

Therapy was a turning point

Paul: My name is Paul. I was a draftee into the US Army in November of 1967, served two years, seven months, and five days and was honorably discharged. And, during that time I spent 15 months as a Medic in Phu Bai Vietnam. The whole 15 months I was in this traumatic situation, had lots of guys die while we were trying to save them.

The day that I left Vietnam, got into the back of a deuce and a half and I'll never forget pulling away watching my life as I knew it just disappear into the distance and cried. Cried that I had to leave, and I found that really bizarre even then. At the time, I thought why are you so sad, landed at the airport in Dayton and made the decision that I did not want anybody to meet me at the airport.

Finally got to my house, my family was there, welcome home banner, walked in the house, looked around, walked right back out the backdoor and went and sat down on the ground and just sat there, and I knew that I was disappointing them because I wasn't happy, and they wanted their son, brother back and they didn't get it.

I grew my hair down to my waist, had a full beard, so that I think people wouldn't know that I was a Vietnam Veteran because it wasn't the most welcoming time for Vietnam Veterans, and that really, it angered me but more than that it hurt. It really hurt that I was used and then sort of tossed aside.

I think the thing that helped me out more than anything else was that I was still around the same guys that I was around in Vietnam. We all kind of converged in Southern California. So, I got my family back. I got a job as a director of a nonprofit organization for grief and loss and had an incredible amount of responsibility but also I had a staff of people who I had been a colleague and an equal to and all of the sudden found myself as their boss, and so I had this really close group of friends, became their boss, and it changed. I started having real issues, sleeping pattern which I had never had a problem with, never had nightmares. All of a sudden, I was having trouble sleeping and decided that it was probably time to seek counseling.

A friend of mine, who is a therapist and knew me really well said, "I've got the name of this woman that you should go to see." And, I was like, okay. So, I went to see her. She allowed me to set up my own treatment plan which meant three times a week for the first month, then we go to once a week, and then I went as solo. Probably, it lasted three months and I came away from that experience changed, purged.



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