

A  
STATE  
OF

# openMIND

A PUBLICATION OF CAL HUMANITIES



SPRING 2014 WAR COMES HOME EDITION

Phil Klay: After War, A Failure of the Imagination

Karl Marlantes: Thoughts on Returning

California War Letters

Over the Wild Blue Yonder: Riverside Stories

# cultivating A STATE OF OPEN MIND



< Margaret Shelleda, Chair, Board of Directors, Cal Humanities

## DEAR READERS,

Welcome to the spring edition of *A State of Open Mind*. When Cal Humanities launched this magazine, we envisioned it as a space to explore big ideas, and asked some of our great thinkers to weigh in on the pressing issues of our time. I am proud to introduce our *War Comes Home* issue.

In 2014 Cal Humanities is embarking on a multiyear initiative focused on the experiences of veterans returning from war. *War Comes Home* will create opportunities for communities across California to grapple with the tough questions: What are our responsibilities when we decide, as a nation, to go to war? What do we owe to those whom our country has sent into harm's way? How can we build bridges of understanding between those who have served and those who have not?

*War Comes Home* will include hundreds of events throughout California, from author tours and films to exhibitions and teacher training programs. These events will bring communities together with veterans and their families, writers, and historians to explore how California is welcoming its veterans home.

In this issue, best-selling author and veteran Karl Marlantes (*Matterhorn, What It Is Like to Go to War*) asks us to listen to veterans and their stories. He will be touring the state this fall as part of California Reads, our statewide book discussion. His stories, and those of others who have experienced the impact of war, are here as testimony to the human spirit of resiliency and the desire to make sense of war and its aftermath.

■ *War Comes Home will include hundreds of events throughout California, from author tours and films to exhibitions and teacher training programs.*

Also in this issue are photos and letters from projects funded through Cal Humanities' Community Stories program. From photos of the national cemetery in Riverside to war letters found in attics, veterans are writing their own stories of return.

I invite you to support the work of Cal Humanities and to attend one of the many *War Comes Home* events across our state in the coming months. To learn more, visit our website, at [calhum.org](http://calhum.org).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Margaret Shelleda".

Margaret Shelleda  
Chair, Board of Directors  
Cal Humanities



Memorial at Arlington West in Santa Monica by Veterans for Peace. May 2, 2010

## ON THE COVER:

National Guard veteran Eric Lund rises on his board as he catches a wave during a session at Indicator's surf break in Santa Cruz on Thursday April 3, 2014 as part of Operation Surf, a six-day surfing excursion in Santa Cruz and Capitola for wounded veterans. Lund was on patrol with his unit in Afghanistan in the lead vehicle's gun turret when they hit an IED, which flipped the vehicle. Eric lost both arms, shattered his right femur and suffered severe facial injuries. Photo by Shmuel Thaler.

visit our website at [calhum.org](http://calhum.org)



**CAL HUMANITIES**  
A STATE OF OPEN MIND

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Questions? Comments?  
Contact Rachel Anne  
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[rgoodman@calhum.org](mailto:rgoodman@calhum.org)

*Child holds on tight to  
her dad's leg while saying  
goodbye to him. He was  
deployed to Southwest Asia  
for six months in support of  
OEF and OIF. 2006. Photo  
by Technical Sergeant Ceci-  
lio M. Ricardo Jr., USAF*

# After War, a Failure of the Imagination

by Phil Klay *reprinted with permission from the New York Times*

*“I could never imagine what you’ve been through,” she said.*

As a former Marine who served in Iraq, I’d heard the sentiment before – it’s the civilian counterpart to the veteran’s “You wouldn’t know, you weren’t there.” But this time it struck an especially discordant note. This woman was a friend. She’d read something I’d written about Iraq – about the shocked numbness I’d felt looking at the victims of a suicide bombing – and it had resonated. As a survivor of child abuse, she knew feelings of shocked numbness far better than I did. And yet, midway through recounting some of what happened to her as a young girl, she said it again: “I’m sorry. I don’t mean to compare my experience to yours. I could never imagine what you’ve been through.”

It felt inappropriate to respond, “Sure you could.” I’d had a mild deployment. She’d mainly have to imagine long hours at a cheap plywood desk in a cheap plywood hut in the middle of a desert. True, there were a handful of alarming but anti-climactic mortar attacks on my forward operating base, and the wounded and damaged bodies I saw at the trauma center, but that was all. Her childhood, though, was full of experiences I couldn’t have handled as an adult, let alone as a child. And what was particularly bewildering was that, even as my friend was insisting that what I’d been through was beyond the limits of imagination, she never once told me, “You aren’t a victim of child abuse. You couldn’t understand.” She wanted me to understand. At the very least, she wanted me to try.

