

Finding a Veteran connection years after Vietnam

Interviewee: My name is Tyrone. I served in the US Army in the 199th Light Infantry Brigade in Vietnam Long Binh.

Before I knew it, I was going out on my first mission. We walked into the ambush. It was heavy gunfire. There was confusion. There was chaos. Several feet from the medic who was wounded. He was shot in the head. I moved in the direction to help the wound, or close the wound, and when I put my hand out to put the medic pack on his head, that's when the either concussion grenade or rocket hit nearby and blew me several feet. I can only guess around six feet or so. I was all turned around. And, and how it felt was as if my head was inside a big bell because there was tremendous vibration, and I later found out there was my brain in, ricocheting back and forth. And I sustained hearing loss at the time.

It was a total of 14 wounds to the body. Various parts of the body, from the head to literally to the ankle. I was deaf for 8 days and hearing gradually came back, but not enough to, without help from audio equipment.

Returning home, it was all right at first. First, drinking crept in. More drinking crept in. When a heavy rain would fall, it would change my mood. Helicopters, the sound of helicopters, often grew my attention as if I was momentarily hypnotized. It was just, I would just freeze because of the helicopter whirling.

I did not talk about Vietnam. I even start...I didn't even admit that I was a Vietnam Veteran. As far as my particular personal issues, they were all buried.

It wasn't maybe 26 years later that I got involved with the Vet center and part of a group. And I was able to build up a closeness, a camaraderie, that I hadn't experienced in quite a while with other men.

I would go down to the Vet center twice a month, plus once a month meeting one on one, with one of the counsellors.

I thought it was appropriate to get the talk and exchange, our ongoing struggles sometimes, thoughts, sleeplessness, and I thought it was helpful, I thought it was helpful, very helpful. I look forward to this ongoing communication, ongoing socialization.

Surely the warrior that Tyrone was in 1971, I'm certainly not that way now at 67. I'm not that way. And, and that's a, and that's a, in all honesty, that's the issue right there. Dealing with the change of physical limitations, restrictions, that is brought about by injuries in the past catching up with you now as you're aging.

We've all learned skills and abilities. You have more talent and skills than you know. You have to discover what you can do to uplift another even your community, even the young that you see, you can go about being a model or example. But whatever you do, you need to construct, not destruct. Do, do not become a burden to yourself. If you get unhappy, you really need to talk to someone.

Make a difference in someone's life, but first in your own life.



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