Posttraumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, is a debilitating anxiety disorder which is experienced by many people who have been subjected to traumatic events. The traumatic events, which can consist of warfare, genocide, rape or even a car accident, produce a pattern of characteristic symptoms including flashbacks, emotional numbing, and hyper­ vigilance.

PTSD is certainly not a new condition. Medical records during the Civil War

referred to it as "Da Costa's Syndrome," named for the Civil War doctor who described the symptoms. After World War I it was referred to as "shell shock," and after World War II it was called "combat fatigue." Even though these symptoms have been observed for a long time, however, they have been systematically studied only since the end of the Vietnam War . When they were studied, researchers quickly discovered that a variety of traumas, in addition to combat, can induce the same symptoms. As a result, they decided to rename the disorder using the more collective term "posttraumatic stress disorder."

[ Many theorists believe that a form of classical conditioning contributes to the development of PTSD. As you may recall, in classical conditioning a neutral stimulus gets paired with an important event. Thereafter, whenever the animal (or a person) experiences this neutral stimulus, it automatically prepares itself for the impending event. For example if a bell reliably precedes the presentation of food, then whenever the dog heard the bell, it prepares for the food by salivating.

A similar process may explain the development of PTSD. When a person is subjected to a profoundly stressful situation, he or she will become sensitized to the event and to the circumstances that predict its recurrence. For example, if a woman is raped, any number of stimuli that were associated with her rape, such as a darkened street, a person walking behind her, or even a strange looking man can elicit a fear response.

Other factors also contribute to the development of PTSD. For example, once the fear response is learned, the client usually avoids the fear-inducing stimuli entirely. In tum, tllis avoidance behavior is negatively reinforced and hence the fear becomes an even more entrenched part of their behavior. This combination of classical and operant conditioning mechanisms is known as Mower's two-factor explanation.

People with PTSD express three principle types of symptoms. First, people with PTSD re-experience the event though involuntary flashbacks and dreams. For example, a soldier might have a flashback of the battlefield, or a woman might dream about a flood that ravaged her community .

Second, individuals express a generalized emotional detachment or numbing. For example , he or she may begin to feel detached from friends and be unable to express loving feelings. He or she may also suffer a limited amnesia and be unable to recall any details from the traumatic event.

Third, people with PTSD are likely to become hyper-vigilant and chronically on­ alert. They can become startled very easily and have difficulty falling asleep. It seems like they are always on guard against a recurrence of the initial event.

It is worth noting that people with PTSD frequently also suffer with depression,

substance related disorders, and anxiety disorders.

Have you ever been exposed a traumatic event? Sixty percent of adult men and

fifty-one percent of adult women report being exposed to at least one traumatic event

during their lives. The most frequently experienced traumas include witnessing someone

#### being killed or badly injured, being involved in a fire or a flood, and being involved in a life-threatening accident.

Of course, stressful events do not produce PTSD in everyone. Research shows

that although about half of adult Americans are exposed to a trauma in their lifetime, only about 8% ever experience PTSD symptoms. Thus, an important question is, what factors cause certain people to develop PTSD while others go unaffected?

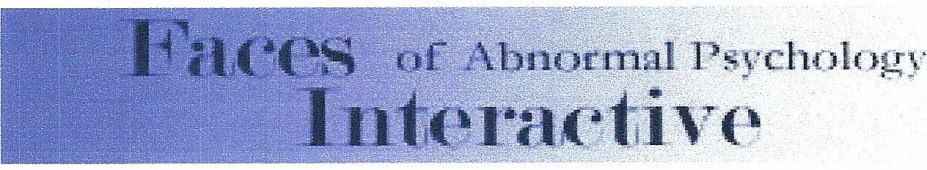
First, the nature of the trauma itself is important. As you might expect, traumas that are more severe, more prolonged, and that directly affect one's family are more likely to induce PTSD symptoms.

Second, people who were already experiencing anxiety before the event are more likely to acquire PTSD. Likewise, people who have a history of mental illness are much more likely to experience PTSD symptoms.

Third, individual coping techniques also play an important role. People who dwell on the trauma and those who refuse to discuss it at all are more likely to ultimately experience PTSD.

Finally, lack of a support network makes it more likely the individual will

experience PTSD.



**Diagnostic Features for PTSD**

A. A person has been exposed to one or more traumatic events in which he or she is confronted with events that involved the threat of death or serious injury to themselves or others and the person's response involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror.

1. The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced by

distressing recollections or dreams of the event. The person feels that the traumatic event is recurring and feels distress in the presence of stimuli that remind them of an aspect of the traumatic event.

1. Avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and

numbing of general responsiveness including avoiding thoughts and activities associated with the trauma, feelings of detachment and diminished interest in significant activities.

1. Increased levels of arousal including insomnia, irritability, and hyper-vigilance.

#### Case History

#### Carl was 17 years old when he volunteered for the army and began his service in Vietnam. One of his first duties, involved assigning individuals and divisions to enter various combat zones. Then the next day he had to review the casualty lists and send out the next round of troops. He remembers that this was profoundly distressing, and so he volunteered for active combat.

In one of his next assignments, Carl operated a machine gun off the side of a patrol helicopter. As you would expect, these battles were both arousing and terrifying. As you listen to this interview, be prepared to hear some pretty graphic detail about Carl's experiences in combat.

Carl's psychological problems began to emerge after he returned to the United

States. The political climate had turned against the war, and he was condemned both by his friends and by strangers on the street. Over the next few years, Carl developed a set of PTSD symptoms including flashbacks, hyper-vigilance, and emotional detachment.

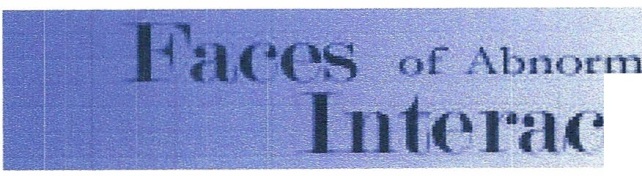
This interview was particularly interesting for me. For the first hour or so, I had the strong sense that Carl was assessing me. His eye contact was intense. He watched me very carefully as though he were deciding whether I was a friend or an enemy. Was I there to attack him or support him? I had the sense that he was ready to defend himself. He seemed fearless and he appeared to enjoy intimidating me.

After a couple hours, however, things began to change. He relaxed, and he spoke

from his heart about the challenges he experiences in his daily life. Carl is now a social worker, and he specializes in helping other veterans cope with their own PTSD challenges.

Looking back over his life, Carl knows that his experiences in Vietnam left him

with permanent emotional scars. Yet as an American Indian, he takes consolation in tribal traditions where the warrior walks in front, defending his family at all costs. He believes this tradition is essential to his own survival, as well as the survival of his society.

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#### Demographics & Details

* + Among American civilians, about 5% of men and 10% of women will experience PTSD at some point in their life.
  + Following a disaster, middle-aged adults are more adversely affected than are older and younger adults.
  + Older adults and the elderly are not at an increased risk to acquire PTSD after a community disaster. *As* a result, researchers suggest that they can be viewed as a community resource following a disaster.
  + Prior experience with disasters may help inoculate people against PTSD symptoms.
  + People in lower socioeconomic classes are more affected by disasters and traumatic events.
  + Following a community disaster, the severity of a husband's symptoms predicted the severity of his wife's symptoms more strongly than the wife's symptoms severity predicted the husband's.
  + Being a parent also adds to the stress of disaster recovery, especially among women.
  + Individuals who have mental health problems prior to the disaster are much more likely to express PTSD symptoms afterward .
  + Individuals who rank high in hardiness are less likely to express PTSD .
  + No traumatic event leads inevitably to PTSD . However, among men the traumatic events most often associated with PTSD include rape, exposure to combat, and childhood neglect and physical abuse. Among women, the most common events were rape, sexual molestation, physical attack, and being threatened with a weapon.
  + Researchers found that 15% of Vietnam veterans still suffered from PTSD 15 years after the war.

Clinic Question (1 of 1)

Youth

Why did you join the military?

I grew up in a family, we were ...weren't wealthy, weren't rich; we weren't super poor, but we got by. And I knew there was no way I could pay for a college education or anything. So, and that was my--part of going through the military, was the G.I. bill. You know? That's what I got out of it. I'd serve my country and do my duty and then get my education.

Combat Experience (Question 1 of 7)

Carl, what was your job in Vietnam?

Uh ...I was trained as an air traffic controller. So I was supposed to be in a tower,

working air traffic. Um, because of the way things are in the military, and you arrive in a unit, if there’s not an opening in your particular MOS, they put you where you're needed. So my first job, I worked in operations assigning missions and uh, aviation missions for helicopters. And urn, it means I sat in a room with radios and uh-in the biggest bunker on Fuloi airbase; uh, which is the largest helicopter support base in Vietnam. And uh, I was in the bunker that hit the siren when we got hit at night or whatever, uh, so I was in a pretty secure place. Um, I deleted aircraft every day, uh, bitched because we-you

know, they didn't have enough aircraft to take care of all the missions that I had to get

put together for the next day. Urn, didn't give it much thought. Um, kinda kicked back and, although I'd been shot at, rocketed, mortared, and everything else, urn, seemed like it was gonna be reasonably okay.