I know an airman who suffered a traumatic brain injury during training just a few years after being in a car accident where he watched his twin brother die. When he tells people



*Photo by Pfc. Loren Cook February 14, 2013, Joint Base Lewis-McChord, WA, US*

about the T.B.I. and the accident and his service, he invariably gets the “I could never imagine” line. “It makes me angry,” he told me. Sure, he wants to say, you don’t think you could understand, but what if I want you to?

It’s a difficult spot to be in, for both. The civilian wants to respect what the veteran has gone through. The veteran wants to protect memories that are painful and sacred to him from outside judgment. But the result is the same: the veteran in a corner by himself, able to proclaim about war but not discuss it, and the civilian shut out from a conversation about one of the most morally fraught activities our nation engages in – war.

The notion that war forever separates veterans from the rest of mankind has been long embedded in our collective consciousness. After World War I, the poet and veteran Siegfried Sassoon wrote, “the man who really endured the war at its worst was everlastingly differentiated from everyone except his fellow soldiers.” During World War II, Hemingway called combat “that thing which no one knows about who has not done it.” After Vietnam, Tim O’Brien claimed that a true war story can’t even be told, because “sometimes it’s just beyond telling.” Given the way American history, unlike Iraqi or Afghan history, allows for a neat division between soldiers who see war and civilians who don’t, it’s not surprising that the idea has taken root.

When I returned from Iraq, people often asked me what it was like, usually followed by, “How are we doing over there?” And I’d tell them. I’d explain in bold, confident terms about the surge and the Sunni Awakening. The Iraq I returned from was, in my mind, a fairly simple place. By which I mean it had little relationship to reality. It’s only with time and the help of smart, empathetic

“We pay political consequences when civilians are excused or excluded from discussion of war. After all, veterans are no more or less trustworthy than any other group of fallible human beings.”

friends willing to pull through many serious conversations that I’ve been able to learn more about what I witnessed. And many of those conversations were with friends who’d never served.

We pay political consequences when civilians are excused or excluded from discussion of war. After all, veterans are no more or less trustworthy than any other group of fallible human beings. Southern veterans of the Civil War claimed the Confederacy was a noble lost cause. Nazi leaders who had served in World War I claimed that the German troops had all but won the war, only to be stabbed in the back by civilians in thrall to Jewish interests. The notion that the veteran is an unassailable authority on the experience of war shuts down conversation. But in a democracy, no one, not even a veteran, should have the last word.

The problem is compounded on a personal level. If we fetishize trauma as incommunicable then survivors are trapped – unable to feel truly known by their nonmilitary friends and family. At a recent Veterans Day performance put on by Arts in the Armed Forces, Adam Driver, the organization’s founder, a former Marine turned actor, spoke of his feelings of alienation after leaving the corps. “Not being able to express the anger, confusion and loneliness I felt was challenging,” he said, until theater exposed him “to playwrights and characters and plays that had nothing to do with the military, that were articulating experiences I had in the military, that before to me were indescribable.”

*Former Army soldier Melissa Stockwell, from Chicago, speaks to fellow injured service members during an annual Paralympic Military Sports Camp at Balboa Naval Medical Center in San Diego. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Travis K. Mendoza/Released) October 5, 2010*

It’s a powerful moment, when you discover a vocabulary exists for something you’d thought incommunicably unique. Personally, I felt it reading Joseph Conrad’s “Lord Jim.” I have friends who’ve found themselves described in everything from science fiction to detective novels. This self-recognition through others is not simply a by-product of art – it’s the whole point. Hegel once wrote, “The nature of humanity is to drive men to agreement with one another, and humanity’s existence lies only in the commonality of consciousness that has been brought about.”

To enter into that commonality of consciousness, though, veterans need an audience that is both receptive and critical. Believing war is beyond words is an abrogation of responsibility – it lets civilians off the hook from trying to understand, and veterans off the hook from needing to explain. You don’t honor someone by telling them, “I can never imagine what you’ve been through.” Instead, listen to their story and try to imagine being in it, no matter how hard or uncomfortable that feels. If the past 10 years have taught us anything, it’s that in the age of an all-volunteer military, it is far too easy for Americans to send soldiers on deployment after deployment without making a serious effort to imagine what that means. We can do better.

