

It was a wound that hurt more than the shrapnel

Tim: My name is Tim. I am a Vietnam Era Veteran Marine. I was in Vietnam just under six months and had an RPG land about three feet away from me and was wounded. Fortunately, I was just about to jump over the side of a bunker, and it landed right in front and splattered me up my whole right side with shrapnel. So, I was wounded in right leg, in the head, in the hand, in the stomach. I think there were 44 Marines who were wounded, and two who were killed that night.

I ended up in a Navy Hospital. Everybody was pretty happy, even though we were pretty wrecked. And then the evening news came on and they were showing the big protests, and the room just went completely silent. It was a wound that probably hurt more than the shrapnel from the RPG, and it still obviously affects me today, but it just felt like the country was against us.

I went back to the summer camp that I had worked all through high school and the first three years of college. Things had changed. There were counselors there in their first week of training, sitting around the campfire chanting antiwar slogans, and thinking it was funny, and I was thinking of the Marines and all of the folks still dying in this war. It was a tough summer. And then I went... got married and went back to college. And I sat once in a political science class where Vietnam came up and the students were just ripping on us. People were saying like, "I could never kill anybody. How can they do that?" And events like that would keep coming up. The words Vietnam, I would have this shooting hot pain in the back of my neck.

And so, I began a life of avoidance and ducking and hiding and just keep your mind on the job and anything else. And every once in a while, things would come up and would remind me of it. After I started teaching, I was in a classroom one day, it was an anatomy class, and they spent the semester dissecting calves, and the first hour I was in there, I could just feel myself losing it. And then the second hour came and I taught, but I was just drifting away, and at the end of that class it happened to be my prep time, and I wandered out into the parking lot. And I was just thinking about this naked body of a dead Marine being lifted up into this helicopter and the smell of a... we had killed an NVA Soldier and spent the... I was on that position the next day and sat there in the heat smelling this decaying Soldier and thinking that could be **Tanjee**, who was so good to me. And one of the assistant principals happened to be a Marine and came out, and all I could say was, "Vietnam" and he took me home. The staff was good. They didn't put me back in that room again.

The nights... I would just get these panic attacks and would just pray for it to get light again.



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