But along about July of '69, things had uh, kind of changed. Had a new commander; urn, very important to uh, get body count, urn, which is a term that uh, was very common. That was uh, how things were represented back here on the TV every night; urn, which would come to affect me in a lot of different ways later on. Um,-- We wanted to have as high a body count as possible on enemy bodies. Means we're doing a good job; uh, promotions come, uh, things--you know , you look good and your commander looks good. And that's' what's important for the commander. If he plans on career military and wants rank and uh ....So, um, fortunately--or unfortunately, depending on how you look at it--uh, quarter-cav for about three months urn, in uh, September, October, and November '69, we had the highest body counts in the first infantry division. For a small unit, that was pretty amazing. Uh, we had a lot of contacts, uh, just-we-if we saw one tunnel one person, whatever, we scrambled air rifle platoon, we were in on

'em, and uh, uh, usually when we'd get there, there'd end up being a whole lot more. And a number of times we got uh, trapped in situations where uh, we had to get pulled out -­ saved, whatever, by armored cab coming in or whatever.

We were-you know, our CO just tended to make some really poor choices in my opinion.

Combat Experience (Question 2 of 7)

How much combat did you experience?

Yeah. I uh, when I went to the quarter-cab, because we were a small unit, um,

basically I worked the night shift; which was uh, from six in the evening till six in the morning. And so I was available during the day, and so if someone needed a break on a helicopter, one of the door gunners, I could fly on a slick, or on a loach, doing the-slicks being the ones that were hauling the infantry guys in. The loaches were light observation helicopters, part of the hunter/killer team.

Um, so I'd volunteer to do that. Sometimes volunteered to uh, pack the radio, uh,

for the radio operator for the aero-rifle platoon, because that uh, he never had a break really, except for when someone--one of us would volunteer. And we knew all the call signs and everything, so it was easy for those who worked in operations to do that. So I started getting out on the field more, and urn, there again it's-when you're on the slick, and you're flying in and you're putting people in on a hot LZ, the-and you know , you're coming in, and you're getting a call, and it's gonna be hot. And that means that you're

tak---they're taking fire already. Uh, enemy's in position, and actually shooting, and you're coming in a helicopter in line; six helicopters, urn, dropping off infantry guys.

You've got a door gunner on one side or the other, or both sides keeping, uh, a suppressing fire going, and trying to get the guys off the helicopter, hoping they're not going to shoot a rocket -propelled grenade, which will take out your helicopter, which happened periodically. Urn, then you lift up outta there, leave the aero-rifle platoon there and fly off and sit down someplace safe--reasonably safe while they get their butts shot up, and then you go back and help pick up what's left, and hopefully nobody's hurt, and everything goes off smooth. But sometimes you gotta, urn, pack up bodies or wounded or whatever, depends on the situation.

So, um, and um, and then probably the worst situation that we got into was uh,

late in November of '69, urn, we went in on a mission that--we started getting hit with rocket-propelled grenades, the aero-rifle platoon did. We had 21 actually wounded, out of the 28. And uh, 14 severely, that had to be replaced. And actually, two of those were dead and uh, 12 were wounded seriously and shipped out. Um, never saw a gook. It was all RPGs . Every time we’d get people moved around and stacked up, and trying to get the choppers in, they'd lob in three or four more RPGs, and right in amongst the wounded. Getting wounded again, two, and three, four times the same person. Uh, and never saw anybody; and no way to return fire, or anything.

Finally got out of there, and because of that, we felt: "oh wow. We'll probably get a break now." You know, because we lost 14 guys, and we're an all-volunteer unit. But no, we went right down to Zion, where the guys come in from the first infantry division, and picked up 14 more, and brought 'em straight up, and went on a mission that afternoon. Took them in, and lost two of them, trying to train them on how to get on and off helicopters and do a sweep. Uh, one of 'em pulled a trip-wire in the hedge row, and blew himself up, and another up, and urn, but that was right back to business. And uh, you know, keep on going. You can't stop, there's no break.

Combat Experience (Question 3 of 7)

Carl did you, to your knowledge while you were there, did you kill anyone?

Coming up over the trees in the loach, and in the morning. And uh, mist over the

top of the jungle. It's real serene and peaceful. And we're down at tree-top level, and we suddenly see-saw a little wisp of smoke coming up over the-up out of the jungle there. And so, there was a stream right by there; and that's kinda what we're looking for, because we know that's where Charlie, after he comes out at night on his boats--at night he sinks his boat, and then he sets up--has breakfast and then hides in the jungle for the day. And that's what we're looking for. We're gonna try to catch him right there.

And uh, see this whiff of smoke coming up, and as we come cruisin' over it--and

you're, you're as anxious and prepared for it, and kinda leaning out with a sixty, M-60 machine gun, and all of a sudden there's five guys sitting around a little camp-fire with a, doing-one of them was standing off to the back, four sitting, one standing back here,

and I could see the AK on this one guy. The one guy was real vivid, because he looked

right straight up ...and he's shoveling rice into his mouth, and all of a sudden his eyes come up, and you're making contact as you're squeezing the trigger, and uh, the ...just chaos.

They're trying to get their weapons up, but it's already too late. I mean, I'm

prepared with an M-60 at that range, and you're probably eighty, a hundred feet above them; that 's all. Shooting down through the jungle. But, urn, it's not that-uh, it's not that hard to hit what you're aiming at. An M60's putting out a fair amount of ammo per second, and uh, so, it just exploded. I can't say that I saw the rounds hit, but I saw people dropping and falling, and the guy that was standing back here, he started to move away, and I'm spraying the whole area, and when we came back over and rolled back in, to take a look, we didn't get any fire. And so then we had uh-which meant that either they had left, or they were dead.

Um, so a Cobra came in and the attack helicopter. And put some rockets on it,

and then we called up the aero-rifle platoon, and come in. And we had five dead, with uh, their weapons and found their boats in the river and destroyed those, and packed up their crap and a good morning. A great morning . We uh, it worked. It worked great, with nobody getting hurt.

I just turned 19. Um, it felt exhilarating. It felt just fucking crazy (laughs). Just uh,

like I said, I get goose-bumps when I think about it. It just, it's-it worked absolutely perfect. And nobody got hurt, which was ideal. Kill the enemy without anybody getting hurt . Perfect. Ideal. No problems. That's the way it 's supposed to be. Came off perfect. Uh, the . ..it was just letter perfect. The absolute perfect operation, you know? You can go home knowing you did your job well, and not have to worry about it. And not have to worry about what pilot got hit, or what guy in the ARPS got hit, and who was going to replace him, and what's going to happen now, or whatever. It's just you, you kinda roll with that.

And that's the kinda things you-the door-gunners all stayed in one hooch, which was where we slept at night, and uh ...Those were the things that you could really talk about and have a great time with at night. Uh, you know, making fun of the guy's look on his face when he looks up and he knows he's dead, and there's nothing he can do about it. You've got his life in your hand, and you know-but it's just a gook, so it doesn’t matter. Um, so you laugh and uh, have a good time with it. Um…

Combat Experience (Question 4 of 7)

How did combat experience change you?

I came back home on a thirty-day leave, and saw a bunch of the people I went to school with, things like that; they're still hanging out at the Arctic Circle, uh, wherever, getting hamburgers, and uh...I re - I realize-! just ...they were kids. And I wasn't a kid anymore. And I'd never be able to see the world the way they did. And that's-- I just-I really felt like I was really different and uh...maybe dirty?

Combat Experience (Question 5 of 7)

#### When you sometimes showed compassion, did that allow you to have some control over your situation?

#### Um-hmm, and I think when you do that, it's--you kljlow, maybe there 'll be a situation that comes up later on that someone will do that courtesy to you, let you walk. You know, maybe. Maybe if l have that compassion at that one point, maybe that'll come back for me in another point.

But I can't do it all the time, you can't do that, you know; I mean, you gotta do

your job, but ...You know, that one day, you know, after a hard day of fighting, and uh, you know ...so he's the last one, we're the last one on station, that gook was the guy there too. I mean, you know. Both sides won, we both walked away from it. But that's more between him and me. And it's okay at that level, because it's-then it comes back to human. Not enemy and uh--or two enemies fighting but two human beings that uh,

urn ...kinda recognize and know and understand , you know , there is a part of you

somewhere deep inside that still uh, cares about family and life and people . But, but you

can't have that very much. It doesn't work. Doesn't-it won't keep you alive.

Combat Experience (Question 6 of 7)

Did you ever show passion toward the enemy?

I've been on a mission where we flew in and after a long-pitch day of just all kinds of uh, contact, and bodies everywhere from both sides, and the last flight of the day, we'd been back and re-fueled three or four times, and been back on station, and rolled back over this one area. And we're kinda hovered in on it, and checking out this one last bunker, and we'd been trying to get this one gook, and we couldn't get him.

And finally, I don't know, it just happened. And he was standing there with his

AK pointing right up, I was sitting there with my sixty right at him . ..and it was just- -you know, you're kinda looking at each other from uh, maybe a hundred, hundred and fifty feet away. I was up in the air and hovering over him, but it was just, yeah, okay. And told the pilot to bank left and we banked left, and off we went, and we didn't shoot each other. He lived and I lived, and he still had rounds , I still had rounds . It was the end of the day and, and it had been a rough day. Uh, maybe that was enough.