*Phil Klay is the author of “Redeployment,” a collection of short stories.*



# OFF WE GO...

## Into the Wild Blue Yonder

Photos by Douglas McCulloh  
Stories by Susan Straight

*Cal Humanities is proud to support this Community Stories exhibition at the Riverside Art Museum, revealing the many “hidden” stories of veterans in Riverside and the Inland Empire. Home to the Riverside National Cemetery and the March Air Reserve Base, the area has been a magnet for returning service members for decades. Author Susan Straight and photographer Douglas McCulloh collected dozens of their community’s stories and images. We are excited to share a few of them here. For more information click [HERE](#).*

### THE TREASURE CHEST: MAKING HOME IN THE WORLD

Donna Miller moved 17 times in 20 years. “We never did spring cleaning,” she said, standing near the cash register at The Treasure Chest. The room behind her was filled with furniture and décor and jewelry and teacups, a carefully and lovingly recreated actual living room assembled every week by these women who have retired from lives in the military. Georgia De Barr laughed. “The drapes! We’d take these drapes down and pack them! We carried drapes for years, always thought, at the next house they’ll fit. 26 moves in 34 years and they never fit!” When someone dies at Air Force Village West, a military retirement community just outside March Air Reserve Base, often the family arrives to find a lifetime of possessions collected all over the world. Those treasures end up here, for sale, like art in a museum of home, made on bases everywhere from Okinawa to Oklahoma, from Turkey to Texas.



“ We met a woman at the national cemetery who drives from North Hollywood and sits there for six hours once a week near her husband’s grave. She brings his favorite cookies, and buries them there near the grave. She sits reading a book and crocheting, with her big gulp, and that is how she honors his memory.

—Susan Straight

*“America has begun to treat wars in a sanitized way, like they’re not even happening. It just kills me that there is a whole row of new graves, and nobody ever talks about it.”*

*–Susan Straight*



#### RIVERSIDE NATIONAL CEMETERY

Forty a day. Every day. Ordinary weekdays, cloudy Saturdays which remain unremarkable to anyone else. Forty buried a day at Riverside National Cemetery, the busiest national cemetery in the nation, where tens of thousand of war veterans lay above or below their wives in concrete vaults, above or below and bones separate as if in floating beds stacked in ironic opposition to twin beds aside each other; and where thousands, and still counting, also lay single sad vaults of young men and women dying right now in Afghanistan and Iraq, too young to have spouses who have died, or to have had spouses at all.

#### THE WINTER ROAD TO SEOUL

“Remember, it’s combat,” Bill McInroe said to me last week, sitting at a round table in a church hall in Riverside, California. “There are infantry up on the hills above the road, covering us. We were in the tank, moving down the road, and it was so slippery and icy. So cold. The civilians were so tired trying to walk, trying to climb onto the tank. It was so chaotic that we didn’t know who was who – five or six Chinese soldiers would mingle in on the road with the Korean civilians and then start shooting.” Sitting beside him, eating pie and drinking church-made coffee, his Korean Bible in a much-handled black leather case, was Young Bong Yoon. “We figure they must have passed each other on the road,” Yoon’s son John said. He is Senior Pastor at the First United Methodist Church of Riverside. “We like to think that Bill was there along the side of that road as they were leaving. That he helped make it possible.” “Four million human beings died there,” McInroe said. “Half of them civilians.” He had maps spread before them on the table, his Marine signet ring on his thick-knuckled finger, and his own piece of pie.

*“We live in an age of a million photos out of context. These images, the current ones of current vets and the old photos, carry this intense charge in their lives.”*

*–Douglas McCulloh*



# A CONVERSATION WITH KARL MARLANTES

Karl Marlantes is a best-selling author and former Marine Corps Lieutenant. Cal Humanities is excited to name his book, "What It Is Like to Go to War," as our statewide California Reads selection for 2014. Karl will tour the state this fall.



Karl Marlantes  
photo by Devon Marlantes

**CAL HUMANITIES:** What moved you to write *What It Is Like to Go to War*?

**KARL MARLANTES:** There is a wonderful expression I picked up from Joseph Bobrow, who is a Zen Buddhist. He said part of the task is turning ghosts into ancestors. I got a lot of ghosts out of my system. The other motivator was to write to young people who were considering going into the military as a profession. It's a calling, not like going to work for Microsoft. You are going to do something for your country that may involve taking a human life or sacrificing your own. You'd better be sure.

