

# The Warrior's Code of Honor

As a combat veteran wounded in one of America's wars, I offer to speak for those who cannot. Were the mouths of my fallen combat friends not stopped with dust, they would testify that life revolves around honor. In war it is understood that you give your word of honor to do your duty to stand and fight instead of running away and deserting your friends. When you keep your word despite desperately desiring to flee the screaming hell all around, you earn honor.

Earning honor under fire changes who you are. The blast-furnace of battle burns away impurities encrusting your soul. The white-hot forge of combat hammers you into a purified, hardened warrior willing to die rather than break your word to friends – your honor.

Combat is scary but exciting.

You never feel so alive as when being shot at without result.

You never feel so triumphant as when shooting back – *with* result.

You never feel love so pure as that burned into your heart by friends willing to die to keep their word to you.

And they do.

The biggest sadness of your life is to see friends falling. The biggest surprise of your life is to survive the war. Although still alive on the outside, you are dead inside – shot thru the heart with nonsensical guilt for living while friends died. The biggest lie of your life torments you that you could have done something more, different, to save them. Their faces are the tombstones in your weeping eyes, their souls shine the true camaraderie you search for the rest of your life but never find.

You live a different world now. You always will.

Your world is about waking up night after night screaming, back in battle.

Your world is about your best friend bleeding to death in your arms, howling in pain for you to kill him.

Your world is about shooting so many enemies the gun turns red and jams, letting the enemy grab you.

Your world is about struggling hand-to-hand for one more breath of life.

You never speak of your world. Those who have seen combat do not talk about it. Those who talk about it have not seen combat.

You come home but a grim ghost of he who so lightheartedly went off to war. But home no longer exists. That world shattered like a mirror the first time you were shot at. The splintering glass of everything you knew fell at your feet, revealing what was standing behind the mirror – grinning Death – *and you are face to face, nose to nose with it!*

The shock was so great that the boy you were died of fright. He was replaced by a stranger who slipped into your body, a MAN from the Warrior's World. In that savage place you give your word of honor to dance with Death instead of running away from it. This suicidal waltz is known as: "Doing your duty."

You did your duty, survived the dance, and returned home. But not all of you came back to the civilian world. Your heart and mind are still in the Warrior's World, as far away from the civilian world as Mars. They will *always* be in the Warrior's World. They will never leave, they are buried there. In that far off hallowed home of honor, life is about keeping your word.

Back in the civilian world, however, people have no idea that life is about keeping your word of honor. They think life is about ballgames, backyards, barbecues, babies and business.

Your earning honor under fire;  
your blood sacrifice;  
your loss of serenity/peace of mind in the hard blast-furnace of battle;

bought and paid for their freedom to indulge in this kind of soft civilian thinking. The distance between the two worlds is as far as Mars from Earth. This is why, when you come home, you feel like an outsider, a visitor from another planet.  
You are.

Friends try to bridge the gaping gap between you. It is useless. They may as well look up at the sky and try to talk to a Martian as talk to you. Words fall like bricks between you. Serving with Warriors who died proving their word has made prewar friends seem too un-tested to be trusted – thus they are now mere acquaintances.

The brutal truth is that earning honor in the white-hot forge of combat hammered the soft civilian you into a hardened Warrior accustomed to dancing the suicidal “Doing your duty” waltz with Death. This unspeakable, indescribable, life-changing experience picked you up like a whirlwind and hurled you so far away from home that when you come back you feel like a stranger in your own home town, a visitor from another world, alone in a crowd of those you once knew.

The only time you do not feel alone is when with another combat veteran.

- Only *he* understands that keeping your word, your honor, whilst standing face to face with Death gives meaning and purpose to life.
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- Only *he* understands that your terrifying — but *thrilling* — dance with Death has made your old world of backyards, barbecues and ballgames deadly dull.
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- Only *he* understands that your way of being due to combat-damaged emotions is not unusual, but the usual and you are OK, you are NORMAL for what you have been thru — repeat NORMAL!

