

SMY
Books

STEVEN M. YEDINAK

DREAMSCAPE

American Veterans Share Post War Trauma

One Morning on a lonely trail ... NVA LT DI & his patrol hit our ambush. Our Claymore Mine spewed body-parts high into the trees above. Di's home-made jungle-blade, ID crudely etched; cheap canteen; and archaic Mas-36 French bolt-action rifle now live in perpetuity via an act of war more suited for Rod Serling & The Twilight Zone. Our Bodes ... without my knowledge ... gathered the gear for safe-keeping!. This episode haunted me for 25 years.

DREAMSCAPE

American Veterans Share Post War Trauma



STEVEN M. YEDINAK

DreamScape Review by Colonel John Hayes

Having first-hand knowledge about the author's highly classified *Mobile Guerrilla Operations* in 1966 - '67 Vietnam, I was not surprised to read his most recent account of *Veterans willing to share their closely-held ... emotionally-driven ... descriptions of their own combat experiences*.

I was assigned to IICTZ Vietnam when *Task Force 957: Mobile Guerrilla* was formed. Two missions [*Black Box* and *Blackjack 31*] became the hallmark of the author's first title [*Hard To Forget: An American with the Mobile Guerrilla Force in Vietnam*] published by Random House in 1998. In *HTF ... Steve talks openly ... divulging his innermost thoughts and feelings* about the *horrific nightmares* he endured for a period of twenty-five years. As ...

the real war starts when the fighting stops!

Towards the end of his 26-year Army career, Steve and I worked together for three years at the *Army Training Support Center [ATSC]*, Fort Eustis, Virginia and have remained close friends for over 35 years. When Steve retired in 1989, I was honored to stand by his side as the band played our favorite *Special Forces [Green Beret]* theme song.

But that was then!

DreamScape features the *Significant War Events [SWE]* and/or *Nightmares [NM]* of combat veterans from four war eras [*Vietnam ... Gulf War ... Iraq ... Afghanistan*]. Formulated over a *six year period*, the *author personally interacted* with each Veteran to ensure not only a *comfortable commitment* but ... perhaps ... an *open-door to a healing process*.

Reading the *Self-Written Service Profiles* and seeing the *War & Recent Photos* of the contributors *provided me an inside-view of my own thirty year life in boots*. The *SWE & NM* brought tears to my eyes as I was forced to recall *many of my own inescapable realities of war*. Understand ... *these are real people ... sharing real experiences ... as if neatly-positioned on a couch while paying thousands of dollars to a qualified therapist*.

Both Steve & I were privileged to have worked in Vietnam with **David H. Hackworth [HACK]** and honored to participate in his burial in 2005 Arlington. This tribute as *HACK* is also featured in *DreamScape* as an *element of the author's own recollections*. You won't be disappointed. If you read *Hard to Forget ...* you noticed *HACK'S REVIEW* neatly-placed on the inside **FRONT COVER**. Using *HACK'S* tone and temperament qualifying his critical appraisal of *HTF ...* gives me a *relatively unencumbered evaluation* of *DreamScape*:

Explodes like a grenade!

Couldn't put it down!

John Hayes

A Leg on the Trail

As the *first friendly force* to inhabit *War Zone D* ... trying to fix the coordinates of *NVA Base Camps* ... my *Team of eighteen Cambodians* and I deployed in the dark of night down unmarked trails, weapons at the ready, trying to *smoke out the VC* and learn more about their tactics and techniques.

Just like creek fishing. Move into an area. Set up. Maintain silence. Wait patiently. No luck? Relocate. *I was beginning to think there was little more to learn that night* ... so, about 0100 ... we slogged back towards our *Special Forces Mission Support Site*.

No sightings. No contacts. No unfamiliar noises. Just one foot in front of the other. *Going home.* Raining slightly. Moonlight glistening high over the jungle trees below.

Just a leg on the trail. Wait a minute. *A leg on the trail?* Outside one of the main entrances to our base camp, there was, indeed, a *clean ... naked ... fully distinguishable Caucasian leg ... blood lines still running* ... lying neatly across the jungle trail.

As our training would prophet ... one by one ... *we simply observed what we saw* ... what we knew to be true. *Recorded.* Message received. The *VC of War Zone D* were cleverly transmitting that, indeed, *two can play this game* ... so ... *Go Fuck Yourself!*

The *persistent nightmares* that endured for about twenty years presented the same sharply exact or delimited reproduction of something few humans experience.