**CH:** *Matterhorn*, your best-selling book, used fiction to examine the war experience. *What It Is Like to Go to War* is a true-life account. How do you think these different approaches affect your readers?

**KM:** Everything that happened in *Matterhorn* happened to me, or friends of mine. I wrote it in such a way that people could choose to be an 18-year-old black kid from Mississippi, or they could choose to look from the viewpoint of an alcoholic colonel. The second book is: here are my experiences, really, but you are limited to just my viewpoint. The ability to identify with fictional characters takes you out of yourself, expands you beyond your skin, and I think has a better chance of actually changing who you are.

**CH:** What effect did reading about myths have on your life and your writing?

**KM:** Mythology has always informed the way I write. Reading both Jung and Campbell made me realize that whatever I'm going to write down, although it may be unique in its particulars, it's ancient in its structure. Every group, from Aborigines to Vikings, all have hero myths. When Odysseus comes home, they ask him, "Tell us, Oh, Mighty Hero, about the battle of Troy." He falls apart, and exhibits every symptom of PTSD. Homer nailed it. You have someone in the masculine environment, who has to relearn how to reconnect with the feminine. Odysseus has to go through that.

**CH:** What do you think the public ought to know that will help them understand veterans better?

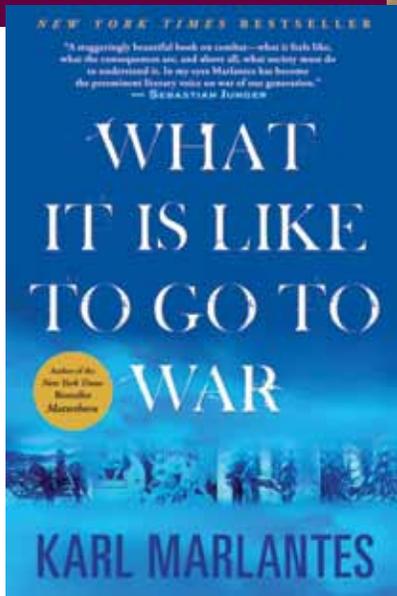
**KM:** Most veterans do not consider themselves victims. They have gone through traumatic experiences and it has wounded their psyches and their souls. But they volunteered. The other thing you have to understand is they will never probably

“The non-physical wounds, the psychological wounds, and the wounds to the soul have to be healed by community. That is what brings these guys home; (it) is this ability for the community to say, “Come on back.”



Karl Marlantes  
in Vietnam

Click [HERE](#) to listen to and interview with Karl Marlantes conducted by Bill Moyers



*Karl Marlantes in Vietnam*

in their lives count like they did in combat. You're 19, and if you don't show up and do your job, people will die. How much more important do you get? When you come back to "civilization," nobody really cares. It's not easy to come down from that peak, and just to fit in and just go back to everyday life. Give them a little slack.

**CH:** How can the divide between veterans and the rest of us be made smaller?

**KM:** If you let a veteran tell his story, he'll get over one great fear of veterans, which is being judged. These kids are taught all their life, "Thou shalt not kill," and then we send them out and that's what they do, and they come back bearing that burden. Because you do bad things in war. You do things you're not proud of. Here is what I think is the important thing: Civilians have to own part of that killing. He's got the rifle, but who paid for it? Everybody who paid taxes paid for that rifle.

**CH:** What is the potential of Cal Humanities' War Comes Home initiative to help spread understanding about veterans?

**KM:** You will have people coming together in libraries, discussing coming home from war. And there will be veterans there, members of veterans' families, people who work in service organizations, VA counselors, and wounded warriors. If you talk about what's in my book, you're going to talk about stuff you're not comfortable with. By bringing it out, so that people discuss it, it's the sense of rejoining the community that reading the book won't do.

**CH:** Given that there are so many social services needs to address, what do you think the relative value is of trying to build understanding about veterans' experiences?

**KM:** The non-physical wounds, the psychological wounds, and the wounds to the soul have to be healed by community. That is what brings these guys home; (it) is this ability for the community to say, "Come on back." If we just isolate him, and say he's taken care of, he's just going to the VA. He's still isolated. He hasn't come home. The community has to show that they are returning to the tribe, or the equivalent. And that's where Cal Humanities is supposed to pitch in. You're actually raising consciousness through the arts and humanities.

