

## I needed to correct my Vietnam experience

**Bud:** My name's Bud and I served in the U.S. Army from 1966 to 1967. I did a year in Vietnam. When I was initially stationed in Vietnam I was assigned to a Civil Affairs Unit. I worked with the Native Aborigines, the Montagnard people. We became friends with them, brought 'em over to our camp, and had dinners and so on. And I thought to myself, this is the greatest thing, and then all of a sudden, one day it changed.

The order came down that this one village that we had become quite close to was communist sympathizers, and then the order would come, burn the village and take these people and ship them out like cattle to refugee camps. It was terrible.

Drinking was not really an issue in Vietnam because we were so busy. Drinking was more of an issue after I came home and started using alcohol as a way to kind of deal with my PTSD. I would drink heavily and then I would end up getting in some kind of fight or bar room brawl, and I got that reputation of this Vietnam Veteran that you never knew what he was gonna do.

I had no sense of purpose. My days were getting darker and darker. And one day... I got these long legs and someone had me by the ankles and they were just mopping the bar room floor with my head, and I had a moment of clarity that something is terribly wrong with my life.

I knew I needed to do something to correct that Vietnam experience. And so my motivation was to join the Peace Corps. I became more and more interested in religious life, went back to Denver, Colorado. I joined the seminary there and I began to study for the priesthood. My novice master recognized that at that time, because I didn't have access to the booze, my PTSD started coming out in spades. But he says, "I'm sending you to a psychologist, I want you to get some help."

So, I go to this psychologist. He had this 20 questions about my drinking. Anyway, I started checking off them, about 12 out of 20, and you flipped it over it says three or more you're definitely an alcoholic, and my jaw hit the floor. I couldn't believe it. I had two thoughts. One, if I admit to being an alcoholic that will mean I can never drink again and that scared the hell out of me. The other thought was, and this is the thought that won the day was, I can name it, I'm an alcoholic, I can name it.

He connected me with an alcohol and drug counselor and I started seeing him three times a week, and I got involved in a self-help group. For the first time in my life I had hope. From that time on, my life has been getting continually better. I got married. My wife and I we just celebrated 27 years of wonderful bliss. And we adopted a little boy, that's another great joy in our life.

No matter what life has thrown at me, I've been able to endure and come out and go through it. And I've got to carry that message because it's not just for me, this can work for other people too. Don't underestimate the power of addiction. Keep your recovery number one always because if you don't, you can lose it.



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