Welcome to DreamScape



Traumatic dreams and other significant war events that our veterans ... *Army ... Navy ... Air Force ... Marines ... some suicidal to this day* ... are compelled to share with readers ... *an emotional step towards better mental health and a more-constructive life-style.*

FORWARD

If I only had the words to tell you ...

If you only had the time to understand ...

These iconic words by **Billy Joel** reflect the mental, emotional, temperamental and behavioral conditions of most war veterans. Scarred by missions in a deadly environment, we veterans often exhibit a skewed intellectual process, extravagantly demonstrative emotional health, sharply varying moods and psychologically addicted recourse while trying our best to find common ground within our families, friends and society at large. *No one is immune.*

From intense training with weapons that kill others to first-time actualization on the battlefield, we begin to become another person ... *someone else who may defy description* going forward. On return to the home-front, we begin one of the most difficult journeys of our entire life. If married, *we begin to experience the strain on the most-sacred relationship.* Our children may well ask ... *who's daddy?* Our family and friends ... mostly well-meaning, search for the person known to them before the war started. And, of course, most veterans well-know that *when the fighting stopped, the real war began.* The internal personal investigation into the furthest recesses of our minds ... *hoping against hope we can forget about the war and move-on* ... to *Captain Jack's Special Island* that may provide comfort but is often laced with the need for dangerous drugs and an over-abundance of alcohol ... *just to get through the day.*

Movies like the *Deer Hunter* feature young working-class steel workers who ship-out to Vietnam, only to return to lives unrecognizable and emotionally destructive. Veteran's Health Centers become a final resting place for some. Others live with such indignity as to openly kill others or, with a vengeance, commit suicide as the only option remaining.

The compendium of traumatic dreams and other significant war events was an idea whose time has come. *Obviously not easy reading* ... some of the descriptions of actual war are brutal, disgusting and down-right frightening. But, there are few other options for those of us trying to find purpose in our lives than to *reach-out to others with the only words we know* ... *hoping that you will somehow find the time to understand.*

Introduction

DreamScape American Veterans Share Post War Trauma

Sigmund Freud's discovery that dreams are the means by which the unconscious can be explored revolutionized modern psychology enabling the interpretation and manifestations of conflict within the human psyche. Dreams often enable the hidden fulfillment of unconscious wishes. **War Dreams (Nightmares)** and other **Significant War Events** are a part of the routine price soldiers pay for their participation in the death and destruction of others. But a reminder that *the real war starts when the fighting stops*. A reason why *most soldiers either can't or don't want to talk about the aftermath of their war experiences*.

DreamScape features a compendium of *dreams and other significant war events* that often trigger the physical, mental, emotional and temperamental behavior of those who survive the horrors of the battlefield. In earlier wars (World War I and World War II) soldiers were to have experienced *shell-shock* ... an anomaly that doesn't begin to accurately describe the often insidious nature of combat.

Going forward, practitioners began to more precisely identify the subtle poison that affects the war-torn human mind. **Trauma** ... *any physical damage or emotional wound or shock often having long-lasting effects* ... began to rear its ugly head as the **lexicon** by which veterans were codified. This evolutionary promise lead to a more effectual means by which soldiers were treated.

Currently, **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder ... PTSD** ... *an anxiety disorder associated with serious traumatic events and characterized by such symptoms as guilt about surviving or reliving the trauma in dreams or numbness and lack of involvement with reality or recurring thoughts and images* ... is the recipe within which soldiers are organized and treated.

War veterans were asked ... *volunteered* ... to provide personal, psychological and other relevant information owing to combat, support or service-support missions within a war zone. Participants were also asked to provide up to three relatively short *dreams or other significant war events* that have persisted in memory often causing emotional and/or physical incapacity.

As **DreamScape Author** and two-time **Vietnam Veteran**, I have also volunteered to provide what promises to be for readers a **head-shocking venture** into the *insidious nature of war*.

