

We must heal the wounds we can't see

By Pete Conaty

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For too long, America has been in denial about the true cost of war. We have honored our veterans with our lips but we have refused to acknowledge the wounds we don't see, the deep, painful psychological scars borne by so many of our veterans. Thankfully, we are at last beginning to recognize the depth of this problem. We are beginning to reach out a helping hand to those men and women who have borne the heat of battle and come home forever changed.

In his State of the State speech, Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger spoke eloquently and frankly about these wounded warriors and our obligation to make them whole again: "Too often our soldiers bring back the enemy with them in their heads. We are seeing and hearing all about a lot of post-traumatic stress syndrome . . . Those men and women need help."

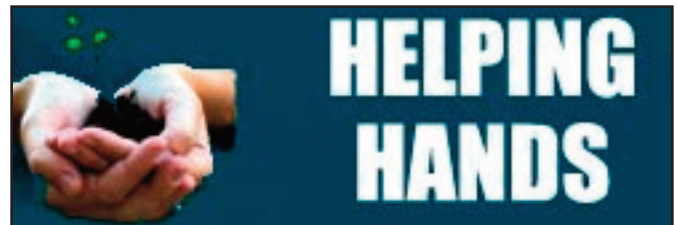
California's concerted effort to help these veterans, however, dates back nearly three years, when the Armed Force Retirees Association, the Vietnam Veterans of America and other veterans groups won Governor Schwarzenegger's signature on AB 2586, a groundbreaking law designed to give our most traumatized soldiers a chance to confront and overcome the psychological wounds of war. Under this alternative sentencing law, a judge first determines if a defendant is suffering from combat-caused

post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

If he is, the judge can steer the defendant into a psychological treatment program rather than jail. Without treatment, many of our fallen heroes would find themselves trapped in an unending cycle of crime and punishment as they struggle with their inner demons.

Eight months ago, the U.S. Supreme Court faced this issue and came down on the side of California's law in a landmark ruling on the impact of combat stress on veterans. In that case, the high court reduced the death sentence of Korean War veteran George Porter to life in prison. The Florida jury that sentenced Porter to death in a murder case did not

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July 4, 2010 • Independence Day

July 6, 2010 • VVA-391 Board of Directors meeting at the Veterans Memorial Hall at 7:00 p.m.

July 13, 2010 • VVA-391 Pot Luck and General Meeting at Sonora Veterans Memorial Hall, A-G bring a dessert, H-M bring a salad, N-Z bring a main dish. Bring enough for 6-8 people.

July 16, 1969 • Appollo 11 launched from Cape Kennedy...

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July 18, 1971 • New Zealand and Australia announce their intention to pull out their troops from Vietnam.

July 20, 1969 • Appollo 11 becomes 1st manned space vehicle to land on the moon..

July 21, 1954 • France signs armistice to end their war with Vietnam, but the country is divided into two countries.

July 25, 1969 • Nixon Doctrine begins the Vietnamization of the war..

July 30, 1969 • Nixon unexpectedly visits Vietnam.