So, at times there's compassion in there too, you know? There's other times there isn't. And there's a-um, we had a mission where we had uh, we got called out for­ somebody had saw a couple gooks, and went in on 'em with the aero-rifle platoon, and uh, got ambushed. And, we had one guy killed and two wounded. We killed one gook, and the other gook was uh, wounded . But he ran out of ammo. And soon as he ran outta ammo, he surrendered. You know? Now, theoretically, we're supposed to take him prisoner, bring him back, and what'll happen is, is they'll send him into one of the camps for re-integration into the urn--it's called a Kit-Carson program for making scouts out of

'em and stuff, using 'em on our side. Which was a good program in some ways, but about half of 'em, after they got re-outfitted, and had an Ml6 and a bunch of ammo , and they went out in the field, they just disappeared and went back to the other side; you know?

So, although we had good ones, there was that concern that that's probably what

was going to happen . So why would you wanna do that? Uh, so unfortunately for him, you know, we've got a Vietnamese one--our Kit-Carson scout is interrogating him, asking him questions, and he won't answer, and uh, end result is, is one squad's left, the other three squads start heading back to the LZ, we finish the uh, questioning, and executed him right there and left his body there. Urn, you know, he urn ...and, and ...it's it in some ways it's not right. Um, that's what they did, that's what we did.

#### Combat Experience (Question 7 of 7)

#### Did you lose touch with your values in combat?

#### I had a friend-a good friend-who was uh, hit. It was on a night defensive position, and he was the sergeant in charge. And he got outside the perimeter to check things out. And uh, just kind of-get ready to settle in for the night. And when he was outside the perimeter, he uh, was walking, looking around; all of a sudden there was a gook right here . And they're both bringing up their weapon at the same time. The gook hesitated, and didn't bring his weapon up as fast. So Ron stitched him, and killed him. He-the gook got off one round, which wounded Ron. If Ron would've been thinking, oh, this is a human being, he'd a hesitated. The other guy's weapon woulda came up; they probably would've both been dead. Ron survived.

There's-you can't let that thought enter into any situations. In a singular

situation, one person to the other ...but you still have to be prepared. If he's gonna pull

the trigger , you go ahead, but-and if he's willing to back off, that's okay. It's just -and you never know. And it doesn't happen very often. But, it does, it happens.

#### Returning to the USA (1 of 7)

#### What happened when you came back from Vietnam?

#### You're coming back from Vietnam as a single person. I come back-I flew back with a group of guys, got off the airplane and went home. But I wasn't with anybody in my unit, I was by myself. I went back home, there wasn't anybody else in town at the time that had been in Vietnam, that I knew about. Eventually I did find out there were some, not a great deal in Port Angeles, Washington , but there were some. Uh, if anybody asked you anything, they wanted to know how many people you killed. They wanted to know that side of it. They, they, they don't wanna talk about what it 's really like, or what it was like for you. They just wanna talk about the ... the gore and stuff, so.

What I figured out when I came back on my second leave, I--I had some pictures that I took of a napalmed body. And uh, in the picture I was holding the head, with blood running down my arms. And then when people would ask me, I'd give 'em these

pictures to look at. And then they'd shut up and go away. You know? 'Cause they just ­

you know. It's like having these pictures, you know? People will just-it stops them. It gets them out of their-and they don't wanna talk about that. They can't believe it, for one, they don't know how to experience-if you're talking about it, it's okay. But when you see it in a real photograph, that's a different thing for a person; so. And that worked really good for keeping people away.

#### Returning to the USA (2 of 7)

#### What were you like when you first came back from Vietnam?

#### When I first came back. I was angry and disturbed because a lot of kids were talking about Vietnam, and against the war, and all this, and uh, I found myself getting angry. I wanted to go get a weapon, and you know, teach them a little bit. Urn, that's not appropriate. They won't accept that. Uh, felt really incompetent in talking with people. 'Cause they wanted to talk and deal with the world in a way that I was not very competent in.

1 You put a weapon in my hands, I'm extremely confident; very competent. I can do what I need to do. And my guess is, I'd probably do it a whole lot better than you ever will, you know. I'm very com-and, because I don't care if I live or die so I've got the edge.

Returning to the USA (3 of 7)

Was it hard to come back to the USA? What did you miss most?

It's real difficult coming back here and trying to live life, where there's no­ nothing that's going to bring you that exhilaration , that height of awareness; where all your senses are at their peak, uh, it's just-it's crazy. You're back here, you're bored stiff; uh, the only thing that uh, gets you excited is uh, doing things that are dangerous; uh, that's fun. Driving fast or taking risks and things like that, that other people probably wouldn't take but uh, but that's stupid. I mean, urn, it is now for me.

I tend to not take risks anymore. I try not to; but uh, for a long time I did. Or, I

didn't care. I think part of why these pictures and stuff don't bother me is because there's still that part of me that, that learned detachment that you feel in combat situation. It takes about .. .I remember vividly at about three months in country, I uh, noticed a change. And, I immediately-! was engaged, and I broke off that engagement; uh, started detaching from my family, and uh, stopped writing; just ...everything was uh­ didn't matter anymore. Uh, and that ...stayed there for a number of years, and still comes back periodically.

Um, so when I look at stuff like that, it's uh, real easy to, you know, uh, it don't matter. It don't-it don't matter. Life is uh, here. You're here today, and you'll be gone tomorrow. You'll be gone ten minutes from now if something happens, and that's just the way it is, and you have no control over that. It's random, uh, it's unpredictable, you

never know.

It's like being in a fire fight. Bullets are going by. They don't know who's who , they don't care. They-whoever gets in the way gets hit, and that's it, and that's too bad, you know. If you-and if you get hit, you get hit. If you don't get hit, you don't get hit. And there's no sense wasting time worrying about it, or thinking about it. 'Cause you can't control it.

Returning to the USA (4 of 7)

Did American civilians treat you with respect?

Uh (chuckles) ...I mean uh, coming back, uh . . .(ahem) in uh, 69, when I come back on leave, and they tell ya at Oakland, uh, you're better off to get outta your uniform

as soo n as possible; 'Cause people will treat you like shit in the airports, and whatever.

And that doesn't fit with what, what it was like in '68 when you were finishing up basic and AIT, and you had your, your greens on, and you had your national defense ribbon, and you're thinking-you know, you're pretty gung-ho still, and all that, and uh. Down in the South, where I took my training, you had people-god, we'd take off on a weekend, people'd pick you up and get you drunk, buy you food, and take care of you. And wine you and dine you-I mean, they treated you really well. But, uh, then it all changed. It went just, psshh! What happened to this picture?

Urn, before that, I hadn't had any experience, I hadn't done anything. Um, and I

was being treated with respect. And now I've done something, I've risked my life, and there's no respect. Huh! Pretty confusing picture. Um ...compassion, you know, I mean­ the college students, uh, listening to them, and knowing the guys are dying for them to be able to sit there and talk about it. And yet, they're putting down those guys that are fighting for them to be able to do that. It doesn't make any sense. Urn, I certainly didn't have any problem with them; I didn't care if a person dodged the draft, ifthat's what they wanted to do, fine. I didn't want 'em over there anyway. I didn't have any problems with it-urn, Jane Fonda, fine. She had her choices, she did what she felt was right, and that's okay. That's what I was fighting for. For her to do what she felt was right. You know,

uh ....

I'm a little bit different than a lot of guys, 'cause I don't concern myself with that. Uh, but it's really confusing that I-that alls I did was do what I thought was right, and­ but I don't get the same thing back for me. And uh, that's-that's just really hard to understand.

#### Returning to the USA (5 of 7)

#### How did you try to cope with stress when you came back from Vietnam?

#### The best thing to do was to smoke dope and get involved in drugs. And so that's what I chose to do. And that was a good way to hide.

Um, I, I see-working with PTSD- that uh, most all my clients have some kind

of an addictive behavior: It's work, drugs, alcohol, sex, relationships, whatever. They always seem to have some type of addictive behavior that kinda keeps them away from the trauma stuff. So they don't have to deal with it. So I worked really hard at trying to distance myself from the trauma. And unfortunately, what that did is made it extremely difficult when I finally didget into therapy, to come back and work through what I needed to work through and get it sorted out. So it took and inordinate amount of time to sort it out.

You know, it's like now, with a rape victim. I mean, when they go into the

hospital, the first thing they're encouraged to do is get hooked up with a counselor and to

talk about the event while it's fresh, so that you can work through it and process it. But you wait thirty years, or twenty years to work on it, your memory gets all screwed up; you've done all kinds of drugs or alcohol, or whatever that get in the way of it. Uh, it gets

real difficult to sort out.

Returning to the USA (6 of 7)

Was it easier in Vietnam or was it easier here?

Much easier in Vietnam; knew how to deal with it, knew how to handle it; it was real simple. Kill or be killed. Black and white. Real simple. Back here, it's just, so convoluted, crazy ...uh, and the things that I was so skilled in doing are totally inapplicable; not useful in any way shape or form (chuckles). I can fly as a door-gunner, but who needs a door-gunner, you know? There are places where you can get the jobs, but uh, uh ...yeah, it 's just -I don't know. It was easier . It was easier.

I uh-that's why I went back. I could not envision myself sitting here taking orders from somebody who-and picking up cigarette butts on some military base and doing some menial task. Not after Vietnam, there was no way. So I might as well go back where I belonged.