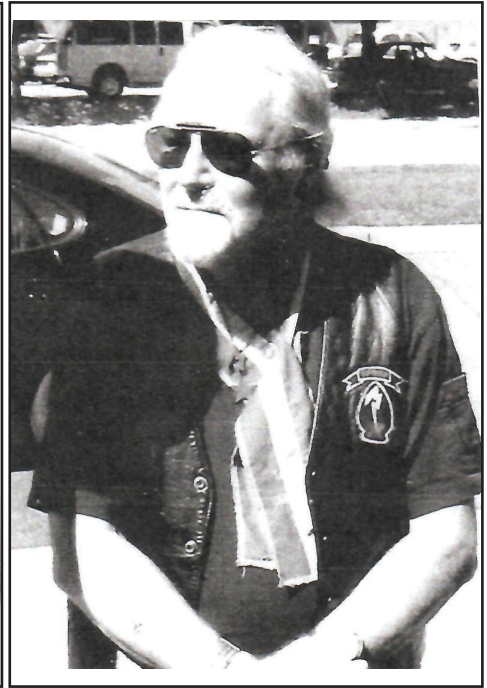
VIETNAM VETERANS SHARE POST WAR TRAUMA

Steven M. Yedinak, United States Army

Steven M. Yedinak commissioned INF upon graduation from **Gonzaga University** (Spokane, WA 1963) and served two **Vietnam** combat tours - one as a **Green Beret** with the **5th SFGA** (1966-'67) and later as **David H. Hackworth's** G-3 Advisor for **MACV Team-50** (1971-'72). **Yedinak** also served **five-years** with the **101st ABN DIV** (Fort Campbell, KY); three years at **LAFB** with the **Army-Air Force Center for Low-Intensity Conflict** with a **TS-SCI Clearance** enabling **covert operations** (1985-'87) in **Central America**. **LTC Yedinak** retired in 1989 at 26 years service. After **Vietnam** (1967-'68) **Yedinak** began to **routinely experience nightmares** and **other significant war events** that triggered **emotional trauma** for 25 years. In 1998, **Random House** published his story **Hard to Forget: An American with the Mobile Guerrilla Force in Vietnam**. **Yedinak** now works with other veterans.



**FOX - 2 @ Duc Phong
FEB 67 after TS OPN BJ-31**



**Yedinak @ Arlington 2005
Memorial David H. Hackworth**

VIETNAM VETERANS SHARE POST WAR TRAUMA

David Whitley

As soon as I landed in **Long Binh**, I was assigned to the *Aero-Rifles*, a *rescue, reconnaissance* and *reactionary* unit. When we were *called-out to respond* to a downed aircraft, or to *assist a Special Forces unit that was in trouble*, we were inserted by *slicks* [Helicopter] *as close to the action as possible*. Our usual *Response Team* was comprised of three Squads. *Army Rangers* also made-up some of our Team. Because of the *nature of our missions*, we were authorized to wear *camouflage fatigues*. In addition, *we carried only weapons and ammo*. In my opinion ... *one of the most valuable assets* to the *Aero-Rifles* were the *Kit Carson Scouts*. These *brave men* were *defectors* from the *North Vietnamese Army [NVA]* who *came-over to the South to fight for the freedom of Vietnam* from a *Communist* takeover ... *despite the knowledge of retribution* they knew their families would face. *I formed close friendships with the few that I knew*. Our *Kit Carson Scouts* *walked point on all of our missions*.



Aero-Rifle Whitley in Southeast Asia



Dave Whitley Photo [Current ... TBD]

DEAD OR ALIVE? [NM]

In 1970 Vietnam, our *Aero-Rifles* were called to come to the aid & support of a Spec-Ops [*Green Beret Team*] that was facing an overwhelming enemy force.

As we neared our insertion site, *we watched as the NVA downed the 2nd helicopter*. As was often the case because of the nature of our “job”, we were *once again late to the party*, so to speak. We had seen the second slick go down as *we raced to the Special Ops Boys*, only to find *two burning shells of what had been minutes before, Huey slicks*.

My squad was first to arrive to see the remains of what had been a *hell of a firefight*. After making sure the area was secure, *we set about the job of collecting bodies ... and parts of bodies ... to put in body bags*. As I looked around, *I noticed a boot sticking-out from behind a nearby tree*. I walked carefully around the tree and was surprised to see one of the *Spec-Ops Boys* sitting there, his back leaning against that big old tree ... *him just staring ahead*. As I got closer, *I saw the perfectly centered hole in his forehead*. Rather than take him prisoner, *the VC had executed him*. His eyes remained open with a *lifeless gaze that haunted me for too many nights and ... for too many years*.

VIETNAMIZATION? WHAT VIETNAMIZATION? [NM]

In 1971 Vietnam, our *Aero-Rifles* were called to come to the aid of a pilot & co-pilot of a downed slick. As it was late in my tour, *I was feeling good ... a short-timer & Vietnamization* had begun. The *South Vietnamese Army was to take-over our missions in the field*. We were confused when we heard the alarm for us to gear-up & assemble at the air strip & board the slicks, where we would hear what our mission was.

