

I wish I had addressed it when I first came back

Jesse: I served in the Marine Corps from July 6, 1965 to July 6, 1968, and I served in the Republic of Vietnam. I was shot in an ambush. I was told at that point by the guys that were loading me onto the C-130 that I had gotten the million-dollar wound and that I was going home.

So, I got out. I decided to go to school. And went to UNC Charlotte and graduated from there with a BS in accounting. The kids that were there were not that wild, I guess, in their beliefs and what have you. Although, there were some demonstrations. What I did, how I coped with it was to just I grew long hair, mustache, and I became one of them. I mean, only in the sense to look at me. I didn't want to say I was a Marine. I didn't want to say that I was in Vietnam. I didn't want to say anything about my military background from that standpoint.

Depression didn't come until a lot later. I didn't have depression as a young man. I just felt like an outsider. I felt like I couldn't connect with people. They couldn't get to me. They couldn't understand me, and I couldn't open up to them. I kept everybody at an arm's length. Unfortunately, I was married four times. I don't think that I ever sat down and told them what I saw, what I felt in detail. I never did.

I didn't get involved with the VA until '98. The mental health, I wish that I had addressed it when I came back from Nam. I retired March 1st of 2007 from my job. That's when I went to the VA and I said, "I want you to check me out and see if I've got PTSD." I had a lot of the symptoms. The nightmares were getting worse, unable to sleep. I knew that I was having some difficulty and obviously, relationship issues were coming up. Sometimes I was quick to anger.

I'll have to admit that the VA, at least the people that I had to deal with, were very good, I think, as far as PTSD is concerned and all the services that the VA has given me. When I retired, I had to make a decision of whether I was going to continue my own healthcare or what, and I found out that I'd get all my health benefits taken care of with the VA.

I'm able to cope with things a little better. I still have issues no doubt, and I think I'll have issues until the day that I die. They come with the territory. I have found an opportunity to talk about it more with the group that I'm with. Those are the only guys that I really feel comfortable that I can say what I want, and they know what I feel and so forth. We were there at different times, different battles, but we all had the same feelings. We all endured the same trauma that has brought us to the point that we are today.

I think that the biggest problems that I had, had they been addressed day one, my life would have been a whole lot better.



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