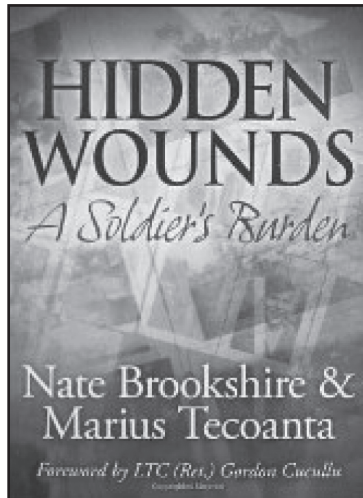


Book Review



Hidden Wounds: A Soldier's Burden, by Nate Brookshire and Marius Tecoanta, Network 3000, July 2011, 192 pages, ISBN-10: 1934266221 ISBN-13: 978-1934266229, \$19.95 (paperback)



War does for human emotions what a laser does for light particles—gathers and intensifies them to the point that they can be blinding. Throughout the novel *Hidden Wounds: A Soldier's Burden*, we see how the experiences of war can render an individual unable to perceive behavior that is obvious to others. According to a tired cliché, “Time heals all wounds;” but for those who have endured the trauma, the seemingly endless passage of time affords only the dubious opportunity to dwell, relive, question, and regret. The experience becomes an endless movie loop, always playing in the forefront of the mind.

A cruel characteristic of the human mind is its penchant to sow doubt, second-guess and, ultimately,

breed despair. While we acknowledge at the conscious, intellectual level that split-second decisions made in combat cannot bear detailed analysis, our vicious subconscious—that “little voice in our heads”—is always there to undermine our best intentions. Perhaps one of the most oft-repeated questions asked by those who have endured extreme stress is a frustratingly unanswerable one: What could I have done differently?

Hidden Wounds adroitly explores the ramifications of what can happen to an otherwise outstanding American Soldier who, for decades, is plagued to the point of instability by that terrible little voice. In this case, all it took was a single, isolated—but poignant—incident to alter the life of a man and his family. Too often, this is the case with returning combat veterans.

Tragically, much of this Soldier's anguish was self-inflicted. Through his inability to come to terms with the reality of his situation and the feeding of his angst with a secret, constant reminder of “that” day, his self-criticism morphed into a self-destructive quest. The story related in *Hidden Wounds* is not allegorical; the events described happen to Soldiers daily. Struggling to cope with routine civilian activities, troubled by memories that they vainly attempt to alter or erase, and haunted by nightmares, they often stumble through their lives. They “go through the motions,” but fail to slip back into the comfort zone that they enjoyed before heading into combat. To some degree, nearly all returning Soldiers and civilian contractors share that experience.



Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Cucullu (Retired). He and his wife Chris Fontana are co-authors of Warrior Police: Rolling With America's Military Police in the World's Trouble Spots and founders of a project that, by Spring 2012, will provide a working and recreational retreat for post-11 September 2001 combat Soldiers and war zone civilian workers.