

The loss of his wife led Nick to face WWII

Nick: My name is Nick. I served in the Navy from February of '44 to April of '46, was in WWII. We picked up the tanks and the personnel and took them into the beach. I was in the campaign in Leyte, Luzon, Okinawa, the big one. You grow up pretty fast when you're 17 years old and you go in there, really fast. You either grow up or you go down. It seems like a different lifetime, '44 to '46. I never talked about it. My kids and my wife, I never talked about my service.

So I come home from the service and at that time — when I left I was an apprentice tool and die maker, and I went back to work there for but — not as a tool and die maker, just in assembly, and it was touch and go, touch and go. Things were bad in '46, as far as employment was concerned, but it was very difficult. You're out of sync. You're out of sync, so I went to school for a while.

Now, my wife died seven and a half years ago, after 50 years. I started to get bad, and I thought, "Well, it's from my wife dying," and I was going to psychiatrists, psychologists, went to the VA, so a psychiatrist interviewed me for one day and — well, for an hour — and he said "Well, I think we've found out what your problem is." I said, "Gee, that's nice." I said, "You mean I can stop shaking and get a night's sleep or something?" He says, "You're having a very bad emotional flashback." I said, "From what?" My service. I said, "That's 60 years ago!" He says, "How old was you?" I said, "17." He said, "Your wife dying and that was probably the two most important things that you'd done in your life and one is taking over for the other."

He said, "Well, you're going to do something different." I said "What?" He says, "I want you to talk about everything." I says, "I can't do that," but I talked, and the more I talk probably the better I feel. I go to counseling once a month and when I get down there, I let all the stress out, everything that's happening. They listen to you, but you've got to talk to people. That's the name of the game. You've got to get someone to listen to you. The services there, the country, the government, the VA, they all want to help you, but you've got to help yourself too.



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