

## Solutions to manage troubling memories

**Robert:** My name is Robert, I was in the United States Marine Corp. I joined in 1967. When I got to Vietnam they created a position and I worked for Division Casualty. Short-term I was a casualty reported for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Marine Division. I confirmed wounds and deaths. I confirmed if you were shot in the stomach, I had to make sure you were shot in the stomach not in the head, things of that nature. We processed over 1200 dead Marines at that time and something like seven or eight thousand casualties. There was no transition for us.

You know some of my friends had been in search and destroys and then two days later they were done with the Army or the Navy and they were back to nothing. We had no direction. There was no transition for us.

I went through by drinking binges, my drugs, my marriages. It got so bad when I was drinking that when I was showering once I started thinking okay all I have to do is cut this wrist and I am out of here. I felt like I should have died in Vietnam. I should have been there. I should have been one of those guys instead of the guy that skated through it.

I would have some very severe anger issues. I would react before I thought. If you were a person that was being disrespectful to somebody in a bad way I would be punching you before you knew what was going on.

I was playing softball in El Dorado Hills and I see this Asian looking fellow. I remember the game was over and I am putting my shoes back on. He looks over at me and goes excuse me I heard you were in the Marine Corp. He was the company commander for Delta 326 during the 72-day siege. I never knew he lived in my area. So we started talking, became friends and then he kept telling me you have got to get your ass over there. I went to the VA in Mather and I had two psychiatrists in front of me. Those doctors put me in to a combat... or no a program PTSD program where it taught me what was wrong with me. Every time she would put something up on the board I kept going God damn I did that, I did this. She wasn't afraid to talk to Veterans. She wasn't a doctor-doctor, she was a clinica psychologist and she was good. She knew how to talk to Veterans.

After each session I would go home and talk to my wife, my third wife, and she was my voice of reason after all of these women that I had dated. I would explain to her what she had said to me and it gave me reason to go back. Afterwards I started to think more about my actions, what could happen. It brought me down to earth. I am not screaming anymore, I don't go head hunting anymore. I have a lot of good friends, a lot of good people, I am enjoying my family a lot more. I am enjoying my friends a lot more. I can understand when I talk to the young Veterans what they went through.

For the Viet Vet, all I can say it is time to do it now, it is not too late. You have to have faith and trust in your fellow Veterans. If they are telling you that you need some help, they are not blowing smoke. They are telling you that you need help. They can see inside your heart and your soul. You have got to take that advice. You have gotta do it for yourself, for your family, for your well-being.



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