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Heartbreaking and Inspirational



Josephus J. Duckworth

ILLUMINATING THE MENTAL HEALTH WOUNDS OF WAR

BY CHRISTA MCINTYRE/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

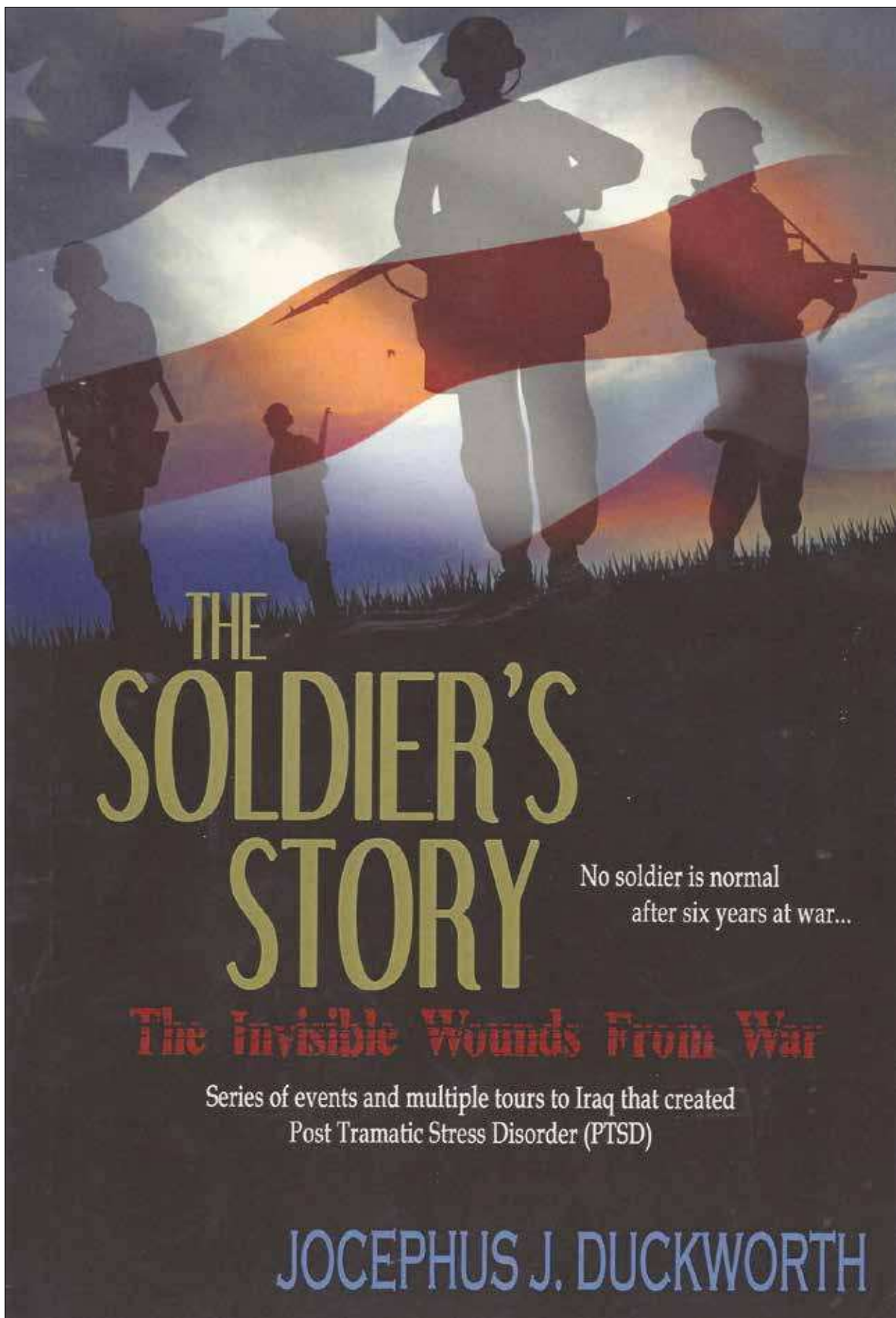
Portland resident, retired Staff Sgt. Josephus J. Duckworth has published a book to help his fellow combat veterans titled “The Soldier’s Story: The Invisible Wounds from War.”

Duckworth spent 16 years in the Army and served four tours in Iraq. During his last tour in 2009, he began to suspect he was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a mental illness. He struggled with inner turmoil and fought for three years to get treatment from the Army.

Before his first intake appointment with a military psychologist, he wrote a 25 page statement describing the side effects he was experiencing from active combat. Those 25 pages grew into his book and his new found dedication to stop suicide deaths among his fellow war veterans. It’s estimated that between 20 to 22 veterans take their own lives each day,

American soldiers returning from World War II were described as being “shell shocked,” a term that after the Vietnam War became the root clinical diagnosis for what is now known as PTSD. The mental anguish was tied to the homelessness, chronic illnesses and addictions that a good number of Vietnam vets were dealing with as they tried to transition back to society. Serving in combat, being witness to the realities of warfare and losing friends to fire takes a toll on a soldier’s mental health. Victims of domestic abuse, natural disasters and terrorist attacks also suffer from PTSD.

The number of soldiers returning home with PTSD has consistently risen in the U.S., and more recent combat veterans, with tours in the Middle East have the highest rate of PTSD in history. Only 50 percent of those veterans,



however, seek help for PTSD and of those, only 20 percent finish their therapy. Many veterans with PTSD turn to street and prescription drugs or alcohol to self soothe their symptoms.

Duckworth describes PTSD as living under constant

stress, with flashback episodes of traumatic events, and realistic nightmares, all which can result in emotional outbursts and violence.

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