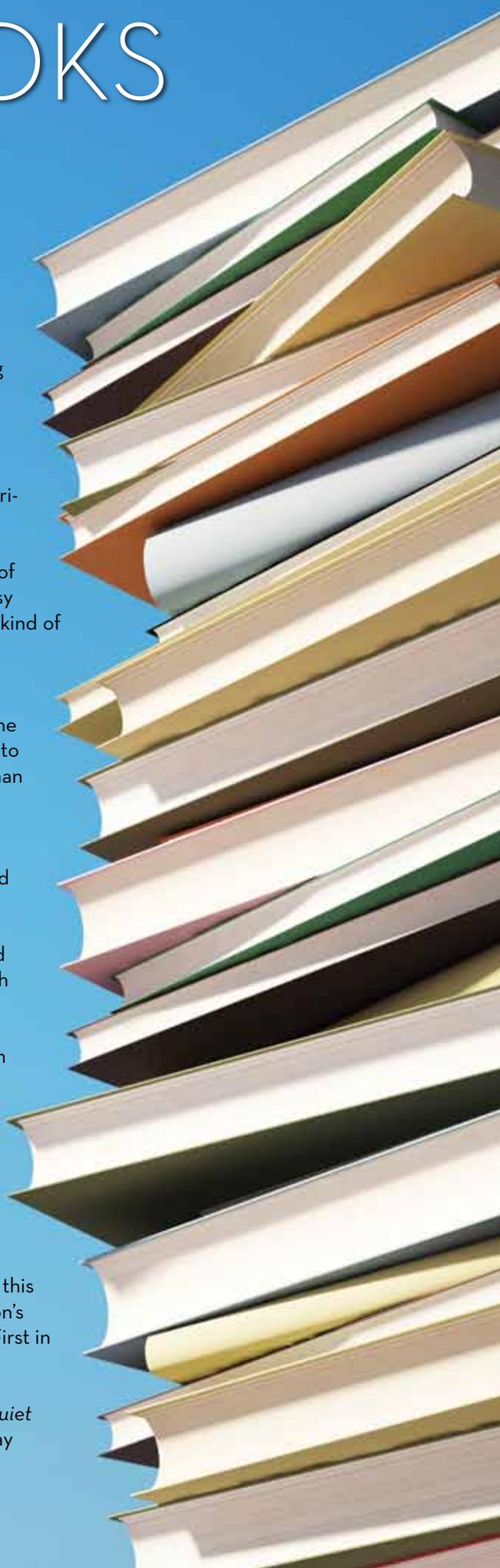
*Excerpts from an interview with Karl Marlantes conducted in March, 2014, by Rachel Anne Goodmanž*

# TOP TEN BOOKS

## about coming home from war

by Mary Menzel, Director, California Center for the Book

- 1 *Ajax* by Sophocles (5th century BC). The fall of a mighty warrior who has been denied the honor which he believed was his due.
- 2 *Born on the Fourth of July* by Ron Kovic (1976). A classic, bestselling memoir of a young man's path to Vietnam, his grievous wounding there, and his healing through activism. The 2005 edition has a new introduction that discusses the author's thoughts about our involvement in Iraq.
- 3 *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko (1977). Tayo, a young Native American, has been a prisoner of the Japanese during World War II, and the horrors of captivity have almost eroded his will to survive. His return to the Laguna Pueblo reservation only increases his feelings of estrangement and alienation. While other returning soldiers find easy refuge in alcohol and senseless violence, Tayo searches for another kind of comfort and resolution.
- 4 *Cold Mountain* by Charles Frazier (1997). Best-selling winner of the National Book Award. Sorely wounded and fatally disillusioned by the fighting at Petersburg, a Confederate soldier named Inman decides to walk back to his home in the Blue Ridge Mountains to Ada, the woman he loves.
- 5 *Here, Bullet* by Brian Turner (2005). Iraqi war veteran Turner writes powerfully affecting poetry of witness, exceptional for its beauty and honesty.
- 6 *In Country* by Bobbie Ann Mason (1985). This classic, recommended reading in many high schools explores the legacy of Vietnam through the eyes of a teenager trying to connect with her veteran uncle.
- 7 *Odyssey* by Homer (8th century BC). Odysseus journeys home from the long war at Troy to the Greek island of Ithaca, where his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus have been waiting for him for 20 years.
- 8 *Packing Inferno: The Unmaking of a Marine* by Tyler Boudreau (2008). The ordeal of a Marine officer in battle in Iraq who tries to come to terms with himself and how society views him.
- 9 *Regeneration* by Pat Barker (1991). Shortlisted for the Booker Prize, this fictional account is based on the true story of poet Siegfried Sassoon's hospitalization after refusing to serve any longer in the Great War. First in a trilogy, with *The Eye in the Door* and *The Ghost Road*.
- 10 *The Road Back* by Erich Maria Remarque (1931). This sequel to *All Quiet on the Western Front* follows young veterans trying to make their way home after Germany's defeat in World War I.