And ...for a long time, I felt that it was unfortunate that I survived. You know, it was uh-the hardest thing I ever did was leave there . Cause I still had friends there.

And, you know, you, you 're flying out--you get on the airplane and you 're flying out, and there 's kinda that relief because you're finally off the coast, and there's no threat of getting shot down now; but then there 's this-real sadness about, you know, 'cause

you're leaving all these people behind, and uh, gee, if I left--I knew my job. I knew it well, urn. And if someone had to take my place, and they weren't trained as well, they didn't know it as well, they were new, it was gonna take them a while to learn that. And someone could die in that period of time.

Urn...so, you know ; that , and that's real conflicting-real conflicting for a person to be in there-' cause you know you should be happy as hell to be outta there. But I just felt outta place back here. And knew what it was gonna be like, and I really wasn't looking forward to it. But, then I thought: well, I'll come back, put it behind me, and move on, you know. Uh-huh. Don't happen .

Returning to the USA (7 of 7)

Were there any events that helped you turn your life around?

I went to the wall--which was a real difficult time--we kinda skirted around it a number of times; and finally everybody was moving away from it, and Ron and I had just made a V-line down to the center of it, walked up to it, and kinda put our hands up to it for a second, walked right up out of there. It was just, whew; real overwhelming. And as we thought about it, urn, I was writing a letter there. And uh, I left my diploma, and uh, I was thinking about all the guys who died, and what they gave up, and what they didn't have a chance to do. And I realized I'd been feeling sorry for myself for a lotta years . 'Cause I hadn't done anything to really do what was there, for you know, the opportunities; the stuff that I had as, uh, goals when I was a child . I was gonna study medicine . And uh, do all that.

And alls I'd done is come back and been a laborer, and as a body-man, and a roofer and all kinds of other stuff. And did a lotta drugs, and kinda detached from life,

and didn't accomplish anything. And I realized that I was really letting those guys down, you know? If- if l didn't do anything with my life, then they-then virtually, they died for nothing. They didn't have the opportunity to do it, so the only way, the way-best

way to honor them, was for me to do something. That's when I really started focusing on my career and getting into something that would be helpful and uh, make a difference to people .

Emotions (1 of 6)

Do you feel guilty about killing people?

Could 've been the other way around: he was there, he was caught with his pants down; he wasn 't on alert . And he knew better. He knew what the risks were. And he just didn't do his job as well as I did. That's what it was about.

Emotions (2 of 6)

What experiences cause you to feel the greatest guilt?

When it comes back to how things affected me, uh, being shot at and rocketed and mortared and stuff was traumatic in of itself

I guess the biggest portion of the guilt and problems I experienced were more related to putting people in harm's way and not having um, thought about it, or been concerned or cared about it. When I deleted aircraft, I was deleting people.

So years after, as I thought about it--I, I sat in a group one night, and somebody

asked me how many people I put into the field, and so I did some math on that, and probably in nine months, I was responsible for probably 250,000 lives. And a lot of those were replications of people that went in everyday, but over those period of days, about 250,000 lives were put in jeopardy by my hand, when I put those missions up.

#### Emotions (3 of 6)

#### How do you feel or react when you were being shot at?

#### The best thing you can do is to stay emotionally uninvolved. You can't afford emotions in combat, that's for sure. You notice that in the first couple of fuefights where someone's shooting at you, and you're scared to death, uh, just...you, you don't know how to act. All the training in the world will--can never prepare you for it. I don't care what they do. It won't prepare you effectively for it. And you're still going to make mistakes.

But then once you get through it a couple times, for me, what I've figured out is the brain shuts off. Part of it, the emotional side--the reactive part of the emotions shuts off The emotions still happen, but I think they go straight into memory. Urn, I mean, if you're standing there and the guy next to you gets hit, and you get splattered with blood or bone, or w-whatever, urn...you can't think about it. You can't be concerned about, you know, this is a guy you've been uh, friends with for six months, uh, it doesn't matter. Uh, you can't think about it.

And so you're-the emotion, you gotta stay totally away from that. You gotta access just those senses that are important for surviving. And uh, but I think that those emotions just, as they run back down into the memory banks and get stored away, uh, they come back later.

#### Emotions (4 of 6)

#### What did you feel after a battle?

#### After the firefight and you 're sitting there talking about what happened that day, and you've bagged everybody up and put 'em on choppers and sent 'em out, or you're back at the base camp having a drink and smoking a joint, or whatever you're doing, you 're urn, kind of putting that person down who maybe got shot today, or hurt, or whatever. And uh, you don't really talk about it on an emotional level; you just kind of make fun of it and put it behind you. Because it's gonna happen again tomorrow. It's gonna happen again the day after that, and it's gonna continue to happen until you're outta there.

And um, and it just-it's just a really strange, uh, conflicting situation.

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Emotions (5 of 6)

Where you able to relax at base and were always a bit anxious?

It wasn't uh, uh, uncommon to have uh, enemy bunkers within two or three hundred yards of a main base. Uh, we caught a bunch of'em with a-they had a hospital and a fairly large bunker complex right outside of YK. And uh, a pilot friend of mine uh, was coming back from uh, a mission, and s--on three separate days, they saw a couple of groups running across this one area, and then they'd disappear. And so we knew there was something up there, but we couldn't find it, and kept looking.

But eventually uh, another helicopter was coming back, and actually saw the guy disappear into the hole, and we got the infantry out there from YK, which is a big base camp right there; in fact--division headquarters. And uh, got in a big fight out there and uh, oh, killed a hundred and some gooks that had a real nice little home set up within a stone's throw of the main base camp there, so. Um, it was a interesting experience.

Emotions (6 of 6)

When you look at photographs from the Vietnam War, how does it make you feel?

Somewhat excited; somewhat relaxed. Um, puts me back into a position when I knew more about how things were. Uh, there wasn't a whole lot of uh, differences in how you were gonna deal with a situation. It was all pretty cut and dry. It was very easy to, uh deal with things . Versus here, where every situation is different, and everybody plays by a different set of rules . With this, there's one set of rules. And it works from both directions. Both sides have the same set of rules: Let's kill the other person. Um, gather information, and do whatever it is you have to do. And try to make it as hard on the other person as possible . Very clear; very easy, um ...

I don't know, it just uh--the excitement. The excitement bothers me and disturbs

me because I still feel excited about some of those things . Uh, it's-if I stop and think about being in a helicopter with a sixty and coming up over the jungle and you look down and there's five people sitting down there, five groups uh, who are eating their breakfast , shoving rice into their mouth, and they've got AKs leaning up against their legs, and

you 've caught 'em with their pants down, so-to-speak. And you're opening up on 'em,

and, you know, as they look up and you can see their faces, and they're looking right at you, and you're in charge of the situation; I get goose bumps when I think about that. It's power, it's control; it's-uh, it's the ultimate experience. I mean, everything's great and wonderful. It just, *mmm!*

And that's a pretty sad thing too; because I know as a, as a human being and

growing up as a child, um, now in my life, I care about people. And to think that at one time, it was uh, okay, or acceptable to uh, be involved in that is uh, it's real conflictual still. To uh, get excited; I sort of feel guilty when I feel that, so. But uh, what can I say? That's facts. That's the way it was.

Intrusive thoughts and avoidance (1 of 4)

Do you ever have intrusive thoughts?

I had a nightmare--or intrusive thoughts for a number of years. Uh, a pile of bodies that uh, urn ...follows me around. Um, mostly skeletal, urn, kind of like the skeleton on the board there; the, the skull. Uh, seeing the eyes, and uh, um, just this huge , overwhelming pile of bodies that uh, um . ..you don't know anybody.

#### Intrusive thoughts and avoidance (2 of 4)

#### Do you ever have intrusive thoughts that are positive?

#### You only dream about the other stuff, the, the horrific stuff. The stuff that's just really crazy. Urn, it's just-seems to be the ones that gets mixed up in the dreams, so. Unfortunately you can't control that.

And I don't' know why that, the intrusive memories aren't. ..uh, aren't more positive. I mean, I can sit around and talk about all the fun times, and partying with guys and-guys that I met and partied with, and had a good time with; I can talk about that and feel pretty good about it. But when I'm sitting there and I'm-not wanting to think about it, and the thoughts come back in about a particular situation, or whatever, it's usually pretty horrific. Uh, pretty uh .. .disturbing; gets me anxious. Uh, gets me upset. Uh, then

I get angry, and then I want to withdraw and hide. And be angry at the world, for even

allowing people to go do this sort of thing .

Intrusive thoughts and avoidance (3 of 4)

What happens when you hear a helicopter?

The hair goes up on the back of my neck. When I hear the- if I-particularly if it's a loach, or a slick. And I know the difference. I-got a lot of helicopters over here at the air base over here; they come up, but they're just uh, they 're a different kind of helicopter , and they make a different sound. I can tell a loach, and I can tell a slick, and I can tell a Cobra. I know those, and when I hear them I, the neck goes up--the hair goes up on the back of my neck, and my shoulders kinda come up, and my head kinda scrunches down a little bit, which was how you protected that one little soft spot on the back of the neck that isn't covered by your flight jacket-flak jacket, and uh, helmet, or uh-that you're wearing . You know, I mean, just -those sort of things.

