



Child of War: My Memorial Day 2016

"Once upon a time my father was a soldier- he did heal but was never whole... That war defined his life and defined my life before I was even born...One of these days someone needs to write a book about what war does to the children of those sent to fight and die in them...There are many like me and many more to come. We are the children of the aftermath. (William Rivers Pitt, Memorial Day, 2016)

"When your father died, it was like a grenade exploded within our family and then... the silence descended ..we didn't know any better". (Aunt Challis, my father's younger sister)

"In peace, sons bury their fathers; in a war, fathers bury their sons".

"War does not determine who is right; only who is left". (Bertrand Russell)

On this May 30th, 2016, here in northern Arizona, this (WAR) Memorial Day began just before sun-up, as those of us desert dwellers know that the baking heat of our oncoming season requires that whatever needs doing, if at all possible, should really try to happen well before noon. And still, before I seriously got going, I took a few minutes to check my email which contained some life changing news from a cousin who is also our family historian. As I read his message, two major and interfacing themes during my years of social and war trauma work, suddenly came together in a totally new way: the choice of one's life's work is often an attempt to heal something unresolved within earlier generations, and the systemic role of wars and other conflicts in the ongoing war between men and women.

Years ago, it came to me, as I grew deeper into clinical work, that what we choose to pursue as either a profession or serious hobby is often either a conscious or unconscious attempt to heal something that remains unfinished from previous generations. A pivotal example that opened a way toward this understanding was my work with a swimming instructor for adults, who lost both parents in a boating accident because neither knew how to swim. Given my evolving understanding, in this regard, my ongoing and extensive work with trans-generational war trauma seems almost inevitable, especially with the focus of the impact of war upon the family . My earliest memory, which my Mother has confirmed, is of lying in a crib, around nap time, looking out a large window toward the sky and asking her about a noisy airplane flying low around and around our rural farmhouse. "That noisy plane", she explained, "is being flown by your Uncle Bill, saying a good bye to us, on his way 'overseas' to the war". Uncle Bill, my Mother's youngest brother, who later became an important protective figure in my early life, was a bomber pilot stationed in Southern England. As a staunch patriot, he joined, together with all my other uncles, aunts, cousins and other family members who were deeply involved in World War II; as soldiers, mechanics, navigators, tail gunners, doctors, nurses, Red Cross and home guard. Only many years later did I begin to realize the import of this military aspect of our family history and subsequent relationships.

We were fortunate that all of our relatives returned, at least physically intact, with the notable exception of my father who died in the Battle of Besancon in eastern France; reportedly blown to pieces by a German grenade. By interesting "co-incidence" if you believe such events are merely random, my father died in a battle on the very site where the Battle of Besancon took place on June 21, 1575 during the religious wars between Protestants and Catholics. As a result of accusations of heresy, our Huguenot ancestors fled this exact area via north Holland on their way to New Amsterdam which eventually became New York.

My maternal Grandfather and other Uncles stepped in to provide a "fatherly" advisory presence, and I remain deeply and always grateful for their efforts...and still none could ever replace my very own and only father, long lost to war. As a child, I blamed Germany and all Germans for this unfathomable loss. As an adult, this changed during my international war trauma work, especially in Germany where the humiliation of defeat, occupation and division, had added yet another dimension of

suffering to the massive devastation; some of which was caused by people that I loved and trusted.

As I became increasingly aware of my trans-generational legacy of war, and the no longer deniable impact of war upon families, my cousin's Memorial Day message carried this understanding still deeper within an entirely new level that I have yet to fully integrate. His recent research has revealed that, on father's side, our ancestor's war service goes back as far as our history can be traced; including combatants in the American Civil war, three who enlisted in the War of 1812, as well as a dozen in the 1776 Revolutionary War and many of our earliest forefathers were colonial militia men. In short, our historian was unable to locate any male ancestor of service age who did not serve during a major U.S. conflict.

