

# Editor's Introduction

**Cristina Kirklighter,**  
*Texas A & M*  
*University – Corpus*  
*Christi*

---

---

I'm happy to introduce this special issue devoted to veterans and welcome our special editors and contributing authors. When Eileen Schell and Ivy Kleinbart first approached me about this special issue, I could not help but reflect on the personal familial connections I have with veterans. As someone whose husband died during military active duty, I am a surviving spouse and will carry this strong identity for the rest of my life. Also, two of my cousins and father-in-law served during the Vietnam War, and my father is a veteran. When I was a professor, I was open about sharing my stories as a military widow in an academic environment that sometimes did not understand military experiences. We had a number of veterans, active-duty, and military family members attending my university. The Naval Air Station was just across the bridge, but some administrators, faculty, and students had little knowledge of what occurred across that bridge. Fortunately, others did cross that bridge to make this institution military-friendly.

# Introduction to the Special Issue on Veterans' Writing

**Eileen E. Schell,**  
*Syracuse University*  
**& Ivy Kleinbart,**  
*Syracuse University*

---

---

*The authors offer an introduction to the special issue on veterans' writing, highlighting the four major areas of work that emerge in the issue: 1) veterans' writing in extracurricular settings, whether in community projects and writing groups or specific programs based on veterans' wellness, healing, and recovery; 2) veterans' writing in the composition classroom on university campuses or at military bases; 3) faculty development initiatives that help prepare university faculty, instructors, and TAs for their work with veterans in the classroom. A fourth area centers around veterans' creative works--poetry, in particular—and reviews of the literature of veterans studies and veterans' writing.*

---

---

**I**n March of 2010, we started a community writing group for military veterans at Syracuse University, open not only to students but also to all veterans and military family members in the Syracuse area. With different individual motivations and reasons for starting the group, we decided to focus on how creative nonfiction could be useful in helping our members to explore their experiences in and out of the military. We had no idea what to

# Veterans' Writing and a Rhetoric of Witnessing

**Karen Springsteen,**  
Wayne State University

---

---

*Four examples of Iraq veterans' self-sponsored writing and media compositions are reviewed in order to develop a rhetoric of "witnessing" (Oliver, "Witnessing and Testimony" 80) with which to engage veterans' writing. Particular attention is paid to how this rhetoric can help reframe anxieties that accompany faculty work with veterans in composition classes and in higher education more generally.*

---

---

In her August 2, 2011 column, titled "On War, Guilt, and 'Thank You for Your Service,'" West Point Professor of English Elizabeth Samet argued that the ritual of US citizens thanking troops for their service is a "poor substitute for something more difficult and painful—a conversation about what war does to the people who serve and the people who don't." That conversation can be difficult to initiate in a nation that has seen fifteen years of a post-9/11 global war on terror conducted, for the most part, outside its own borders. US civilians may assume, for example, that all recent veterans have deployed to Iraq or

# Writing to Bear Witness: A Grass Roots Healing Movement

**Melissa Whitworth,**  
*Syracuse University*

---

---

*During the post 9/11 period, veteran writing programs—led by grassroots movements such as Warrior Writers and the Combat Paper Project—have proliferated across the US. Clinical and anecdotal evidence shows writing is an effective means to address the trauma of warfare, focusing on the unnatural experience of combat, PTSD and moral injury. Most importantly, the writing groups provide an informal, supportive and communal environment in which veterans share stories with each other, and with the civilian population. This essay follows the story of Nathan Lewis, an Iraq War veteran and an influential (and beloved) member of the veteran writing community. It blends journalism, by a writer following the “Solutions Journalism model, with academic inquiry—from the perspective of the soldier/veteran and the journalist/witness. Nathan’s story of war trauma and writing (through multiple interviews) is threaded through seminal moments in post-war literature, trauma theory and the concept of witnessing.*

---

---

## **NATHAN’S STORY**

**N**athan Lewis lifts the lid of a large plastic grey vat. “Shredded uniforms” it says on the outside, in thick black

# Re-Authoring Narratives: Reflective Writing with Veterans with Spinal Cord Injury

**Aimee C. Mapes, Ph.D.,**  
*University of Arizona*  
**& Michael T. Hartley,**  
**Ph.D.,**  
*University of Arizona*

---

---

*This article describes a community outreach project for veterans with spinal cord injury and disease (SCI/D) that was particularly effective as a short-term veteran writing group. Sponsored by a grant from the Paralyzed Veterans of America, The University of Arizona hosted an outreach project for veterans with SCI/D in October 2013. When situated in a trusted community of veterans with spinal cord injury and disease, reflection afforded a space for re-authoring experiences wherein veterans were able to make meaning from military experiences. In this manuscript, we highlight reflective writing as a fundamental component of the community outreach because reflection was essential for identifying and sharing strengths to carry forward.*

