

You can overcome anything if you try

Lewis: I was in the United States Army and I was in the bottom half of Vietnam, below Saigon. We were running convoys and we had stopped at a place called Bearcat, which was a huge, big fire base, and we decided well, we'd go down to the river, set up an ambush, so I took the point again and as I went over the bridge there was a hell of an explosion. All I know that I was lifted out of the track and blown into a rice paddy. I was AirVac'd to Saigon to a major hospital, and they have a huge hospital there, and I was so shot up, I mean, the only place I'm not hit is where my flak jacket was.

I called my wife from Japan, and I told her, I said, "I'm in Japan," and she said, "Are you okay? Are you hurt?" And I said, "Well, I'm shot up a little bit." I remember they were changing the bandages when she came, and the nurse said "Your wife's here," and then she just pulled the curtain back and there I am naked, laying out, and she saw me the way I was, all of the bullet holes, everything. She just grabbed me and hugged me and kissed me. As long as my wife accepted me, I could go with that. I could build on that.

I would go home and come back and go home and come back. They'd do a major surgery, I'd get healed up enough and then I could go home for maybe 30 days, and then I'd come back. I was discharged from the military as totally disabled. At that time the VA was in Salisbury which was up the road from us, so I went over and they said "Yeah, you know, that's what you got, you've got depression, we can treat that."

They really just go over backwards to help you do what you can and it's just really a nice place to go. If you're a soldier you can't talk to anybody about soldiering but other soldiers, and it's just a brotherhood. I've, you know, been there done that. Don't let that thing eat you up. You're bigger than it. I said, you can overcome anything if you try, and you've got Vet centers you can go to, you've got a lot of psychiatrists up there to work with, you've got a lot of outpatient treatment. You need to take advantage of that. You've just got to go and get help.



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