One of our slicks had been shot-down by a company of NVA. What happened to Vietnamization, we asked? Told the *SV* were *afraid and had refused to go*, so here we go, approximately 10 - 15 *Aero-Rifles* dropping into a fight with a *Company* [80 - 120] of *NVA*.

After our insertion, *we fought-off the NVA* with the help of other gun-ships. I was one of the first to see the pilot [*Warrant Officer Mortimer*] and it was evident *he had little chance of survival*, having been hit several times.

As a slick overhead dropped a rope & harness to lift him out, *I held his hand*, assuring him we would get him out & to medical help quickly. He was so pale as he looked at me while being lifted-out.

I think *this mission ... along with other similar ones ... were the seeds of my nightmares* consisting of *frustrating scenarios* where I was *tasked to lead civilians through the jungle*, having no weapons & *never quite reaching safety*.

NOT TONIGHT MAMA-SAN [NM]

We [*Aero-Rifles*] were behind cover, *waiting silently for something to happen*. We had been called out to assist in *finding & capturing or killing VC*.

I had my *M-60 [Machine Gun]* locked & loaded & was next to my friend *Craze* [nickname & short for *Crazy*] who was a *Kit Carson Scout*. He had been an *NVA Officer*, but had come over to the *South* to help us fight for a free *Vietnam*. *Craze* tapped me on the arm & pointed to his ear, then pointed towards an area in front of us. *He heard something* that I hadn't & it was headed our way. Seconds later, *a young man carrying a rifle came running towards us*. *Craze* looked at me and said ... *VC! ... VC!* I got up on my knees & *started firing* and in only a second or two, the boy dropped ... *dead as a rock*.

Craze was slapping me on the back, smiling & saying ... *that good!* I was still in an adrenalin rush & *I felt like shouting ... yes!* We went over to make sure he was dead & *he was very dead*. He also looked so young, because he was ... *very young*, probably in his teens.

As I grew older, I often wondered how late his mom & family stayed up that night waiting for his return. *Not tonight ... mama-san ... not ever!*

FINAL THOUGHTS

I've gotten *softer over the years thinking & re-thinking* what I had done in *Vietnam*. That is something you do later on in life, but not when you're in the field because that will get you killed. You just act & react in the field ... *do what you're trained to do*. My only regret was wondering how our *Scouts [Kit Carson Scouts]* felt when the U. S. pulled-out. *Did they feel betrayed?* I'm not a betting man, but I'd wager all I got, *that they do*

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I first met *Dave* about twenty years ago. *He was an inspiration to me from the start*. Not uncharacteristic of we traumatized Veterans, *he scarcely said a word about the details of his wartime experiences*. *Dave* and *I* both live in Newport News, Virginia, and have *access to the Hampton, Virginia Veteran's Administration Medical Center*. *Early-on ... Dave received life-saving treatment at the Hampton VA as a resident of the DOM* with access to *psychologists* and other *mental-health staff*. He credits the facility for helping him to *reverse drug-addiction ... to once again believe in himself ... and to instill in him a purpose he thought he had lost forever*.

Reading his words in *Final Thoughts*, I too have often thought about just how our allies ... *those with whom we fight and die* ... think and feel going forward. Especially Vietnam, where *we won the overwhelming number of military battles* ... but *failed to free South Vietnam* from Communist rule. **Dave** and **Candy** are *dear friends* with whom **Tracy** and **I** often socialize.

Dave is to be congratulated for his role in saving so many *Green Beret* lives. He may now *rest in comfort knowing that ... with his contribution herein ... he is continuing to save the lives of our Veterans ... just in a different way.*

As we continue to interact and socialize as we have for so many years, *he will continue to be one of my heroes.* Two of **Dave's Vietnam Poems** ... *lost in the attic for years* ... appear below.

ANOTHER INSERTION

David Whitley

Another insertion and my gut is tight with fear.
I can smell it, taste it, and feel it ... death is coming here.
Right behind the point ... I step as quietly as I can,
Feeling very scared ... A boy inside the man.

Kneel down quickly ... the Loach radios he's running our way, this VC.
Oh God ... he's running our way alright ... he's coming right to me.
Like my daddy taught me when I was little, and we were hunting game,
I've learned you lead a Gook like you do a rabbit ... it's really all the same.