Helicopters do . ..my mom had an aneurism right not too long after I started into therapy. I went over to the hospital and everything was okay, they were gonna take her to Seattle, and that was cool. I, you know, I was calm, I was dealing with it, you know, and it was gonna be hard and difficult, and, you know, she might die. All of a sudden, they had her on the gurney and they were taking her out, and I'm thinking they're going out and loading her in the ambulance. I come out the door, and here's a helicopter. They're gonna fly her to Seattle in a helicopter.

So, we were all planning to go over the next day, and, because they- we knew she was gonna be in surgery, and da, da, da, we had to get some things done. I couldn't. As soon as I saw that helicopter, I was pssh! Off on to my car, and heading for Seattle. I had to be there to make sure it got there . And I really realized that, you know, there was so many times when guys got medi-vaced out, that you never saw 'em again. And that just -you know, so helicopters are...probably the biggest problem for me all the way around. Just uh, working with guys that have similar experiences, uh, I get excited and I get hyped about it. But other times I get overwhelmed. I get uh, oh, distressed; but then, I do things to continue to work on that on a regular basis for myself.

Intrusive thoughts and avoidance (4 of 4)

Do you find yourself avoiding particular places and situations?

Um, sure: avoiding crowds; earlier on, before treatment and everything, avoiding people; situations. Fourth of July; I was here in Portland with my wife and uh, kids. And we were gonna go to the Fourth of July celebration . We'd just came back down off the

river to watch the fireworks, and sitting taking a shower, and I come walking out, and someone threw an M-80, and it blew a window out of the house. And within ten minutes , I had the wife, the kids, and the car, and was heading up in the mountains, and about two hour later, I was up-sixty miles back up in the mountains, above Wind River; up in there. And still angry and pissed off, and you know.

So, stayed away from any type of celebration where there's lots of people or

noises that are like gunfire. Popcorn popping is just like gunfire. It-you just wouldn't believe how real that sounds. And oh, the memory of fire-fights with single-shot weapons is just very reminiscent of that. Urn, so, trying to avoid those types of situations; any type of situation where there's too much going on, where I can't--couldn't keep track of things. Just-you know . So it really restricts your life.

Flashbacks and dreams (1 of 4)

Do you have flashback experiences?

If l was drinking alcohol, I'd probably be more likely to have a flashback. Urn,

and uh; ended up in a number of situations , uh, where it was uh-drunk and like, being­

you 're looking for a weapon, and uh, it 's -uh, really crazy. Someone gets in my face and gets angry, and then doesn't want to take it to the extreme . And people are dragging you away, and trying to keep you from...

And it 's a really scary thing, because when I get in that position , I, I just. . .I shut off I just want to go for it. I want to . ..go to the extreme. Be on top of everything . And alcoho l tended to get me there if anybody got in my way. If no one bothered me when I'm feeling-everything was fine. But if anybody confronted me in any way, shape, or form, then all that anger and all that stuff would come out. And then, all of a sudden, there was VC around and stuff like that. Flashing in the mind, and it just-it, phhh . So I stayed away from alcohol. Tried to-smoking pot was okay. Kept me mellow, kept me detached, and uh, kept me so I could sleep at night. Uh, I'd get my four hours of sleep and feel okay.

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#### Flashbacks and dreams (2 of 4)

#### Can you tell me about other flashback experiences?

#### There's this sense-when I'm driving down the road sometimes, it happened. That, all of a sudden I'm in a helicopter, going down this one strip of road. And I've never been able to figure out what happened there, it was right after you come out of the gate at Zion. And I can see the tree on the left. There's this one big tree about halfway down on the straight stretch there. Um, just, I-leaning out the door; it's in a slick. A UHI, 'cause of the opening, how big it is. And um, I don't have a weapon, I'm not on a

60. And I can see the jungle, and I just, oh that-I get, then I get overwhelmed with fear,

and I struggle and fight and pull it back down, and go away from it. And uh, I learned in therapy: my therapist asked me what would happen if I went with it; to see where it went, instead of just struggling to fight from it. So it hasn't come back so that I could do that since then (laughs). So--I don't know why. But I don't know what happened there. I don't remember anything happening in that particular spot, urn.

I remember one time there was-seeing a infantry squad dragging some bodies in

on the comer down there, but I can't remember anything. But there's other things that I've forgotten that I didn't, you know; periodically I've-they come up. Some pretty stupid things, but are pretty uh, crazy. I had a flashback. I did have a flashback when I was bowling. And I kept bowling, but I kept seeing this patty-dike, the corner of a patty­ dike. And there's uh, trees; rubber trees, just beyond it. There's an infantry squad pinned

down. There's gooks on the other side of the-in the trees, and they’re shooting. But it­and we're in a helicopter trying to provide fire, but, we can't get an angle where we can shoot and protect 'em, from where ifs at.

I actually wrote that one out. I kept writing it, and kept seeing it, just -and I

could hear the shots, I could smell it. I could-oh, huh--you could sm-I could smell the

gunpowder and stuff, and it was just, ooh. Uh-uh. I didn't like that. And I wasn't on any alcohol, I wasn't on drugs, it was just. ..happening. This was after I started in therapy again. You know? It's a-and it, but it was so vivid. Um, that's in a r-a real event. Um, the patty-dike wasn't there, but it was a, it was a, uh, bomb-crater; uh, from a big bomb, right on the edge of the Michelin rubber tree plantation. And uh, we couldn't get fire in. We couldn't get positioned to get frre, and a bunch of guys got shot up pretty bad because of that. But uh, I felt a lotta guilt from that.

Flashbacks and dreams (3 of 4)

Why do you think your flashbacks occurred within a bowling alley?

I have no idea what clicked there. Um, I was down at the far end of the bowling alley. It wasn't up by-they have a bunch of video machines on this end, where there's flashing lights and stuff, and that could be a cue if l was up on that end, but I wasn 't. I was down at the other end. And so, I don't know whether it was a particular noise or, or what; urn, I don't have any idea what clicked that. All of a sudden it was just as real as I was right there. I was just--choo-choo, choo-choo--coming right at me . And like I said, I go back and I write it down a little bit, and pick up my ball, and throw the ball again.

I was trying--part of me was trying to break it up . Uh, but part of me was trying to keep it going, because my counselor had been talking about this : trying to get it down on paper, and so I was writing it out. And I wrote it out just, really well, I mean. And to keep it going, that's what was surprising: How can this keep going? How can this really be happening? How can I see it so vividly that I can see the bullets hitting, I can see the puffs of smoke. All that from the-individual rounds; I can see the leaves fluttering on a

tree, and I can smell the smoke, you know? And I can see the people moving around. And still, over-in this overlay of uh, the bowling alley and that part of it. It was just -

uhh . . .you know. 'Cause I-up to that point-didn't believe that a person ...cold sober

and anything like that--could ever experience a flashback.

#### Flashbacks and dreams (4 of 4)

#### Do you ever have dreams of combat?

#### The dreams that I tended to have, uh, started more after I got into therapy. They got worse. Ahh (chuckles). And as I started putting all this together, trying to make some sense out of it; that's when the things just reallygot screwed up, and uh, um. And they were typically: trying to find a weapon, trying to uh-always running from the enemy, and uh, never being able to figure out who it was and-that’d be really strange, 'cause I'd end up in a split-level house, finding a deer rifle. And once I'd get the rifle, the enemy was gone. I wouldn't ha- I wouldn't need it anymore.

I finally figured it out. It had to do with therapy, and the tools I needed, and-but I got rid of the dream, too, because I uh-in therapy, I learned that if l thought about taking a weapon into my dream with me, so I had it with me when I went to sleep, then I just never had that dream again. It never came back. 'Cause I was prepared for it.

Hyper-vigilance and startle (1 of 3)

Did you observe this hyper-vigilance among the veterans you work with?

I can come in here and-! sit over at my desk, he sits over here, and I know he's watching out that window. And for years, I would never sit with my back to a window . But he's sitting over here and I know he's watching. He knows everything that's happening out there. And I'm safe. And if it was turned around, and you were sitting over here, you wouldn't be looking out that window. You wouldn't be concerned about it probably, cause you, you don't have that experience. You're not that hyper-alert, you're not that concerned about it. And that's something that you just. .. you k-it kinda shifts back into the back of your mind. But it's there, and it's active all the times.

Hyper-vigilance and startle (2 of 3)

How do you react in a crisis situation?

Um, any time crisis or anything would come up, I get more calm. I don't get agitated, I get more calm . I start feeling more in control, more competent. More able to deal with the situation as other people are going crazy and screaming and yelling, and my blood pressure's going down, and I'm just: oh yeah, this is great. You know? I like it. Um, and ...never really thought that was a big deal. Never gave it any thought till I got into therapy and started understanding a little bit more.

The downside of that is the, uh, the detachment in relationships . Uh, wife gets mad and angry, and so what? You know, I don't care, you know . You want a divorce? Get a divorce. I don't care; you know? I'm not gonna waste time on it, I'm not gonna be, you know, um--but just uh, screw it. Uh, I don't care. Uh, makes it real difficult to maintain long-term relationships.

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Hyper-vigilance and startle (3 of 3)

Do you ever express a startle response?