---

---

**W**riting groups for veterans of military conflicts are not new. Yet there's a continued interest in their potential for supporting veterans in transition. In a recent issue of *Veterans in Higher Education*, Marcia Baxter Magolda declares that supporting veterans begins with their "meaning making and self-authorship" (86) best prompted through acts of "reflection,

# “A Story Worth Telling”: Sharing Stories and Impacting Lives in the Veterans’ Book Group Project at Fort Benning

**Paige Paquette,**  
*with MAJ Adam  
Anderson, SGT La  
Toya Burnette, SGT  
JeQuetta Canady,  
Specialist E4 Brandon  
Carr, SGT First Class  
Nathaniel Coakley,  
Ret., and Staff  
Sergeant Yolanda  
Teamer*

---

---

*In the fall of 2014, Troy University partnered with the Alabama Humanities Foundation, working in conjunction with the Maine Humanities Council, to provide a veterans’ reading group to wounded warriors at the Warrior Transition Battalion at Fort Benning, GA. The program, Story Swap: Literature and the Veteran Experience, consisted of five, ten-week sessions. During weekly meetings, veterans came together to share dinner and swap stories. While reading and discussing short stories, novels, poetry, essays, and art, the veterans learned much about each other and themselves. In this article, Paige Paquette, an assistant professor of English and the group facilitator, will discuss her involvement in the planning and implementation of the program. Six of the participating veterans will share their experiences in a literary program that allowed them to realize they all have a story worth telling.*

---

---

*Everyone has a story. Some stories have been written, some have been told, and some are just waiting on the opportunity.*  
—Paige Paquette

# Stealth Veterans and Citizenship Pedagogy in the First Year Writing Classroom

**Derek G. Handley,**  
*United States Naval  
Academy*

---

---

*This essay supplements previous studies on effective strategies for instructing veterans in the first year writing classroom. Those studies typically focus on students who identify as veterans, but there are many veterans entering American universities who do not reveal their past military experiences. This essay explores one approach of developing a first year writing course that responds to the experiences of “stealth” veterans while simultaneously meeting the educational needs of all the students. I contend that a rhetorical education approach to writing instruction allows veterans to connect their writing with both citizenship and their former military service, and may reduce the divide between veteran and non-veteran students. I focus on how a citizenship pedagogy could allow veterans to see a stronger purpose for their academic work and to develop an understanding of how citizens can make decisions through inquiry.*

---

---

**J**ust a year after deploying to the Middle East for the start of Operation Iraqi Freedom, I returned home to Pittsburgh and ended my active duty career of nearly eleven years in the Navy. I was disoriented to say the least. Initially, I noticed how removed

# Writing Faculty on the Marine Corps Base: Building Strong Classroom Communities Through Engagement and Advocacy

---

---

**Bree McGregor,**  
George Mason University  
**& Lourdes Fernandez,**  
George Mason University

*In this paper, the authors introduce the voluntary education center (VEC), which is a multi-school campus located on military bases in the United States and worldwide that offers accredited undergraduate and graduate degrees to service members and their families. The VEC combines military and higher education elements, offering a productive site of study for the complex interactions between writing instructors and student-veterans in this community of practice. Findings from interviews with five VEC writing instructors offer perspectives on teaching student-veterans in a non-traditional academic environment and illustrate the strategies faculty deploy as they engage with student-veterans, as well as the resources and support they seek. Implications for faculty in traditional higher education settings who work with increasing numbers of veterans are explored.*

---

---

*When I'm [teaching Marine college writing students] on base I say, 'Listen, I'm a hippie. My family said I was so crazy for teaching here. But I love our soldiers and I think the best thing we can do for them is not send them to war... but whatever, that's a different [conversation].' And so I say, 'You guys should teach me about military life.' So*



# Faculty Development Workshops with Student- Vet Participants: Seizing the Induction Possibilities

**Sue Doe,**  
Colorado State University  
**& Lisa Langstraat,**  
Colorado State University

---

---

*While many colleges and universities have earned a “military friendly” designation, too few offer opportunities for faculty to learn about military culture and the specific issues facing student veterans as they transition from active duty to student status. This article chronicles the authors’ experiences with and approaches to a workshop series, “Working with Post-9/11 Student-Veterans: A Faculty Primer,” which we have facilitated over the last several years at Colorado State University. Stressing the importance of a strength-based (versus deficit) model for the workshops and the integral role of student-veterans’ participation in the workshops, the essay offers an overview of strategies, common themes, materials and outcomes for faculty development workshops about this important issue.*

---

---

*A Short Course on Student-Veterans in the Classroom: Sponsored by the CSU Institute for Learning and Teaching (TILT)*

*Over a quarter of a million veterans are currently enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities, and a quarter million more have applied for GI Bill education benefits. In total, nearly 2 million*