There are countless hidden costs of combat that Warriors pay. One is adrenaline addiction. Most combat veterans – including this writer – feel that war was the high point of our lives, and emotionally, life has been downhill ever since. This is because we came home adrenaline junkies. This was not our idea, we got that way doing our duty in combat situations such as:

- Crouching in a foxhole waiting for attacking enemy soldiers to get close enough for you to start shooting;
- Hugging the ground, waiting for the signal to leap up and attack the enemy;
- Sneaking along on a combat patrol out in no man's land, seeking a gunfight;
- Suddenly realizing that you are walking in the middle of a mine field.

- Circumstances like these skyrocket your feelings of aliveness far above and beyond civilian life:  
Never have you felt so terrified – yet so *thrilled*;  
Never have you seen sky so blue, grass so green, breathed air so sweet, etc.;

because waltzing with Death makes you feel stratospheric aliveness from being filled to the brim with adrenaline — *pressed down and running over!*

This unforgettable experience of being sky-high on adrenaline is why you come home basically “thrill-crazy” – that is, to use a slang expression, you do things now that you once thought were “crazy” in order to obtain thrills/excitement. To say this another way, after the indescribable, life-changing thrill of being shot at without result -- you now have a compulsive, compelling craving for *similar* profound stirrings of your thoughts or emotions -- read: thrills/excitement/aliveness from danger. (This is a description of being addicted to adrenaline).

*QUESTION:* Do you know that you are suffering from adrenaline poisoning and have become an adrenaline addict/junkie?

*ANSWER:* No you do not, because being wacked-out on it 24/7, day after day, month after month, becomes the “new normal.” You do not think anything is wrong with being constantly high as a kite on adrenaline because it is not un-usual but the usual – the common everyday condition you are in when fighting for your life.

Then you come home where the addictive, euphoric rush of aliveness/adrenaline hardly ever happens in the normal course of events. You miss being sky-high on it and find normal boring. You hunger for your “fix” of thrills/excitement/danger like an addict hungers for his “fix” of heroin. Then what often happens? “Quick — pass me the bottle, drug, motorcycle, fast car, thrill-drive, drag race, speedboat, airplane, parachute, extreme sport, rock climbing, big game hunt, fist fight, knife fight, gun fight, etc.”

Being poisoned by adrenaline is bad enough, but it gets worse. Another of the countless hidden costs of combat is the dirty little secret that no one talks about -- which is -- most combat veterans, including this writer, come home unable to feel our feelings. It works like this.

In battle, it is understood that you give your word of honor to not let your fear stop you from doing your duty. To keep your word, you must numb up/shut down your fear. But the numb-up/shut-down mechanism does not work like a tight, narrow rifle shot; it works like a broad, spreading shot gun blast. Thus when you numb up your fear, you numb up virtually all other feelings as well.

The more combat, the more fear you must “not feel.” You may get so numbed up/shut down inside that you cannot feel much of anything. You become an emotionally dead man walking, feeling virtually nothing for nobody (if you let yourself be stopped in the flow of fighting by feelings of grief for fallen friends you may join them). This condition is known as “battle-hardened,” meaning that you can feel hard feelings like hate and anger, but not soft, tender feelings (which is bad news for loved ones. The good news is that they can read Writer’s Note (1), *Towards Accepting a Combat Vets Way of Being [Why combat vets are like they are, and how to connect with them]* for a full discussion of this topic).

In sum, the reason that the rush of alcohol, drugs, adrenaline, etc. is so attractive, so compelling is because you get to feel *something*, which is a step up from the awful numbed up/shut down deadness of feeling *nothing*.

Although you may be an emotionally dead man walking thru life mostly alone, you are not lonely. You have a constant companion from combat – Death. It stands close behind, a little to the left. Death whispers in your ear; “Nothing matters outside my touch, and I have not touched you...*YET!*”

Death never leaves you – it is your best friend, your most trusted advisor, your wisest teacher. Death teaches you that every day above ground is a fine day. Death teaches you to feel fortunate on good days, and bad days — well, they do not exist. Death teaches you that each day of life is sufficient unto itself. Death teaches you that you can postpone its touch by earning serenity.

Another of the countless hidden costs of combat is loss of serenity/peace of mind. Before battle you may have been pretty much even-tempered – that is; not hot-tempered but sort of cool — maybe even had more or less peace of mind. After combat, however, many vets — including this writer:

- are super-quick to be impatient, annoyed, displeased, vexed;
- are intensely roused to fits of anger at the slightest irritation.