Startle response is a really negative symptom. Um, when I get startled, I get angry immediately.Um, I've yelled at the kids, uh, just, uh-I've got startled and grabbed a knife . Uh, I won't sleep with a gun close to me, because first thing I'm gonna do if I get startled, get woken too quick, is grab a gun. You know. Wife learns that she walks to the door, and says your name; she doesn't come shake you, or grab you . Because, to wake you that way is uh, you are-you're gonna get hit. You know, if you're uh, just any type of startle like that. And that bothers me, that startle . ..

I, I was in a meeting here a couple years ago, with other professionals. And a window dropped and slammed on the case behind me, and I threw a cup of coffee and was under the table, with my peers . And I ju--ohh , (makes grumbling sounds.) and, you know, I was just so angry that I would do this, exhibit this type of behavior. And that was real difficult when I first came home, cause there was explosions ; uh, car backfiring , anything like that, and it's really-you feel stupid when you find yourself on the ground. Everybody looking at you going, what the hell are you doing? You know? (Laughs) so, startle response is a very uncomfortable side effect--or, symptom.

Recovery and therapy (1 of 6)

What finally persuaded you to go into therapy?

I have my moments. (laughs) But I do all right. And I've had bad times in my life, and I've been on the edge, and I've been suicidal; that's what got me into therapy, was when I finally was in a situation-I'm trying to get a cop to pop a cap on me. And I'm looking him in the eye and knowing that I'm gonna take that gun away from him and kill him before he can do it, because he's so stupid about it. And a friend of mine who was a cop happened to show up, just at the right time, and start-and he knew how to talk to me. And he got me settled down.

They put me in--took me to jail, and put me in a cell, and called a mental health worker to come talk to me. And it was this young woman, and yeah, well, what the hell's she gonna know? And then, first thing she asked me, if I was a Vietnam vet ...and then she s-she says "hey, you know, I know this guy, you know? And you-if you called

him, I'll bet he could help ya." She gave me this phone number, and she told him, just, let

me go in the morning. And they did. Uh-they were gonna ship me off to Western State. You know? Because I was losing it. And I was-I was tired, I, I couldn't go any further. I lived a lie for my life for twenty years, and I was wore out.

I'd been on guard duty for twenty year's -- I'd been sleeping four hours a night on-at the most, for twenty years, and uh, couldn't go any further.

#### Recovery and therapy (2 of 6)

#### What are your goals in therapy?

#### It is really interesting. When I went back-when I went back into therapy. After about a year and a half, two years in therapy I made a decision to go back and kind of go back to seventeen, before the military. And then restructure my life in that sense with that as the, as the ideal. Instead of this piece in the middle that was really screwed up. So I went back to that and I kind of focused around that. But I never could, I never saw myself as that, I still can't.

Recovery and therapy (3 of 6)

Has treatment helped you cope with your PTSD symptoms?

It was really interesting: I went back to school after I started PTSD treatment; went back into college, and---it started out, I always sit in the far left of the classroom, over by the window; at the very back of the room, by the window . Not by the door, cause that's where someone would come in. And I knew all the bushes down there . I knew where there was any possibility-and I scanned those bushes every time when I would sit down. I knew which guy around me to take out first, if anything happened . In the order I would take 'em out. I knew what to do if someone popped the door, and

flopped a grenade in. That's why I was by the window, 'cause I could go out that way. If anything happened from that direction, it was gonna be by gunfire, and I'd be down against the wall, safest spot in the room.

Um, and I'm realizing, god, I'm wast--and then I'm paying attention to the person doing the lecture, and trying to keep track of all this too, you know? I mean, uh, and it was a real exercise in trying to break that habit, and trying to focus more back onto the work and what was happening there . And detach from that, and to let it go a little bit .

So I made---I actually made decisions to sit at different places . Next quarter I decided I would move over at the back, but right in the middle. And eventually, before I graduated with my undergraduate degree, I was sitting at the front of the room -- in the middle in the most insecure place .

#### Recovery and therapy (4 of 6)

#### Do you believe the therapy cured you?

#### I did get therapy, but there are crazy parts of me . And it's still difficult, you know. I spend more of my time keeping my life together than the average person does. You know? I make good money, I have a nice home, I have a nice wife, and I am working

very hard to keep an open relationship with that. I'm working very hard to try to keep communications open with my kids and trying to learn to enjoy going to Thanksgiving dinner. Or have fun, and enjoy Christmas. Things like that, that-things that used to just irritate me to no end. Um, after three Christmases in Vietnam and uh, the picture of that guy's head that I had with blood running down my arm was taken on Christmas Eve in 1969. Um-why can't you just set this aside and enjoy yourself? Hmm, you know, I-it just irritates me that people can think that, 'cause they-they don't have any concept.

But then, then I get angry at myself, because I don't want you to have that experience . Cause you don't deserve it. And you wouldn't want it. And the other part that irritates me is all these people out here jumping on the bandwagon, now-- people that wannabe veterans . People that say they're veterans , combat vets who aren't. They don't know what it's like- I would rather not have this . If I had a choice, you think I'd wanna

be this way? I mean, when I get forced in a corner still today, if you back me up, and I get

to that point, I'm, I'm thinking about killing you. I'm not thinking about hurting you or getting you outta my face; I'm thinking about killing you. And I have the capacity to do it. And I'm getting to be an old man, and I still have the capacity to do that. Because I don't care at that point, I just shut off That's scary, a scary place to be. And I have a feeling I'm gonna be like that the rest of my life.

Recovery and therapy (5 of 6)

Have you ever done any therapeutic hypnosis?

I did a hypnosis deal, and during the hypnosis, what had happened: after we put the guys in, we took off on another this is a different mission. We put guys in for a mission. I don't know why that one happened to come up on it, to trigger it, but, another mission we carne in it was a hot LZ, dropped the guys off, took off, and set down. Urn, there's a mama-san with a little lambretta, selling Cokes; got a couple Cokes. There's group of the door-gunners sitting out here, pilots, talking to each other, with the slicks all just kinda setting there with their blades just kinda, "Wop, wop (helicopter noise) y'know; waiting to go back in emergency if we have to.

And, I'm sitting back out there, urn, talking with these guys. I'm kinda watching

the tree line over here. It's about a hundred yards. And, all of a sudden, I saw a little puff of smoke outta the corner of my eye. And the next thing I knew, there was a big explosion. An RPG hit, urn, knocked me down. I had a uh,--I had my flak vest on, cause it was flying, so it hit me in the shoulder, right up here in the chest, in the top part of my shoulder. And, I roll I hit the ground, I'm rolling, I get up, and it's dust, and dirt; and I'm just ahh shaking my head, trying to figure out what the hell happened; kinda knowing it, and I'm trying to get everybody scrambling towards the choppers. Jumping in the helicopter, and I'm grabbing I'm on, my position was on the opposite side. I got over to it, got my helmet on. I'm screaming to the pilot to go, and then he's asking me where the crew chief was. And I wasn't concerned about him. I wanted outta there. I was scared.

Um, actually I'd hit my knee when I was jumping into the helicopter too. I come back to the other side of the helicopter, looked down, and they were dragging the crew chief into the back chopper, so I screamed to the pilot that he was okay, and, uh, first one's out. We were second in line, and we took off And then, the last thing I saw, when they as we banked out and away, just went back over the jungle part of it, to get outta the opening, so that no one could shoot at us again, one of the gun ships--er, one of the guys on the third or fourth ship kinda broke outta line. They carne back around, and rolled over on the lambretta and the mama-san and the kid that was with her, and shot them and killed them. And uh, I forgot all about that. I've never, just but it's so it, I think about it. You know, I spent 27-and-a-halfrnonths in Vietnam. And I can remember. ..maybe three months.

Recovery and therapy (6 of 6)

You work as a social worker with other veterans? Is that difficult for you?

It is the first job in my life that I love doing. And after six years, I will come here every day happy as hell about the job I have. And, you know, very fortunate to—but then, what do I do? I sit around and talk to combat vets; that know life, and have experienced life in the way that I have.

Coping Strategies (1 of 4)

Can one cope with PTSD by simply ignoring or denying it?

Denying is one way of dealing with it and getting through life. But the downside to that is, is it-allows the PTSD to make a lot of decisions about how you're gonna live your life. And I've certainly seen that in a number of folks--world war two vets that I've worked with in that, and those that I've known in my family, from world war two. Who definitely had PTSD, but they led very restricted lives because they were in denial. And they didn't get to experience the full richness and happiness, and joy of life. They lived their lives out okay. They made money, and-my uncle John sat in his chair when he wasn't out working, but if-you know, and that’s all he did. And you were quiet around him, and the family knew that, and you didn't do anything to disturb that, or disrupt that. What kinda life is that? Why should a person have to settle for just survive-if l'm gonna just survive, why be here? It doesn't make any sense. Life is about experiencing happiness and joy. You know?

And what I know of--when I was in denial of it, the only thing I had was anger.

Um, that--yeah, that was about the only thing I really let through. Everything else was shut off. And I was really uncomfortable when people would be talking about joyful things, or happy things. I didn't know how to deal with it. Cause I kept that part of me shut off; because denial takes away so much of the person .

And we see guys all the time who have done exceptionally well at being in denial.

And then all of a sudden, their lives start falling apart. Fortunately, some of them die before that happens . My guess is that the majority of those people that live through in denial, end up living shorter lives; because the stress that they keep tied up within 'em causes health problems: it's heart attacks, and things like that, and kills them early.