# Articulating Veteran-Friendly: Preparing First-Year Writing Instructors to Work with Veterans

**Thomas Sura**  
West Virginia  
University

---

---

*The CCC position statement on student veterans (2015) reminds writing program administrators (WPAs) of their responsibility to prepare faculty to understand not only the challenges these returning students may face but also the assets they bring with them. This essay argues that writing programs must develop faculty education programs that go beyond solo workshops to articulate what it means to be veteran friendly. Specifically, this essay identifies and describes a special-interest-group (or SIG) model for instructor education. This SIG relies on a micro-curriculum to promote a mode of “uncoverage” in learning about student veterans (Reid, 2004). Instructor reflections from a pilot program identify and define characteristics that help to articulate what veteran friendly means in local contexts including awareness of student-veteran issues, empathy toward student veterans, and confidence in working with student veterans.*

---

---

As veterans continue to return home from deployments around the globe and seek education, colleges and universities also seek means of acting as veteran-friendly “sponsors of literacy” in order to aid student veterans’ learning and success

# Heart of the Enemy

**Jenny Pacanowski**

---

---

The day you waved at me  
For the first time  
The convoy was  
Transformed  
Into a parade  
I lowered my weapon  
Waved back like a beauty queen  
In desert camo...  
A parade of freedom  
Of winning hearts and minds  
Of this liberated country  
My mission was clear  
I was present  
We had arrived  
To help  
To save  
To heal  
To love

We convoyed into your village  
With our green ambulance  
The leaders  
Presented you and the other children  
For US  
To poke and prod with our instruments  
Of medicine

# Review:

## Sue Doe and Lisa Lanstraat (Eds.). *Generation Vet: Composition, Student- Veterans, and Post- 9/11 University*

Jeanne Law Bohannon,  
*Kennesaw State  
University*

---

Sue Doe and Lisa Langstraat's edited collection of theory, practice, and personal stories from both teachers and veteran students provides insights into how the field of composition serves and networks with increasing numbers of the specialized veteran-student population. The most significant contribution this collection makes lies in its consistently networked connections between students and instructors in compelling examples that include prose, poetry, and personal narratives. The essays all point to both challenges and successes in composition classrooms that serve veteran communities and veteran-students. They also connect back to *Reflections'* generative mission of bringing teachers, students, and community partners to talk about public service-writing.

The editors present a comprehensive introduction that points readers to particular locations in the text for theory, pedagogy, and empirical studies. They organize the text into three parts: I- understanding veterans

## Review Essay:

**Paula Caplan. *When Johnny and Jane Come Marching Home: How All of Us Can Help Veterans***

**David Chrisinger. *See Me For Who I Am: Student Veterans' Stories of War and Coming Home***

**Catherine St. Pierre,**  
*The Ohio State  
University*

---

Veterans are cast into two roles in American public discourse: Hero (Hawrot Weigel and Detweiler Miller) and Threat (also called Rambo (Schell & Kleinbart, Valentino); Ticking Time Bomb (Hawrot Weigel and Detweiler Miller, Wood); and Victim (Katopes) among others). Only half of one percent of Americans serve on active duty, so the gap between military and civilians is wide. In their books, Paula Caplan and David Chrisinger disrupt and nuance rhetorical constructions of veterans through radical reframing of PTSD and trauma.

On first look, Caplan, a Harvard psychologist and the student veterans at University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point, who Chrisinger highlights, seem to have relatively little in common; the authors belong to different generations and intellectual traditions. Despite their differences, these books enrich one another. *When Johnny and Jane Come Marching Home: How All of Us Can Help Veterans* and *See Me For Who I Am: Student Veterans' Stories of War and Coming Home* both challenge readers,

# Review:

## Lovella Calica and Kevin Basl (Eds). *Warrior Writers: A Collection of Writing & Artwork By Veterans*

Aleashia Walton  
Valentin,  
University of Cincinnati

---

---

*W*arrior Writers: A Collection of Writing & Artwork By Veterans offers a voice for soldiers speaking their truths and a rare glimpse inside their hearts and minds for the civilians who remain homeside, creating an open channel to the lesser known, (and rarely discussed), personal details of warfare through poetry, creative nonfiction, and photography. Editors Lovella Calica and Kevin Basl are helping warrior writers conquer the divide between the public sphere and veteran experience, (from Vietnam to Afghanistan), one line at a time.

The concept of warrior poetry isn't a new one. War has long inspired prose. Since the Iliad, one of the oldest poems in the Western world, the voices of soldiers have led battles both on the field of warfare and on the rocky terrain of creative writing and poetry. What makes this collection different? The works included in *Warrior Writers: A Collection of Writing & Artwork By Veterans* were written by veterans working through their experiences in a