

This Vietnam Veteran found strength in sobriety

Jeff: My name is Jeff and I was in the Air Force. I was a Security Policeman. I served from '75 through '80. I was in the 15th Engineers guarding airplanes. I did Figure 8s around a refueling aircraft. At the tail end of Vietnam, my buddy had told me that we probably didn't want to be trudging through jungles, so we decided to join the Air Force. It seemed like a good job at the time. Then we found out that Air Force bases were the ones being rocketed in Vietnam and I slapped him.

It was a pretty easy transition for me, but later in life once I went through a divorce years later, I ended up on the streets. I had lost a job, I had no real want to get work at the time because I had just pretty much lost a family also. My wife and I had been partiers. We were part of the 70s. Drinking was a regular part of my life. The problem is most of the people that I know didn't have the alcoholism I did. I had the "ism" part of it and when I got into the streets and thought everything was lost, that became my way out. I could get myself a 40 ounce of beer and fall asleep under the bridge.

There were times that I felt totally abandoned, especially when I had my divorce. When I walked out of my house, I walked out of my house with a cardboard box and three pairs of jeans. I had been a family man all my life. My 17-year-old son was still kissing me on my cheek to go to sleep. It just didn't work between me and my wife anymore, but they had to pay for it.

I decided that enough is enough and so I went to the VA and met a beautiful gentleman named Carl. When I got in there, I went through the program. I was gonna be steadfast, I was gonna stand strong, and I fell down and I started drinking again. I ended up back on the streets. I went through their program a second time and they felt that I needed a little bit of mental health work in there. I was diagnosed with bipolar, I was diagnosed with general anxiety, situational anxiety and to me, I think the reason why I continued to drink was because every time I started getting anxious and feeling that anxiety, it calmed me down I thought.

The year-long rehab program that I was in was out of Fort Sheridan, Wyoming. It was high intensity as far as when you were going through the Alcohol Recovery Program. I was doing a lot of studying of the Buddhism people and some Hindu, looking into that. They allowed my spiritual side to take over what I was doing as far as my recovery was concerned at that time.

When you get in and you get into one of their programs, they really take interest in you and they really are concerned about what you're about to go through. There are people out there that devote their lives to service of other human beings. All three of my children talk to me now. We talk at least once a week to each other. It means everything in the world to me. I have my family back.

This is a poem that I wrote back sometime in around 2011. It's kind of a tribute to all the guys I knew back when I was in Service and other guys that I have met throughout life.

It's called "These Men I've Met":
Who are these men I've met
So far apart they touch?



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So close together they cover the globe right here
Each with their own story and unafraid to share.

Who are these souls on journeys each their own
Yet together at this crossing?

Some would say this is my choosing
Others would say no.

And yet not one of them would shy away.
Who are these ones laughing at the next adventure?

These that walk alone or together.

I've watched these ones hug and pat each other on the back
And walk alone and together just to be sure of each new trek.

They grumble and they laugh and they joke and they cry
And rage and sometimes mostly wonder why.

But I've watched them and I've been one of them
And I say I know these men.

And although alone I walk with them together.



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