright Fellowship as part of my one year sabbatical from Florida State University. I have learned a great deal. I am more aware of the complexities of both the U.S. military's role in the region and U.S. foreign policy that shapes this role. Certainly this Journal, its illustrious Editorial Board, and its contributors and staff would seem to have little to do with either of these roles. However, the field of traumatology has an important role in understanding fear, hatred, injustice, honor, pride, prejudice, and other factors that contribute to political instability and human suffering. As an international journal of innovation, *Traumatology* must attract and publish works that address these and other constructs that help define the issues leading to such horrific acts as terrorism and war. It is critical that the Journal continue to generate greater understanding of the immediate and long-term consequences of traumatic events to improve the care of the traumatized, thereby enabling them to be resilient in their recovery.

We welcome Extenza as our Internet publisher and thank Pat Casey, who arranged the match and Emma Cass who lead a crack team of specialists to shift the contents of the journal to their web site at <http://www.extenza-eps.com/extenza/contentviewing/viewJournal.do?journalId=241>. Peter Shefler, the Web Master for the Journal, coordinated the move. We look forward to a long and fruitful relationship. Now we need excellent contributors. Guidelines for contributors are at our website, <http://www.traumatologyacademy.org/Journal/ContributorsInstructions.html>. We would like to receive your comments. Write to either the Assistant Editor, Patricia Johnson, (mailto:pljohnson_traumatology@earthlink.net) or to me (<mailto:CharlesFigley@Earthlink.Net>).

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Editor
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