

I'm Sorry, I Couldn't Stand By Him

I turned 20 in 1973. From then until 1979, I was married to a Vietnam veteran 6 years older than me. He'd already been in the Navy for 6 years -- 4 years on an aircraft carrier, then 2 years volunteered for river boats.

He never hit me so I never called it "abuse." But sometimes when he was depressed and drunk, he would take one of his guns, a sawed-off twelve gauge or a .30-30 rifle, and say he was going to kill himself, other times he'd say he was going to kill me, too. I probably looked down the barrel of a gun held by a PTSD's Viet vet at least a dozen times.

I still have nightmares about it. It still affects my relationships. I still have PTSD from my experience.

In 1979, I left him.

I still think of him often. I hope he has somewhere, somehow, found someone who can help him get help.

He wasn't an evil person; he had an evil experience.

If I were to encounter him today, I'd apologize that I wasn't the one that could help him.

To those of you who haven't been able to stand by your vets, I understand.

To those of you who *have* been able to stand by your vets, thank you.