Death flies from my '60 and flips him in the air.
It was him or me I think ... you know in war, fair is fair.
But it seemed to last an hour, those few seconds when our eyes met,
I was the last thing this boy ever saw ... Damn you ... Damn you ... I can
never forget.

Maybe what I did helped keep off the Wall,
Another American's Name.
But somewhere in Nam that night ... a boy didn't come home and a mother
cried ...
After all ... a mother is still a mother ... just the same.

BACKLOG

WE ARE DREAMSCAPE AND WE WROTE THE WORDS

We wrote the words that make the whole world think
Words by which we Veterans share a common link
We wrote the words that make our loved ones cry
We wrote the words ... we wrote the words

We share our war stories that mean so much to us
Traumatic moments that cause a lifetime of pain
We share our sorrow through both sunshine and rain
We wrote the words ... we wrote the words

We are DreamScape and we wrote the words

From the *jungles* of **Vietnam** ... claiming over 58,000 US lives
Through the **Gulf** ... and on to both **Iraq** and **Afghanistan**
We fought with both courage and determination
We asked for little as this was *our sworn duty* to our country ... *our flag*
Little did we know about the emotional trauma that would last a lifetime

Many of us have been treated for **Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome**
[PTSD]

Many of us are *suicidal* ... *none of us immune to the scars of war*
For the past *five years*, we have *interacted with our author in an important way*

Now ... we **twenty-six War Veterans** ... *openly share* our **Service Profiles** ...

War & Recent Photos ... and, most importantly ...
Our most significant War Events and Nightmares

We ask not for your praise ... only for your understanding

BACKLOG

American War Veterans of Vietnam ... Gulf War ... Iraq ... Afghanistan & Beyond ... have *volunteered to share ... Dreams/Nightmares [NM]* and other *Significant War Events [SWE]* enabling a *better understanding of the personal emotional trauma ... resulting from constant death and destruction experienced on the battlefield.*

As you read through the events that have caused *so much pain ...* over *such a long period of time ...* accept that *when our servicemen and women fight our battles abroad, emotional recovery* is, at best, *tenuous* and, for many, *but a dream.*

Understand that ... as in the **Bible** ... *many were called ... few were chosen!* Many *Potential Contributors* were ... as yet ... *unwilling and/or unable ... to name themselves and their activities* as another step-forward towards emotional recovery. *Sad! But ... Understandable!*

Hats-off to those who did! Many Veterans suffer from *financial dependence, indifferent relationships ... physical and emotional wounds ... aberrant behavior ... mental exhaustion and a don't fuck with me attitude.*

Others are *withdrawn ... hypnotic ... isolationistic ... fearful ...* and *dreadfully-sad. Out at night ... sleeping away the day ... juiced-up ...* and *hoping against hope for retribution.*

Our most-vulnerable veterans are suicidal and, *but for the support of family, friends and our Veteran's Administration,* , would rather *find another option ... Captain Jack's Special Island ... for eternal redemption.*

