

Support is a benefit Veterans have earned

Gordy: I was in the Army from April '66 to April '72. My dad was an Officer, a Pilot, in World War II. Back then it was the Army Air Corps. So, it was following in dad's footsteps sort of thing. And eventually got orders to go to flight school, and I went to jump school. The truly interesting things about jump school, in retrospect now, one of the precipitating events for my PTSD was my last jump when both shoots didn't work very well. And I walked away from it sort of.

When I got out, I had six years in so there was no residual reserve time expected of me. Up until about six or eight months before I got out, I had really been working towards making a career out of the Army. But in that last eight months or so, I lost that enthusiasm. So, when I got out, I knew where I was going. I had already moved to Santa Cruz. I was going to the University of California at Santa Cruz in preparation to go back to Cal. So, it was over, beyond, behind me.

When I graduated from Cal, I thought here I am, an officer and a gentleman, Veteran, graduate of a distinguished university. It was like, oh, I have to figure this out. Now what? It was obvious that I was different from the people that I was working with, none of whom were Veterans. I was and still am, very situational awareness. It's not, most of the time it's not heightened. But there are times when I will typically go into a room if I'm not comfortable there, I'll find a corner or wall to sit next to. I probably went to see a shrink three or four times, something like that. And it wasn't until, oh probably '87 after we moved down here to the Seattle area that I began to explore PTSD options.

I still have contacts with a couple of Vets from that time, but it was not particularly well-organized. We knew that we had a problem, but we didn't have the means to deal with it effectively.

It wasn't until 2003, I think, that I went to the VA Hospital here in Seattle. And they said, "Yep, you got it," whatever that means. And I've been going there periodically. Taking advantage of the benefits that are due, that you've earned, is very important. I highly recommend that if you're young, do it now. Don't wait 40 years or 30 years like I did. I do hope that my generation can help these other guys. I think that's our responsibility. If we survived combat, then we owe it to the new generations to help them survive the rest of their lives.



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