# The Disconnect is HUGE

*Reprinted with permission of Storycorps. Recorded in San Diego, California*

Storycorps' Military Voices Initiative provides a platform for veterans, servicemembers, and military families to share their stories. In doing so we honor their voices, amplify their experiences, and let them know that we—as a nation—are listening.

Marine Corporal Paul Wayman (L), served two combat tours in Iraq. His friend, Nathanael Roberti (R), is a former Navy SEAL who deployed to Afghanistan. When they came back, they had trouble leaving the war behind.

Nathanael and Paul met in 2012, at a special court for veterans that takes into account the specific struggles that service members face. The judge gave them a choice between incarceration or a program that helps vets readjust to civilian life. They chose to go through the program. Nathanael and Paul are still working through the program and they hope to get their charges dismissed by the end of 2013.

In the business that they plan to run together, they will be teaching military skills to civilians.



*Paul Wayman (left) and Nathanael Roberti*

**PAUL WAYMAN (PW):** I did two combat deployments to Iraq, and I would be sleep deprived for months. I would remember drinking just to sleep. And after I got back from my first deployment, I didn't sleep for three days. I went to one of my seniors and I was like, "What do I do?" And he handed me a bottle of rum and a PBR, and he was like, "Here you go."

**NATHANAEL ROBERTI (NR):** For me it started off with just bar fights. I pulled a knife on four individuals, that's why I ended up in front of a judge. I mean, we'd come back from these deployments and I just felt like, I cannot relate to anybody here in the United States anymore.

**PW:** The disconnect is huge.

**NR:** Yeah. Basically what the world's telling us is, we trained you one way to go kill bad guys, and now that you're out, you have got to completely change your way of thinking. And how do you do that? How do you switch that around?

**PW:** Right.

**NR:** So how did you end up being in front of a judge?

**PW:** We got word that one of our buddies was killed in Afghanistan. Went to a few bars, was driving home and I got pulled over. I was obviously highly intoxicated. I had my .45 right there and the police found the firearm.

And I really needed the help because you walk through a river you're going to come out wet.

It's funny because I've noticed we've always thrived in hardship.

**NR:** Yeah.

**PW:** But whenever things are easy...

**NR:** We're our own worst enemies because we don't live the quiet normal life.

**PW:** Yep.

**NR:** And that's why we hit it off in the beginning. And we told our war stories to each other.

**PW:** Right.

**NR:** And it was important for us to have that relationship because, you and I, we kind of helped each other through.

**PW:** If you wouldn't have been here, I do not know how I would have got through this shit.

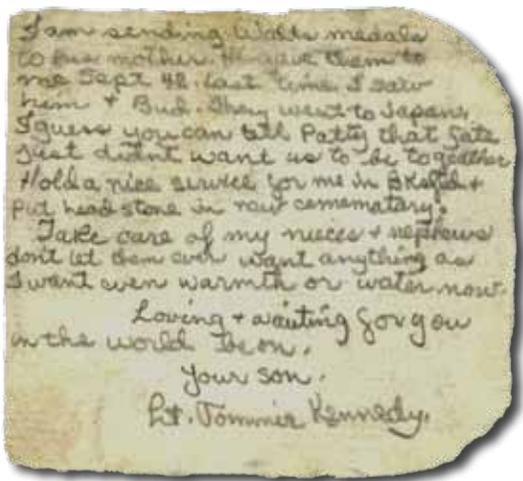
**NR:** But now, here we are a year later dude, and I'm running a successful business now. I'm about to be running another business with you. And um, without getting too, you know, mushy, I've seen you grow, man. And uh, you know, it's a good thing to see.

*To hear a recording of this interview, [www.storycorps.org/listen/paul-wayman-and-nathanael-roberti/](http://www.storycorps.org/listen/paul-wayman-and-nathanael-roberti/)*

# War Letters

“These letters sometimes transcend war. They are about hope and love and grief and reconciliation.”

