

A hunting trip was the turning point for Mike

Mike: My name is Mike. I served in the United States Army from 1966 to 1969. I lived in a fourth-floor walk-up on Kings Highway in Brooklyn. There was one particular night. The windows are open, it's a hot summer night. You're laying in bed. You're half asleep. And, the lull of a tractor trailer outside at the stoplight was just idling. I guess there was a car stopped in front of him. The driver reached over and gave him a couple of toots with the airhorn. Well, that airhorn was our warning for a rocket attack. I took my wife and rolled off onto the floor. That I believe was one of the first times that I really felt that something is still in my mind that I can't get it out.

I found myself up at our hunting lodge, which I wouldn't go hunting for a good 15 years. But I found myself up there with a bunch of my friends. A few started talking about combat instances, and that sort of triggered a whole new batch of emotions coming out. I tried to hold those emotions back, tried to hold everything back, but still the thoughts, the dreams of years ago of what had happened in a combat area, all these things start to accumulate on you and almost get the best of you.

I have 3 of the most fantastic children. Truly blessed with 3 fantastic girls. Between them, they've given me 2 grandchildren. Two boys that are 2 boys that I never had. They are fantastic. They learned, I guess, a long time ago that if dad's quiet leave him alone. If dad's having a good time, we're all going to have a good time. But just once in a while if he seems to be a little bit depressed, let him sit.

I have a fantastic wife, almost 45 years' worth. Stuck by me with anger at times. Stuck by me with explosiveness and not just say in the household, but outside too. It was very difficult sometimes dealing with just...I'm not saying road rage or anything like that, but probably those symptoms even in a store. You had to have somebody brush by you like do I really need this in my life? I guess as you get older you get to the point where the heart and mind are still 20 years old, the body is not. Either you're going to learn how to calm down or you're not going to be around too long.

What I see from the young people coming back today, sometimes they're a little on the edgy side. Sometimes they're not. But take them in because these are our kids. They're our children. It's really tough to see them go overseas. You're happy when they come home, when they come home as whole as possible. Sometimes they're missing limbs. The body armor is a lot better than what we had, so the survival rate is a lot better. But a lot of times they are coming home and they're not as whole as they appear. These are the young people that should seek help, should seek counseling, come into a Veteran organization where you're around people who had the same experiences.

We all have that one common comradery. If a Veteran does need help, a Veteran organization and other Veterans are those that are going to help you get through whatever you need to get through. Even if you think you don't need help, relax, hang out with another vet. You'll feel better.

I do go to counseling now. It's amazing what they can do. Once you get beyond those emotions, you get beyond those emotions and I think it's a little bit more cope-able to get by in life. It does help at the VA, but the counseling, counseling I think is the number one thing. You're talking to another Veteran. The counselor that I see, he's a Veteran.



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He wasn't in a combat zone, but somehow, some way, you develop a rapport with him. And this counselor can pretty much help you through those rough edges. Just a few of the questions, I know they get emotional sometimes, but it's always better just to get it out.

I wish that I would have maybe seen a counselor 40 years ago. And maybe I would have maybe been able to have a more fulfilling life in some respects. But I'm a strong believer in it's never too late.



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