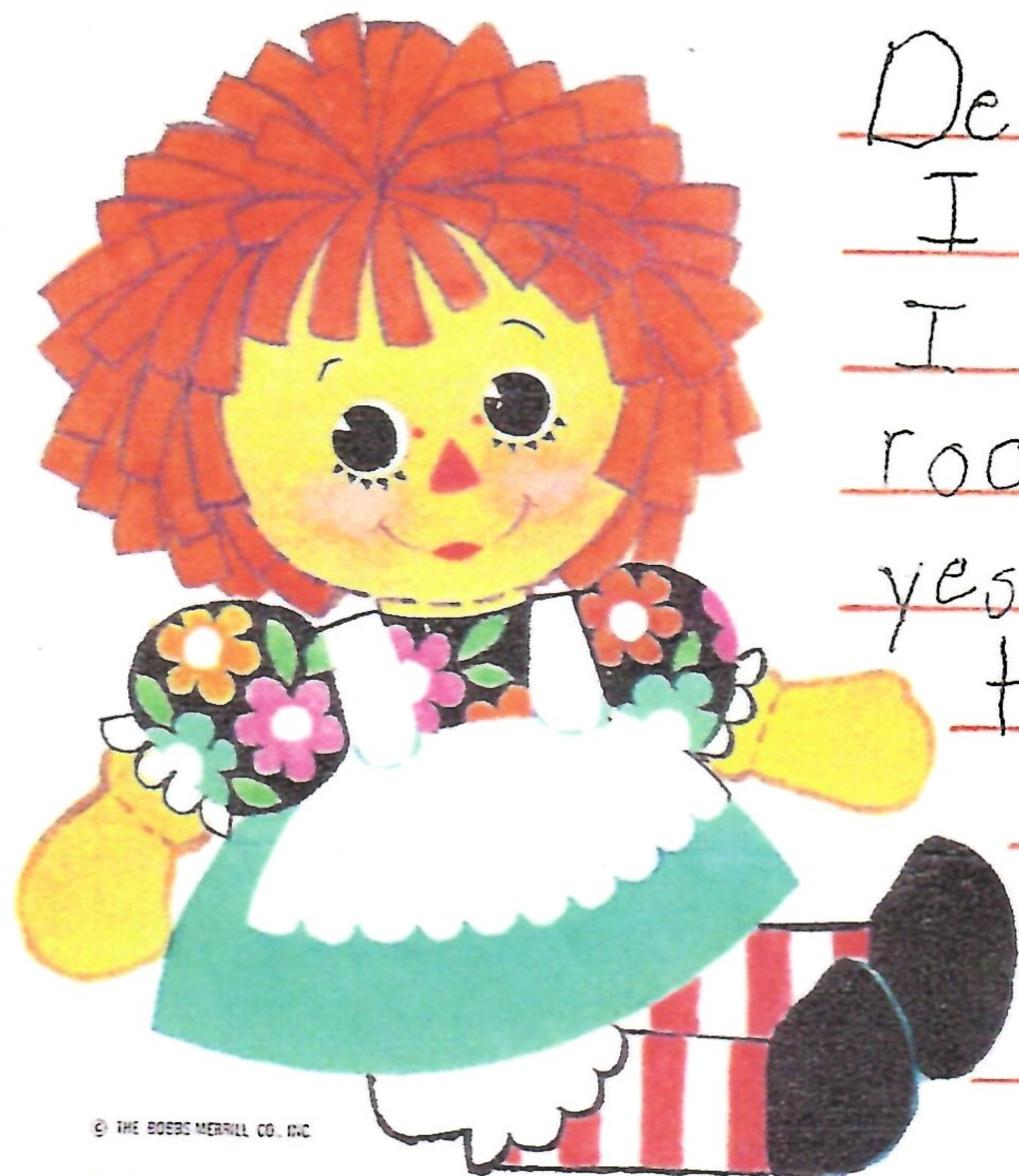
Having worked with many suicidal veterans over the past few years, I have become more aware of *potential triggers* and accustomed to an understanding that *some of those who are suicidal have lived this torment for many years ...* never quite being able to escape the extreme emotional distress of every-day life ... *nor find the necessary comfort of the home-team.*

Suicide attempts include direct and indirect methods. Movies portray the veteran who, realizing *there was a life to be saved but wasn't,* many years later *blows his brains out.* Some attempts are *well-orchestrated accidents* designed to *end-it-all* but, at times, end in failure with the *intended victim walking-away* with but a scratch. Many are *drug and/or alcohol induced wherein the veteran plays a most-dangerous game of Russian Roulette.*

Multiple attempts by a family member put the entire family in jeopardy. Children lose a parent ... spouses lose that one-love ... family and friends often lose sight or are otherwise unable to comprehend the seriousness of the problem. Some are outspoken drawing-out loved-ones to lament over uneventful solutions.

Many veterans with *Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)* never quite shake-the-snake and are ... forever ... left with no parting theme.

Now we have the words to tell you ... We hope you take the time to understand



Dear Daddy,
I miss you,
I cleaned the living
room three times
yesterday and two
times today. And
I cleaned my
room today and
yesterday, I help

Mommy a lot. I cannot wait
until tomorrow because it's
Easter. I miss you so ~~much~~ we
sent you a Easter present
have you got it yet. I
found out there wasn't such
thing as an Easter Bunny, we
got to color our Easter eggs
Saturday with John and
Louise. Dusty is being bad
and we might give him away.
And we might get a kitty.

Barely age 7... a young daughter sends her love to her father deployed in 1971 Cao Lanh, Vietnam.
Interestingly ... her need to help exposes who she is ... who she has always been. Now ... fifty years
later [AUG 2020] ... her father responds. Dear Lori ... I love you so much! Love Always, Daddy

Love
Always,
Dad

Love, Lori