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**"VETERANS' CHILDREN" VALIDATES
TRANS-GENERATIONAL TRAUMA OF WAR**

***New Organization Supports, Shares the Stories of those
Affected by Their Parents' PTSDs From Past Conflicts***

DENVER – Nov. 11, 2009 – Since the Vietnam Era, the American psychiatric community has recognized the returning war veterans' affliction of what is now commonly known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). (What was called 'battle fatigue' during World War II was treated with little regard, and perhaps a short furlough at best, to being ignored or considered cowardice at worst.)

While much of the research and advanced treatment of PTSD has (delete-since) come out of the 'dark ages' (add) since World War II the focus has been on the veterans themselves. What has never been addressed and understood, until now, is how the stress from distant battlefields has affected the families of veterans (returning veterans' families after their homecoming, and over their lifetimes).

Today – Veterans' Day – the first organization to support warfare's often invisible victims has launched with an online community, www.veteranschildren.com. Denver-based Veterans' Children is dedicated to exploring the trans-generational consequences of living with the trauma of war, and serving as a resource center and support group for thousands of individuals and families affected by their loved ones' PTSD.

"Veterans' Children's mission is to heal, inform and serve as a forum for veterans and their families in creating a historic bridge of emotional reconciliation between children and their parents who have served our country from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam to today's conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan," explained the organization's founder, Leila Levinson, author of *Gated Grief*, a memoir and oral history about her father's experience as a Jewish-American doctor liberating a Nazi Concentration Camp in 1945.

The unspoken trauma he witnessed there and his daughter's own journey through self-discovery and psychological healing are chronicled through the book. Inspired by her own experience of trans-generational trauma expressed through her life as a daughter, wife and mother, Levinson spent several years interviewing dozens of World War II veterans and their grown children across the country. Addressing this "collateral damage" experienced by these veterans' children was the inspiration for *Gated Grief* and the creation of the new organization.

[*Gated Grief* is forthcoming from Cable Publishing, www.cablepublishing.com, and will be digitally downloadable from the Veterans' Children site.]

"As I spoke with these veterans – most now in their 80s – their wives and their grown children, I encountered similar stories to my father's and to my own," explained Levinson. "These men had no idea what they would find behind those camp gates, and had little support in dealing with the horror they saw. Their inability to process their grief or to even speak about their experiences has affected the lives of thousands of Americans over several generations. Addressing this trauma and processing this grief is the goal of my book, and in establishing the support organization, Veterans' Children."

Levinson's research found that many veterans locked away their memories out of a desire to protect their children and assimilate back into civilian life.

"The horror was almost never discussed, and as a result continues to this very day, on the eve of the 65th anniversary of the end of World War II," she said. "The trauma manifests on an invisible battlefield – the mind and soul of the veteran," Levinson said. "However, their wives and husbands and children are *also* witnesses to the battle and are its unintended victims. They become the targets of anger or torment, the students of depression, anxiety and melancholy. The family absorbs the unresolved trauma. (into their own trans-generational post-traumatic stress disorders.)

"There is a ripple effect that is devastating if not checked," Levinson continued. "I was never aware of what my father had been through during the War until after he died; and, even then it was quite by accident. But, with that revelation I finally understood that my own depression, my own sadness was a direct result of my father's. Despite

his best intentions, he had transmitted his trauma to me. And my depression was in turn passing his trauma along to my children.”

Levinson’s conversations with veterans and their families revealed how common her experience is. (As Levinson met and interviewed more and more veterans and children of veterans, she quickly realized her story was not unusual.) The Veterans’ Children community and Web site was created as a place for these stories to be told. The site’s navigation is designed to allow visitors to engage in conversations with other veterans and other children and grandchildren of veterans, to get information about PTSD, and to tell their stories – through words, photographs and video.

“Since we have recognized that soldiers suffer trauma during and after war, we have learned that sharing the memories, whether through writing or speaking, is cathartic, bringing healing relief,” said Levinson. “The same is true for the children and grandchildren of veterans. The Veterans’ Children community is about breaking the chain of trauma and freeing our parents, grandparents and ourselves from isolation. Sometimes it seems easier to remain ignorant, but we children can be there for one another as we embark on crossing over into this new terrain of hearing, listening to and speaking the unspeakable.”

2010 marks the 65th anniversary of the Holocaust and the liberation of the camps. Veterans’ Children is planning events to commemorate the anniversary. (more books and more info on the website, trips to the battlefields and camp sites in Europe, etc.)].