

Years later, Al reached out for treatment

Al: Hi, I'm Al. My years of service started in December 1st, 1976 and capped off in July of '07. My wife was raped in the unit, in the field, and I was away repairing at another site, a missile site, so I didn't see her for about two weeks. Come back, the commander didn't say anything, and she didn't tell me. Everybody just knows it but me, what happened. Now, if I was in my regular frame of mind, not in the military, I'd have just commenced to whooping on him, but because of the discipline of the military I had to endure that, and it's a tough pill to swallow, especially when everybody in your unit knows what's going on but you, and I'd take it personally because like I said, a lot of women have been mistreated in any job, whether it be military or not, but I was exposed to it live and it really bothered me.

I suppressed it because I had been so indoctrinated being a soldier, that you suck it up and keep moving, and I was really regimented to that way of thinking, and at the same time she was constantly heavily into drugs, she'd never shot it up, she snorted it, so I never understood that, and I had to get away from her because she was really toxic for me. The stress and depression built up like a volcano. It didn't allow me to fight with anyone but it affected me. I had a terrible after work habit, I would drink beer, not to drink to get drunk, but I would started drinking until I get home and once I'm home I may go through a case of beer that day.

It came to a crescendo at the end because I was very stressed. I couldn't talk to anybody, mostly shame. "This ain't supposed to happen to me, I'm squared away. I take care of business, why am I going through this?" I mean, this is what I went through, but my second wife was the most important person in helping me see medical, mental situations. She says to me "You're a good person, you're a good provider, but you don't do for you, and then you don't listen to the fact that everybody ain't the enemy no more," and when a new VA was built I see a doctor now twice a week.

They have two programs. The first one I went into was called Orientation. What it is is a lot of Vets together and each one of you bring to the table something a very unique way. That's what makes it work. Well, in Orientation it allows us to open up to each other. You've got a trained doctor in there who understands Vets. He runs the program, but he'll have different people come in, they give you different venues, but the program opens you up. It's a sound program, I love it. I tell every Veteran I run into, there are programs here. Don't sit here and say how bad this VA is, this is our VA, you're the VA.



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