#### Coping Strategies (2 of 4)

#### Explain some of the techniques you have used to help cope within our society.

#### When I went back to school, a lot of that came back; but I was working on it, and trying to manage it better. I even got to where I made a deal with myself that every day, when I was walking around the campus, I'd say hi to somebody new. I didn't have to stop and talk to 'em, but I'd say hi to 'em. Just to open up the communications a little bit. And eventually, I started even actually talking to people, and interacting in a different level, so.

But it was--it took a lot of work It was--learning how to go to malls. My wife and I, she has some medical problems, and I had to go to Seattle pretty regular from Port Angeles. And uh, so we'd stop at a mall during the day, at eleven, twelve o'clock, when there are very few people. And we'd just get in, and we'd walk around the inside of the mall without going into any stores. And after a few trips, I'd go into the stores with her. I found, if I was with her by herself, I could do it fairly well; I--cause I could watch and manage that. And it wasn't a whole lot of people . And eventually, it got to where we could take one of the girls with us. And then, eventually, two girls.

And now, I can go shopping at the mall on the 24th of December . I'm pretty

wrecked after I get outta there, but I'll do it, but I-'cause I don't want PTSD to be directing my life. I don't want *it* to make decisions for me about how I'm gonna live my life. I wanna make those decisions . And then I can decide. Well, this is too uncomfortable; I really don't need to do that . And it's okay, because I've got other things I can do-It's okay. But I'm-I'm willing to let it make those choices for me, you know, trying to take that control.

Coping Strategies (3 of 4)

How do you monitor yourself? How do you know when you are having a problem?

I've categorized my symptoms now. That's how I manage my PTSD. Sleep is another one: four hours average, that's typical. Urn, now I get five or six; I feel pretty comfortable with that. And Imonitor my sleep. And if my sleep starts getting off, and I start sleeping less, I know that there's something stressful going on that Ineed to deal with . 'Cause the one thing II know about PTSD, it's a stress-related disorder. If I can manage the stress in my life, symptoms stay down. So I monitor my sleep.

And the next one for me is the hyper-vigilance. The-and if it gets to that point, and I'm starting to look and pay more attention to things, and get anxious about things when I'm around too many people, I know there's something stressful going on. And the third one in line for me is the startle response. And so I kinda watch those symptoms. Those are--and each person has those ones that are really uh, personal that they have that fit them so well.

Coping Strategies (4 of 4)

Do you have spiritual beliefs that have helped you to come to terms with your experiences?

Doing PTSD work was real helpful. But urn, I'm also part Native American, and I just got involved in doing some more spiritually oriented stuff. And that made a real big difference. When I was able to look at the-how the Native Americans look at the

warriors path, and the separation; urn, it's true that once you go on that warriors path, that you can't come back. But the separateness in the trail is only as wide as you let it be.

You can make it a major gulf, and separate yourself totally from things. Or you can have it where you can actually walk hand in hand with somebody else. And there's just a little, small barrier.

That made it okay. It made it acceptable; it made it uh, more meaningful to be on

that path-made a good decision, and plus learning a little bit more, I guess, that the Native Americans tend to honor that, urn. You know, I do a lot of things with uh, Lakota and uh, their, their perceptions and, and I think it really helps me. Because that's the way l've--I was growing up, what I learned from my parents and that--protecting family, and those things were very important. And the Lakota think that uh, the women and the children are the most important and that's why the warrior walks at the front, you know; because be's expendable. And that's okay, because you're defending and keeping that alive, to keep it going. And that's, that's a good concept. That's the way it's supposed to be. If you don't take care of the women and children, you don't have the ability to go on. And that really helps to have something like that to look for, and to look at; and to be a part of

So, it's okay for me to have uh, sacrificed, and to do that.

Living with PTSD (1 of 3)

Can you explain how the PTSD affects you on a daily basis?

I take my kids and I go to the mall-my wife and kids. And uh, it took me a long time where I could go with all of them. I, I found that when I'd go-and here I've got two girls, and a wife. All three females, and I'm in a mall, and there's people everywhere, and I'm agitated, disturbed, pissed off, angry, and I'm trying to understand what's going on here. And, you know, it's just really confusing. Because, uh, I'll do something to make it so we have to leave. And what I figured out, what-you know , I was-it was so difficult to try to protect all of them, and keep track of them. You got three women going three different directions at one time. They have a-no cares whatsoever. They're not concerned about getting ambushed, hurt, or anything. And I'm trying to manage all this.

That 's, you know--and that 's where the PTSD comes in: That hyper-alertness that, that's there. That you're unaware of, but it's there, and you figure it out eventually.

Hopefully you do. And then you work on ways to try to change that, but uh. Driving back and forth to work, and, and, you know every bush on the way. You know every place there 's a potential ambush. When you 're walking down the street, average person 's looking straight ahead, and I'm scanning the windows up above. Might be a sniper up there. Might be somebody up there that you need to know about. If you don't know

about it, you could die. Why is it relevant today? I'll be damned if I know. But, I do it. I still do it, you know? I try to make myself aware of it, and calm it down, but it still happens .

Living with PTSD (2 of 3)

Is your PTSD getting easier to manage?

It’s okay I guess. You know? I mean, um. I’d like for it to be totally gone. But it’s more manageable.

Living with PTSD (3 of 3)

How does PTSD affect your family life?

It's um, I mean, when you talk about all those things with PTSD, um, post traumatic stress disorder, um ...it a real insidious disorder. It's crazy. It really affects a person's life in so many different ways. It's uh-the detachment, numbness, and all those things that you develop to get you through uh, horrific situations. And you tend to do

that in every day life, which really makes it uncomfortable in relationships; your wife has

a problem if you're detached from her all the time. Urn, you become over-protective of your kids. I mean, I want a resume for whoever they're gonna spend the night with and I wanna know what their parents think about drugs, alcohol, sex, all this. My wife would let them go and not even be concerned about it. And I'm on the other end of the spectrum.

So it causes a lot of fights and disruptions. And until you understand it, and sort it out, and figure it out and see why your behaving the way you are. And then sometimes

you can find some middle ground there, but it's real difficult to do.

#### Causes of PTSD (1 of 4)

#### In your opinion, are some people predisposed to expressing PTSD?

#### My position is, is yes: A person is predisposed . Certain significant issues about their childhood that may or may not have been clinically significant later on; they were there though. If the person didn't have Vietnam and that, they mighta had a great and wonderful life with no problems. But then you come back in, and you re-you do something like combat to 'em, and I think it really steps up and exacerbates the pre­ existing stuff. And there's a core issue. 'Cause in my work, in ten years of working with veterans and that, I just keep-see this repetitive pattern, that as you get to know the client after about four years, you see that it-the same issues were there in childhood. Vietnam th-'cause that-the issues that he keeps coming back into in Vietnam are very reminiscent of the one in childhood, and the way he's acted out in life over here has been the same sort of thing.

And so-and that's what I try and help 'em find, is that core issue. So, so there is

a predisposing factor there; if a person has good coping skills, has an opportunity to come back and debrief the situation, talk about it in an open fashion and share it, and integrate the experience, they're able to go on. But uh, there's an inordinate amount of folks who that didn't happen for.

Causes of PTSD (2 of 4)

Do you think people are getting more sensitive to PTSD issues?

Because of all the work around PTSD, it's making a difference in the world.

And right now, the big thing is uh, over in uh, the Croatian government. Just had a meeting with our CS, and they want to develop and put vet centers in over there. And we done it down in uh, San Salvador, and couple other places, you know, so. People around the world are gonna get help because of that; because of what we learned. And because somebody said: bullshit; you're not gonna turn your back on it. You're not gonna deny it.

#### Causes of PTSD (3 of 4)

#### You are also a PTSD counselor. Do you think that people who experience other kinds of trauma suffer a different sort of PTSD?

#### No . I think it's the same. Um, my understanding of PTSD says that it's that one singular event, you know--being in a combat situation. And I really feel that a number of those situations didn't traumatize me at all; especially after I'd been there for a while, and I was used to it. It didn't make a difference. But there were a few key events that really affected me; that uh, the fear and hopelessness of the situation. And it's just that one or two incidences that really bad the impact. The rest just kind of added to it a little bit.

Um, so if it's a rape, you know, it's the same sort of thing . It's that--it's a very brief encounter, but it's that hopelessness and helplessness that causes the problem . And something happens in the brain. The brain chemistry is altered during the event because of the intense stress and fear. Um, Auschwitz, it's a, it's an over and over situation; but it's that--the few key events that really click for a person , that affect them for the rest of their life. You know, there are-it's, uh, if it was-the fact that it was each and every event contributed equally to the situation, people with PTSD from combat are screwed.

'Cause it'd take me another two lifetimes to work through all those; trying to sort 'em out and figure 'em out--which one? When? What was the--? It, phh! I could never done do that. I-phh! I'd be lost.

But it's, I think it's understanding and figuring out what the key events were, and, and try-and like I said, for me, it was more putting people's lives in danger. And not acknowledging it, and just, pshew! Deleting their lives summarily without any concern.

And when you finally put it together , and you realize that they had ...wives, they had kids, they had parents.

Causes of PTSD (4 of 4)

Many veterans believe the US government contributed to their PTSD. Why is this?

