

## Bill

I am a Vietnam era U.S. Army veteran who served 4 years and 2 months of active duty until my section Warrant Officer and E-7 decided I was no longer suitable for the military.

While stationed in Seoul, Korea, I suffered a nervous breakdown and was hospitalized. The breakdown was the result of my wife and mother of our 3 kids no longer wanting to be married. We were young when we got married and had the children in rapid succession, almost exactly a year apart.

It was during a phone call to her after almost seven weeks of silence (no mail from her) that I discovered that she was being unfaithful. I did not take it well; I became somewhat delusional and attempted to walk from the post to the airport to fly home and make it right. The incident led to my hospitalization in the psychiatric ward of the Army Hospital located in the ASCOM compound outside of Seoul.

After my release from the hospital, the Army Doctors recommended a 30-day convalescent leave, during which I returned to the U.S. to try and deal with the situation.

I arrived on the date of my son's third birthday and met with my wife, who told me she did not love me anymore.

I took the rest of my convalescent leave to travel and visit with family. I wanted to hopefully deal with the emotional pain I was experiencing.

While I was on leave, I received orders which promoted me to SSGT E-6. It was a nice surprise, especially since I had only been in the Army for three and a half years and worked in a noncombat MOS.

When I returned to my unit, I was appointed the Assistant NCOIC of the unit maintenance section. I was assigned to AFKN and worked on both the TV and radio equipment.

When I had arrived at the unit I was told they initially wanted to assign me to a transmitter remote site north of Seoul, but because my medical records

indicated that I my wife and I had sought counseling at the Walter Reed family counseling center, and because they had previously had a suicide at that site, they chose against it.

For reasons I was never made aware of my section chief, the E-7, did not like me and began giving me grief after my return from my leave. He started nitpicking on little things. I resisted arguing with him and just tried to perform my duties as required.

One day he approached me and said that he and the Warrant Officer wanted me to go to the NCO Academy session that 8th Army was having. I said I thought it would be foolish since I had determined that I was not going to make the Army a career and had only about 18 months left on my enlistment.

He became angry and made me report to the Warrant Officer, to whom I gave the same explanation. The next day I was told to report to the Warrant Officer and he informed me that he and the Sergeant were preparing the paperwork to have me discharged from the Army as unsuitable (AR635-212).

Just before Christmas in 1970, I was rotated back to the U.S. and Honorably Discharged. The Army said I was a good soldier but they no longer wanted me.

I was happy and I was angry. In the matter of 5 months my wife and the U.S. Army had rejected me.

I have tried not to think or talk about the issue. During the Vietnam War, the Army was allowed to do whatever it wanted. No one cared what affect it had on me and my life. My parents were supportive, but I refused to burden them with the internal pain that the rejections caused me.

I wanted to be normal, but the feelings of constant rejection made it difficult.

Over the next 45 years I tried to find normalcy, but it was hard. I constantly moved, changed jobs and bounced through relationships looking, hoping that the next place, the next relationship or the next job would accept me and give me what I thought I was missing.

I made unrealistic promises to my children as they were growing up in hopes that they would accept me and I could be what they needed. I failed miserably. One of my children refused for years to forgive me for my failed promises.

I tried to understand it all, but many times the depression became more than I could handle. I would run away again, to a new job or to a new location.

A year after I had finally registered with the VA medical services in 2012, I visited a psychologist at a VA Clinic in Washington state and asked about filing a PTSD claim. He asked me if I felt suicidal and then quickly dismissed me when I said, “No”. He said that I probably would not qualify since my issue was not caused by a combat experience.

I felt confused—I had trauma, I was hospitalized by the military for it, so why would it not qualify?

I went to a Disabled American Veterans sponsored claim workshop and spoke with a representative who said that the VA had changed its stance about 10 years earlier about how the military had indiscriminately discharged people like myself.

I filed a claim. Approximately a month later was sent to QTC, the organization which processed claims for the VA, for an interview with an independent psychiatrist.

Approximately a month after my QTC evaluation I received a determination letter from the VA. They awarded me a 50% disability based on emotional stress and PTSD.

I broke into tears when I read it. After all these years a small award confirmed for me that I was treated badly by the Army and that other circumstances related to my enlistment had contributed to some of the problems I faced in my life since my discharge.

A few months before I received my VA determination, I found a VA sponsored group therapy sessions called Life’s Path. It was designed for veterans still dealing with post military life issues. The sessions allowed those who attended to share their stories of struggles and problems arising from their time in the military and how it affected them and their families. It also offered positive reinforcement on dealing with many of the problems.

I have recently moved because of health issues and want to find a similar program sponsored by the VA at my new location.