*QUESTION:* Are you aware that you have changed? Do you see this negative change in yourself?

*ANSWER:* The bad news is that most likely you do not see it because it is the Human Condition to “not see” negative changes in yourself that may be quite obvious to others. This is why you may not know that combat has changed you in the head. Consequently when a loved one (or a stranger) respectfully suggests that maybe you have changed — and perhaps not for the better — very often you may deeply resent it and perceive them as The Enemy. (This is more bad news for loved ones. The good news is that the vet’s woman can take a little step that helps her man big time. See Writer’s Note [2], *A PTSD Tidal Wave Is Starting To Crash Down Upon America and what you can do about it* for a full discussion of this topic).

If you are one of those vets with a new pattern of instant anger, the bad news is that this is a dead giveaway that you suffer from combat-caused troubled mind, commonly called “PTSD.” (The good news is that you can read Writer’ Note [3], *A Veteran’s Explanation of PTSD And How This Website Prevents Suicide* for a full discussion of this topic and perhaps gain a helpful understanding of your situation).

If you are one of those vets who wonder why you have trouble maintaining successful relationships, wonder no more. It is extremely difficult to do when:

- You suffer from adrenaline poisoning and the only worthy people in your book are those addicted to thrill-seeking;
- you cannot feel your soft, tender feelings;
- your mind is troubled and you are instantly angry over not much.

The good news is that serenity/peace of mind can be regained by a lot of prayer and acceptance. Acceptance is the key to serenity. This simple phrase holds a vast field of Understanding. Acceptance is taking one step out of denial and accepting/allowing your repressed painful combat

memories, and repressed coming home disappointments to be re-lived/suffered thru/shared with other combat vets – and thus de-fused.

Each time you accomplish this dreaded but necessary act of courage/desperation:

The pain and tears get less than the time before;

More tormenting combat demons hiding in the darkness of your gut are thrown out into the healing sunlight of awareness, thereby disappearing them;

The less bedeviling combat demons, the more serenity earned. (See Writer' Note [4], *How and Why the Warrior's Code Was Written — a step-by-step guide how to get out of PTSD and in to Serenity* for a full discussion of this topic).

Serenity is, regretfully, rather an indistinct quality, but it is experienced as an immense feeling of contentment, peace of mind, fulfillment, and satisfaction deep down inside you:

- from knowing that you did your duty under fire no matter what it cost you to keep your word to do so, thereby proving to yourself — whether others know it or not — that you are a Warrior, a Man of Honor worthy of respect;
- and from being grateful to Higher Power/your Creator for sparing you.

It is an iron law of nature that such serenity lengthens life span to the max.

It is also an iron law of nature that to keep your serenity you must continue to keep your word of honor in civilian life else bad things may happen. It works like this. Unlike civilians who are not trained to keep their word, their honor — the importance of doing your duty and keeping your word of honor was drilled so deep into you by the Military that it became more important than life itself as proven by the fact that you were willing to die to keep it. Consequently if you throw away in civilian life something that important it is only natural to feel a sense of self-betrayal, loss of honor, unworthiness, etc. These poisonous feelings from trashing your training may grow so powerful they destroy your self-esteem; your life may spiral down into the living death of self-hatred and you may think of suicide to end the horror you have made of your life.

The lesson: unlike un-trained civilians, veterans must keep their word, their *honor/self-esteem* in the civilian world like they did in the Warriors World lest their tough training triggers tragic times..

***Down thru the dusty centuries it has always been thus.  
It always will be, for what is seared into a man's soul  
who stands face to face with death  
never changes.***

Signed, Paul R. Allen

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*“Dedicated to absent friends in unmarked graves“*



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*MESSAGE BY WRITER: You have complete freedom to use the Warrior's Code of Honor and Writer's Notes any way you wish (outside of re-writing them). The whole idea is to get the Code and Writer's Notes out there any way we can because they form a Group Therapy that is increasingly preventing combat vet suicides as word about this website spreads.*

*I would appreciate that when you use the Code you cite this website at [www.warriorscodeofhonor.com](http://www.warriorscodeofhonor.com) so people can visit the Responses to "The Code" section immediately below this message and read what Veterans, their loved ones, civilians, etc. say about the Code helping them, how this website is preventing suicides, etc.*

Thanks, Paul Allen

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