

## A connection can turn your life around

**Howard:** My name is Howard. I served in the U.S. Army, Vietnam artillery, 1966-67. At the beginning, it didn't really seem that bad. Things went from not so bad to bad to worse to absolutely horrible.

In fact, I remember coming home and going back and hanging out with a couple of my other friends that had been to Vietnam. I really don't remember talking very much about what our experiences were.

I didn't tell anybody I was a Vietnam Vet unless it came forward. I just kind of grew my hair long and blended in with the scenery. And that's what I did. I was very withdrawn. I wasn't very open. I still am. I still am to a certain extent. I really moped around a lot. I moped around a lot. I didn't know, I was directionless. I got into drugs. Not necessarily hard drugs then, but you know the drug culture.

I was on and off in programs at the VA and various other places. I got into this group. It's been really a good thing for me to be able to be among your brothers. These guys are my brothers. It's a bond that cannot be broken. I don't care where you come from, who you are. You walk over to a guy on the street, you see him with a hat like this, you say, "Hey, where were you, brother?" Or I go Chu Lai '67. You make his day. I made my day.

I see a social worker. He conducts a once a week group. We all take turns if we want to say something about our experiences or about something, a person's day. I see him one on one once a month. And I also see a psychiatrist. Guys now who are retiring being my age start to think about things.

You had a kid. You worked. You're retired. Your kids are out of the house. And you're sitting around and you think. You go back to certain times. I think that every Vet should at least join an organization. When you join an organization, you find out information. I started going to meetings, participating in AA and NA groups. I have 2 fellowships. I always tell them I have 2 fellowships. I have the AA fellowship and my Veteran's fellowships. And Vets are my first because they've always been here.



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