



## HOW TO UNDERSTAND THE RETURNING WAR VETERAN

By MAJOR GENERAL  
DAVID N. W. GRANT  
THE AIR SURGEON, ARMY AIR FORCES

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Here, in simple, matter-of-fact language that any layman can understand, is one of the most useful and inspiring messages in our *Guideposts* series. It is useful because, instead of comforting us in some of our perplexities, it gives us better understanding of our home-coming veterans and their problems as they resume their places among us. It is inspiring inasmuch as the chief medical officer of the United States Army Air Forces gives straightforward, authoritative testimony as to the curative effects of strong religious faith. General Grant, The Air Surgeon, supervises the activities of many regional and convalescent hospitals. His remarkable achievement in the field of rehabilitation is one of the great stories of this war.

NORMAN VINCENT PEALE

ONE OF THE GREATEST challenges before our society is the physical and spiritual rehabilitation of returning war veterans as members of their communities. Energy which was concentrated upon fighting and winning a war must be redirected into ways of peace. Wives, parents, friends and the community at large should understand why some men who come back are temporarily, at

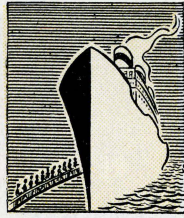
least, changed individuals.

Most of the men who come home will be able bodied; but, inwardly, they will be vastly different from the civilians who entered military service two, three or four years before. They have different attitudes, different emotions, different impulses, and their rehabilitation is a complicated problem, hard to grasp and complex to solve.

Many a demobilized veteran



would be regarded as normal under any ordinary physical or mental standards, yet the impact of war has altered his attitudes and compelling interests. His foremost desire from the time he was inducted



has been to be home again. That human yearning accompanied him through the rigors of training and the terrors of battle, and he is nonetheless loyal to his country and he fights nonetheless well because of it. But when he comes home he may be depressed and dissatisfied. He becomes tense and restless: he may even wish he were back in combat. His lost feeling may arouse in him hostility to people and the community he loves. He may consider himself more of a victim than a hero of these people.

Such a man is no different from a civilian who gets the jitters or is upset by difficult and harassing situations. But if his condition has been observed by army psychiatrists who classify him as "neuro-psychiatric," many persons jump to the erroneous, yet understandable, conclusion that the veteran's mind is affected. Every community has people who have spells of being moody and disagreeable. We may say that Joe "acts funny," and let it go at that. But should Joe consult

a psychiatrist, it is immediately assumed that he must be mentally unbalanced, because psychiatrists are commonly and wrongly identified with treatment of the mentally disordered and the insane. Actually, the

psychiatrist's diagnosis of Joe may be the same as ours—he "acts funny"—but instead he calls it a psychoneurosis or functional nervous disorder, which does not imply to the specialist a psychosis or insanity. Joe is tagged with a term which the American public associates with the mentally unbalanced.

This is an essential point which civilians should understand about returning service men. Aside from the comparatively small group of soldiers who have become insane, the war psychiatrist deals with normal persons exposed to an abnormal environment. Any difference in their behavior upon return home is probably a hangover from normal reactions to abnormal ways of living—and dying.

War compels an individual to accept the abnormal idea that self-preservation is less important than self-sacrifice—that there is a distinction between killing men in peacetime and killing them in war. Conditioned throughout his formative years to seek security and com-

fort, to love peace and freedom, a recruit is quickly and sternly exposed to a system which, first in training and then in combat, subordinates personal security to that of a group.

We have observed a number of basic conflicts in our fliers. Commonest is conflict between fear of death and will to fight. The individual's instinct says "flee!" but the will of the group says "fight!" There is the conflict between the desire to stick by one's friends in the squadron and one's ego bidding him, "save yourself." There is conflict between one's patriotism or sense of duty and worries over one's wife and child. And there are conflicts arising from a feeling that your friend in the ball turret or in the wing position was killed because of some failing on your part.

Some of the strangest conflicts observed in our fliers do not come from peacetime habits, but when a man accepts flight as a normal environment. Such a man loves to fly. He is the "natural" who says to our flight surgeons, "Doc, I'd rather fly than eat." And he means it. The airplane gives him a spiritual, as well as a physical, lift. He has a sense of majestic freedom and kinship with the gods when up in the sky and looking down

upon earth; but in combat a conflict arises in him, because flying then seems bent upon destroying him.

These men have been poured into the mold of war. Removal from that mold requires adjustments as profound as those needed for the change from civilian to military life. And adjustment varies with the man. One veteran may be flexible and resilient. When he comes home, he may take his wife on a fishing trip, then settle down to being "good old Bill" again, without so much as a harsh word. Another may be the high-strung type. He may find that the releases he found in combat boil over upon his homecoming into resentment against his mother's solicitousness over him, or in the urge to punch the nose of every civilian he sees on the street.

Any man forced into an environment in which he does not fit well develops nervous tension and, therefore, psychoneurotic symptoms. The greater the lack of harmony between personality and environment, the greater the tension and the more severe his symptoms. The longer this continues, the more wearing the strain becomes.





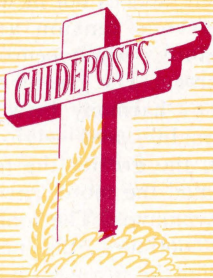
I have seen frequently the strong effect that sound religious faith has in rehabilitation; and any undertaking, such as *Guideposts*, which shows in a simple and understandable way the practical technique of using one's religion, should help many a returning veteran. I recall one of our patients who was shot down and captured on his twenty-fifth mission. The only survivor of the crew, he was forced to identify his dead comrades. A bomber crew is a closely-knit fellowship; the shock from this grisly duty was severe. After long months in prison camp, he was exchanged and sent back to this country suffering from operational fatigue and injuries from his parachute jump. He manifested acute nervous tension and marked changes of mood. Battle dreams disturbed his sleep and left him shaky throughout the day. His response to treatment, however, was exceptional; we found it inspired in large measure by the deep reli-

gious faith acquired during his combat service. Prayer and strong faith had carried him through his harrowing adventure—and speeded up readjustment to normal life.

We point out to our Army Air Force convalescents that no man need be defeated by disability if he accepts it with courage. We tell him to take stock of his assets, as well as his liabilities, so that he may build up in himself a state of mind that will inspire him to say, "Okay, where do I go from here?" He is helped enormously if he believes he can live an effective life. Such faith is one of the strongest drives toward rehabilitation. It builds up a quiet mind. And an added factor of inestimable worth is the quiet mind gained by faith in the help of a Higher Power.



*David W. Land*



#### PERSONAL SPIRITUAL LETTERS TO YOU FROM GREAT LEADERS

... These eloquent personal messages are mailed at intervals in packets of four each.

If these letters inspire and help you, ask to be put on *Guideposts'* mailing list to receive 48 letters—twelve mailings—for \$1. Some member of your family, some friend or associate, may be helped by this personal service. If so, send \$1 for each name. If you don't wish to hold for future reference, conserve paper by circulating these helpful messages among others.

#### GUIDEPOSTS ASSOCIATES, Inc.

Norman Vincent Peale, Editor  
QUAKER HILL

Raymond Thornburg, Managing Director  
PAWLING, N. Y.

Three additional copies of this letter free upon request; five copies or more, 3 cents each, postpaid anywhere.

**ASK FOR NUMBER 5**