Here it is important to note that the impact of these war time experiences upon their physical, mental, and spiritual health, relationships, families and descendants, remains unknown as well as most likely unacknowledged and misunderstood. Please know and also take courage to resist any temptation or misguided invitation to forget, the ancient and long standing reality that it is not only soldiers who suffer the traumas of war... and that this unresolved pain can and most certainly will cascade on, downward and through succeeding generations with often unrecognized consequences.

On Mother's side, our fiercely tribal Cornish clan was also involved in both World Wars, and to this day have not even reconciled with the English. As my Mother advised ... upon the eve of my first trip over there to the UK and "our home" in St. Just, ..."Our Cornish will tell you that they have never been to England". To my surprise, she was not all that wrong about that. On that side of our family tree I would not be surprised to learn that they had also successfully battled Vikings, Picts, Romans, Saxons and maybe even seriously engaged in some head-bashing, stone-axe conflicts with the Neanderthals.

As the realization of my trans-generational mandate with unresolved war trauma began to gain a clearer focus, I also felt a necessity to probe much deeper into the impact of war upon families; as an often hidden source of conflict in relationships, especially between men and women. This was soon to become even clearer during the early 1990s as I co-facilitated a pilot program in the California High Sierra

mountains; bringing together traumatized women and combat veterans from the conflicts in Korea and Vietnam.

Those wilderness-based events mark the beginning of my work with "Men, Women and War: And the War Between Men and Women"; some of which appears in my first book: **Relative Balance in An Unstable World**, (2005) written before I re-oriented toward a systemic perspective in regard to the immediate and trans-generational impact of war upon human relationships. This first account also includes material for a similar event that I offered within a deep forest setting in Russia, with their combat veterans and traumatized women. At this point, I should make clear that my understanding of war entangled relationships includes, trans-national conflicts as well as race, class, tribal, civil and religious wars; as well as consequences from political, revolutionary and genocidal agendas.

In subsequent decades I carried on with the "men, women and war" work, mostly on my own until I reached a kind of standstill with the realization that a book that I had long hoped to be able to write on this subject, so central to all of my other work with individual and social trauma...was just not happening. And then last year, it came to me, in May, during one sleepless full moon night in Mexico City, that the work, after all, was Men...Women and War..and the War between Men...and Women...and that this was not only women's work, which could then be all mixed up with feminism; the real healing work needs to be done by men and women together. Moreover, given the oft trans-generational components of war and other conflicts, I realized the need for a strong, male partner, preferably from an "enemy " culture...who knows war and shares my level of concern.

Within my family's family-system, for at least two generations, our enemy was most definitely Germany, and so with this in mind I contacted my long time Bavarian colleague, Dr. Karl-Heinz Rauscher, since we had briefly done a early version of this work together during his visit to Colorado in 2001. While we had remained in contact after he returned to Germany and his practice of medicine, we had not actually seen each other in over a decade...and still his response was quite positive. However, Karl-Heinz felt that a totally new vision was now necessary, and that given that our families had been killing each other through at least two world wars, it was worth an effort to find a genuine path toward peace.

And so, after a year of serious preparation, during which a few long buried "landmines" exploded here and there... we nevertheless managed to find our own way toward a genuine and lasting peace... on both an individual and systemic level. As a result Karl-Heinz and I presented our new vision of Men, Women and Peace, almost exactly one year later, at a (full moon) "Search for a New Systemic Intelligence" conference in Mexico City... and now we can to begin writing about this, at last and probably, at first, in English.

On related topics we have published two articles in **The Knowing Field Journal** which have also appeared on the WISR blog site as: "End of the Trail: Or a New Cycle for Mankind" and "Separation Consciousness". As a next step we are offering a residential event in Switzerland, a politically neutral country, which will also involve interaction with our surrounding natural landscape...coming full circle now to raise the original wilderness work to yet another level, which while including the absolute and ongoing reality of war, now also carries forth our well informed emphasis on peace. (www.acst-international.com) (<http://de-de.facebook.com/rauscherautor>)

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