In this particular incident, we couldn’t call it an air-strike, because it was in thw Michelin rubber tire plantation. And the um, US government would’ve had to pay for the rubber trees we blew up. So the only thing you could use was light weapons, and this was ridiculous. You’re out here risking your life with these constraints that are unreal. And so you start getting really angry at the way the government managed things, and, uh, you know, because the people—it was about money, when you looked at it from that perspective. That’s what they were concerned about. They certainly weren’t concerned about your life.

And uh, so hence--I think that's why a lot of the vets that have PTSD have a lot

of anger about the government. 'Cause your hands were tied, you could--you know, you had--some places you couldn't fire a weapon without permission. Other areas, you could kill anything that walked in it. It just depended on where you were at, and what the order of the day was. There'd be a cease-fire, and they'd throw rockets at you, and you'd

have to sit there and honor the cease fire, even though they're not. Uh, it's real confusing.

#### Opinion of the War (1 of 1)

#### Um, I hear always things about what we did, and the atrocities and things like that, and today I say, no. I don't go along with that. But at the time, yeah; I did. My Lai

was a, was a major thing in the news and all that. Uh, and it offends me that we focus on that and print it in the paper. And this last year, at the anniversary of that, it was in the paper. But in February, was there anything in the paper about the one grave with 1500 bodies-over 1500, and the other grave with over 3,000 bodies in it at Way, where the MVA summarily executed all the teachers and governmental people in Way, after ten of '68?

No, that doesn't matter what they did. It only matters what *we* did. My Lai was a situation; I know people that worked that village. There's a whole line of villages there.

And it was booby-trapped from end to end, and the people that were there were supporting the MVA, and Charlie, and uh, they were setting out the booby traps, and feeding them and everything else. And they lost people everyday that they went through there; to booby traps and things like that. Guys get their legs blown off, get their arms blown off, and they're screwed up for life. And finally someone decided to put an end to it. So they killed 'em. I'm sorry, but, you know, if you 're, if you're gonna participate, you have to be willing to take the responsibility for your actions.

I don't care how old you are. If you're a kid, and you're packing ammo, and supplying ammo to kill me, and you get in my way, you're dead. That's the way it's gotta be if you're gonna survive the situation. You can't, "Ah, well that's a woman. I'm not gonna shoot her." That's ' bullshit. She's gonna be fixin 'em up if she's working as a

#### medic, or whatever, she's gonna be patching 'em up, and helping them to kill you;

bullshit. You have to kill 'em.

Self-reflection (1of 4)

What was the best thing about your Vietnam experience?

Um…probably the closeness with the guys in my unit. I mean, we were tight, you know? You could count on anybody in my unit to die for you. I was willing to die for

anybody in the unit--and that's the way it was . I mean, we were tight. And we fought hard, we fought together. And believed in each other, and trusted each other implicitly. I could sit here and do whatever I needed to do, and I knew that the guy on my left was watching when there was--gonna be paying attention, and taking care of everything. And that's pretty amazing; when you can actually count on a person that much. You can trust them to die for you; which you don't find here. Not in civilian life.

People are too scared. They don't know, 'cause they're worried about their life.

The downside to combat is, is that you learn to not care about your life. It's just unimportant. Until you get short, and then you might live and you might-you know,

it--cause then it gets a little scary but uh, for the major portion of it, it's-it don't matter.

What matters is doing your job, and making sure that the unit comes out. That's what's important. And that was-that's probably the best part of it.

Self-reflection (2 of 4)

What was the worst thing about your Vietnam experience?

And it’s one of the biggest losses, I think. Is that uh, innocence ...'cause you

uh ...hmm . ..you end up walking a different path in life, and you can never come back. I can never have that innocence; uh, feeling free to be happy and enjoy life in, urn, as a child. With all the-without all the horrific pieces, and understanding what life is really about. Er the, you know, with death and destruction and all that. And that's a lot to lose.

As you think back to uh, when I think about what all the kids did--uh, that I went

to school with, and you-you get really jealous . You know ...? Hmm . .. And then angry.

Um, cause no one cared. (he had tears in his eyes)

Think it's probably the hardest part about Vietnam : afterwards, it uh-people didn't care. They never thought about what uh--the soldier experience and stuff Worry about the political. Um . ..and you're ...hmm . ..based on what you 've been taught growing up, you 're doing what you think is right -- without question. Uh, not looking for anything out of that ; you 're not looking for medals, or anything other than maybe being able to uh, live your life; hold your head up, and ...know that you stand for something . But

um . . .hmm...it was-didn't happen like that.

Self-reflection (3 of 4)

Carl, are you mentally ill?

I'm a disabled person. Um, who has a skewed view of the world ; um, who-and some parts of that, it's good. Some parts of it aren't. Um, and I try to balance it more and focus on the good parts.

#### Self-reflection (4 of 4)

#### What does your experience with combat and PTSD teach you about life?

#### That trauma is a part of life, and that there's absolutely no way that I know of to be totally prepared for dealing with it. And that-1 hate to be philosophical, but uh, with every crisis comes opportunity. And as you deal with those things, there's gonna be something worthwhile to come out of it, no matter how bad it may seem; whether it's losing a wife or a daughter, or a sister or a mother, or whatever; at an early time in your life, or whatever . Urn, there is something positive to be learned out of that. And you have to be able to look inside.

And the one thing that you need to, to really hold onto, and keep with yourself through those experiences, is who you are inside. Really try to understand, and get to know who you are as an individual. What your values are. And follow, and be true to your values. Because they're important. And they are what will get you though the situation. And when you're confronted with situations that you have difficulty in handling, seek out help . Get some help with it. Try to-you know, get somebody to talk with you about it. Urn, and if you're in a posit ion to make choices about whether or not you're gonna be involved in a war-type situation, combat-type situation, uh, to get as much information as you can. And to do what you feel is right, and stand by what you believe in. And hope for the best.

Personal Message

Is there anyone that you want to remember and dedicate this interview to?

Uh, let's see, um. A couple pilots that I know that are-one who I have seen every year for the last couple years, his name's Ron, uh. He's had it pretty bad . Things are finally coming together for him financially, but urn ...I just really hope that somehow he finds that uh, what life he's got left, that uh ...(tears, sniffs, sighs) That he has some peace and happiness in that, and that urn, he can in some way forgive himself .

And, the other pilot: John, uh ...whom I think about a lot who uh, is just starting to

get into therapy and stuff. It was real difficult when he went down, because uh, we didn 't get to see him again, and we got him out, but uh, he kinda left and uh, didn't know what happened to him for a lot of years, so. Uh, I just hope that he sticks with it, and uh, is able to get some help and start givi-getting something more positive for his life. 'Cause he deserves it; so. And uh, that's about it.

Treatment Strategy

#### PTSD is a multifaceted disorder, so therapists have identified a set of treatments to address its range of symptoms. There are three primary goals in therapy: reducing the person's fear of provoking stimuli, helping the client modify counterproductive thoughts, and reducing stress in the client's life. Different techniques are used to accomplish each of these goals.

The most effective way to reduce fear of particular stimulus is through the use of

systematic desensitization. In this approach, a person unlearns their fear, essentially reversing the classical conditioning process that caused them to acquire the conditioned fear in the first place .

In the first step, as you can see here, the therapist trains the client to relax different muscles in their body. Following this training, the client is then able to quickly

and systematically calm themselves.

In the second step, the therapist and client work together to establish a fear hierarchy . This hierarchy is a list of fear provoking stimuli starting with those that are the least threatening to those that are the most threatening.

In the third step the client is systemically exposed to various fear provoking stimuli. Say for example that the person is afraid ofheights. First of all, the client uses relaxation techniques to calm himself or herself, and then the therapist presents a stimulii that is only slightly provoking such as imagining that he or she looking down from atop a small hill.

At first, this mental image might be a bit upsetting, but the therapist encourages the client to relax . Once the client is able to relax in the presence of this stimuli, he or she is then ready to move up one step in the hierarchy. This time the client might be asked to imagine looking out the window of a small building. Again, this probably provokes a bit of anxiety, and the therapist gently encourages the client to relax.

This process continues very gradually over a period of weeks. Eventually the client may be exposed to stimuli in the real world. For example, the client may be asked to approach a window in a tall building.

Systematic desensitization is an effective treatment for simple phobias and it is also an effective treatment to reduce a client's PTSD symptoms. In treating an individual with PTSD, careful re-exposure to the traumatic event plays an important role in recovery. The individual can imagine progressive iterations of the traumatic event or h: or she can talk through the events they experienced.

In addition to systematic desensitization, therapists can use cognitive techniques to challenge the irrational beliefs and unhealthy thought patterns that underlie PTSD symptoms. For example, a war veteran may refuse to enter public places such as restaurants because he fears that he would be vulnerable to an ambush. In turn, the therapist could challenge the rationality of this thinking by asking questions such as "Do ambushes like this happen in your community?" and "Is there any reason to think that people might be trying to target you?"

Finally, given that stress in a person's life increases PTSD symptoms, therapists can help the individual by encouraging time management skills, couples therapy, and anger management.

It is important to note that any therapy needs to be appropriate to the client's culture. For example, in many parts of the world, there are strong taboos against

discussing traumatic personal events, especially outside of the family unit. To be effective, therefore, the therapist must develop a treatment plan that works within these cultural constraints.