—Andrew Carroll  
Founder, Center for American War Letters,  
Chapman University



I am sending Walt's medals to his mother. I gave them to me Sept 48. Last time I saw him + Bud. They went to Japan. I guess you can tell Patty that fate just didn't want us to be together. Hold a nice service for me in Bakersfield + put headstone in new cemetery. Take care of my nieces + nephews don't let them ever want anything as I want even warmth or water now.  
Loving + waiting for you in the world beyond,  
Your son,  
Lt. Tommie Kennedy.

These were the last words that Lieutenant Thomas R. Kennedy wrote before he died in January in a POW camp. The photo and the letter were found in one of his shoes, where he had hidden them from his captors.



Best-selling author Andrew Carroll didn't start out with an interest in war letters or history. But when he was given a letter written by an uncle just after the liberation of the Buchenwald concentration camp, Andrew found his calling. Inspired, he wrote to "Dear Abby" on Veteran's Day in 1988, begging people to save and send him their war letters. The rest is history. Thousands of war letters poured in, and the flood continues to this day. Now Chapman University, under the stewardship of Dr. John Benitz, has archived them all. And with funding from Cal Humanities, Benitz is writing a play and creating a traveling exhibit so Californians can experience the power of these messages.

## Tommie Kennedy

January 16, 1945

Dear Mommie and Dad,

It is pretty hard to check out this way without a fighting chance, but we can't live forever. I'm not afraid to die, but I just hate the thought of not seeing you again. Buy Turkey Ranch with my money and think of me often while you are there. Make liberal donations to both sisters. See that Gary has a car his first year. I am sending Walt's medals to his mother. Last time I saw him and Bud they went to Japan. I guess you can tell Patty that fate just didn't want us to be together. Hold a nice service for me in Bakersfield and put a headstone in the new cemetery. Take care of my nieces and nephews and don't let them want anything the way I want food and water now.

Loving and waiting for you in the world beyond,

Your son, Lt. Tommie Kennedy



This photo and the letter were found in one of Tommie's shoes

## Oscar Mitchell

April 14th, 1945. "Somewhere in Burma"

Dear Helene,

In your last letter you say that you wish you were over here. Although most people think that, like you, they are "War Conscious," are they really? ... You'd have to see the wounded streaming back from the front after a battle above all, to see the light go out of men's eyes. Young men crying and shaking from nervous exhaustion. Strong men they are, or were, who did not or will not have the chance, ever, to live normal lives. People may think they know what war is like. Their knowledge is facts of the mind. Mine is the war-torn body, scared to soul's depth. When I was in the States, war was far away, unreal. I had read, I had seen pictures, but now I know.

—Oscar

# SPEAK ACROSS TIME

by Rachel Anne  
Goodman

I heard a swoosh & I fell on my stomach in my hole. One shell had landed & exploded from the corner of my hole. I was kneeling but a splinter knocked some of the corner off, & filled the hole full of dirt, but my buddy & I came thru with out one scratch. When I ducked down, my head moved so fast my helmet fell off & stayed up on the tank. It blew my rifle all to hell- which was sitting on top - ready to use. The rifle was found about 10 feet away, & my helmet is on the other side of a large drainage canal about 40 yds away.

## Frank Correa

2230 Hours: We took off after dark, but we could look out the hatch windows and see the Mediterranean Sea below dotted with oil tankers. Our flight eventually would take us over Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Looking out over the vast desert below made me very aware of how far away from home I really was. During this part of the mission I felt the furthest from home. I never felt so far from home as when we were flying over the desert in the middle of the night. It also struck me that we were flying over a part of the world that really didn't care for us and would probably take some pleasure in seeing us shot down. They talk about the face of war, well it stared us right in the face. And this face was very young. These soldiers did not look anything like stereotypical Hollywood heroes, just young kids, some as young as nineteen. The scene on the aircraft was hard to believe. If you stood about three quarters of the way up forward in the plane and looked back you could see row after row of litters all the way to the back of the plane. They had casts, bandages, and IVs. Some were amputees and missing parts of their bodies.

-Frank Correa, Flight Medic, 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom.



People wishing to donate war letters can go to [www.chapman.edu/research-and-institutions/cawl/index.aspx](http://www.chapman.edu/research-and-institutions/cawl/index.aspx)

Cal Humanities **War Comes Home** initiative is opening up a statewide conversation about the experience of returning veterans in a way that goes beyond “Thank you for your service.” These poems, one by the wife of a veteran of the Afghanistan war, the other by an veteran of the war in Iraq, speak to the need to reconnect after returning from battle.

