

A Korean War Veteran's recovery through treatment

Lige: My name is Lige. I served in the U.S. Navy. I entered January the second, 1952. I spent my time, it was all sea duty, aboard 3 vessels. But my primary duty was spent on a hospital ship, the USS Haven. And it was stationed over in Incheon, Korea. We would stay in Incheon for approximately 6 weeks. And by that time, we would fill up, our ship would fill up with patients and then we would go and disbar[disembark] them in Japan.

My duty was to stand back aft in an asbestos suit with a fire ax and a fire extinguisher. But during that, I witnessed all of the casualties that came over from the frontline. And it was some terrible, terrible things that I saw.

During my watch, I would have to go in each ward in the surgery room and check the temperature. You go in the surgery room and there's a lobby. During the conflict, the attack on us, it was so grave that sometimes they'd have 5 or 6 lined up into the lobby waiting for surgery. But I'll never forget the first time I went through the wards and I could hear some of these patients crying out. Some would cry out to their mother. We're kids. We were kids. And one would grab me and said, "Help me." That really touched me.

When I got out, it wasn't bad. I mean, it wasn't like the Veterans that got out of Vietnam, but I was starting to have some real issues, emotional issues. I had a lot of depression. Throughout my 50 years in the HVAC industry, everything seemed so difficult for me. The work and everything. Everything was just...I was in an emotional state where I just felt overwhelmed. I just had these very anger issues and these very stressful issues. I've always had this anxiousness, this lack of confidence, this self-doubt. I said I don't want to spend the rest of my life like this. I'm not getting along with my family. I'm not getting along with myself. I want to do something about it. So, I applied for the VA and immediately they signed me up.

By working through them I signed up for a stress management. Wonderful team. And I'm working on that. I got hooked up with this lady, a therapist. She is just a well-qualified individual. I don't care what I bring up. I'm an Al-Anon member. I have recovered children that are alcoholic. So, I bring up those are issues that I have. If I can possibly before I get to the anger sort it out, stop, slow down. If I can learn, and it's starting to work, that it's not that important. How important is it? Hold on. Wait a minute. To learn that process before I get to that anger. So, I mean, it doesn't sound like much, but it's big to me. It's huge.

The mental health department at the VA is number 1, top notch. It worked for me. I say act because there are programs out there for us. We're not forgotten.



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