## Bee by Amalie Flynn

This morning I read about a veteran  
Who said *I returned home, and no one noticed,*  
And he threw himself off the side of a mountain, and  
I know the statistics.  
I know twenty two veterans in America kill themselves  
Every single day because they come home from war  
But cannot live anymore,  
And when my husband finds me in the hallway, and  
Tells me he wants to raise honeybees in our backyard,  
I laugh,  
Because I remember how hard the war was for us,  
Or after,  
When he came home, and had to reattach himself,  
To this life he had left behind,  
Or how there were days when all I wanted was for him  
To care more, about our house, our yard, or me,  
Instead of talking about *peace building*  
And *going back to Afghanistan,*  
And this hallway we are standing in stretches  
Across the house like a vein,  
And the bedrooms and the bathroom and the kitchen

Are like cells in a honeycomb,  
Because this is the colony we have built together  
And I lead my husband to the nearest window,  
So we can look out,  
At the backyard and I can say, *show me where,*  
Because I know my life is sweet.  
I know that no matter how hard the war was,  
Or coming home, it was never that hard, and  
How we were lucky  
Because war can kill you,  
It can kill a soldier on the inside and send him  
Home a shell, half dead already and that is why  
I will lie in bed tonight  
And I will think of all the soldiers who die  
Because of war, fighting in combat, and  
Fighting on the battlefield at home, and  
I will try to remember them, even though  
I know that I don't know at all, and how  
I am already forgetting.

*Amalie Flynn is an American writer and the author of two blogs, Wife and War and September Eleventh, and the book Wife and War: The Memoir. Flynn's Wife and War poetry has appeared in The New York Times At War and in TIME'S Battleland, has appeared in her blog for the Huffington Post, and has received mention from The New York Times Media Decoder.*

## Prisoner of War by Ryan Smithson – Iraq vet.

Being prepared to die  
At nineteen  
Is death  
Mortality, put in your trigger finger  
Stays, trapped  
Like a knot in wood.

When you come home  
To your new bride,  
The warmth of her lips,  
The comfort of her touch,  
Promise that death  
Is far away again.

But a balloon pops at a child's party,  
Or lightning flashes while you're driving,  
And you shatter;  
Someone in a crowd speaks Arabic,  
And you grip your pocketknife.

She tells you that you've changed,  
And the crack in her voice would hurt  
If you could still feel.

*Ryan Smithson served in Iraq from 2004-2005 with the Army Corps of Engineers. His writing has been published in various journals, including Proud to Be: Writing by American Warriors, Volume I. His memoir, Ghosts of War: The True Story of a 19-Year-Old GI was published by HarperCollins in 2009. The therapeutic power of writing about war, he discovered, lies in its ability to teach us lessons we never knew we learned.*

# Ralph Lewin leaves a strong legacy



Ralph Lewin

Ralph Lewin, after celebrating his sixth anniversary as the President and CEO of Cal Humanities and his 22nd year with the organization, announced in March that he would step down. Mr. Lewin thanked the board and supporters. Reflecting on his tenure, he said, "It has been a great honor to lead Cal Humanities, an organization that stands for the fundamental importance of ideas, imagination, and conversations that reach to the heart of the human condition. I am proud of what we have accomplished together. Among the most

fulfilling aspects of my work has been the opportunity to collaborate with creative, insightful, and inspiring people across California and the nation."

Over the last decade, Mr. Lewin has been a fierce advocate for increasing the prominence of the humanities as a foundation for shaping our national conversation. Juan Felipe Herrera, California's Poet Laureate, recognized Lewin's work, saying, "Ralph represents the drive to attain the highest human aspirations of the people of California. I look forward to Cal Humanities continuing to work to bring all Californians into the discourse about how we can live, dream, and thrive together."

The Board of Directors has created a committee that will lead the search for Cal Humanities' new President and CEO.



## SUPPORT Cal Humanities



Cal Humanities provides funding for some of the most innovative work in film, radio and public programs.

Your contribution helps fund media, exhibits, and conversations that are vital in helping make sense of our times. Please fill out the enclosed envelope today or go to: [calhum.org/connect/donate](http://calhum.org/connect/donate).





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Members of Veterans for Peace and volunteers from the community created Arlington West memorial in Santa Barbara, CA, a makeshift cemetery honoring U.S. servicemen and women killed in Iraq. April 5, 2009  
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