



I was born in California up in the Red Woods. My dad was a logger and had 20 inch “guns” on him. He worked hard all his life and used to saw with a seven foot bar. My mother was a hard-worker too. At six years old my parents divorced. My dad took off by himself and we all stayed at home with our mother. I had older siblings that were already grown when my parents divorced. Both of my older brothers had joined the military. One of my brothers joined the Army and the other joined the Air Force.

When I was in college, for anthropology, one of my childhood friends was killed while serving in the Vietnam War. I went to my friend’s funeral, and I told his dad that I was going to join the service and get revenge. I wanted to join the Marines, but the recruiter never showed up. The Air Force recruiter told me he could get me in, and I enlisted in 1971, when I was 19. I received orders for Vietnam. Once I got to the Philippines, my orders changed and I was stationed in Ubon, Thailand. Following Thailand, I was stationed in Germany and Turkey. In 1974, I discharged from the military and went back home to California. I logged in California, Oregon, and Alaska. I made a lot of money when I was younger, but I would drink it up; throw it away.

I was staying in hotels, due to work, but drinking a lot and using drugs too. I would drink myself out of housing. Eventually, I started riding my bike around the nation and stayed at Missions and the Salvation Army while looking for work. I usually stayed at places where I could work for a while and then move on. In 2014, I was working on tugboats in Kentucky, and spoke with a friend who was from Wisconsin. He had several years of sobriety, and I knew that I needed a change with my own drinking. Based on what my friend told me, I decided to move to Wisconsin. I stayed at the Salvation Army in La Crosse, and continued to struggle with finding stable housing and my drinking. Staff at the Salvation Army knew I was a Veteran and told me about the HUD-VA Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) program. I was able to speak with HUD-VASH staff and eventually secured housing. While in programming. I had a desire to ride my bike around the country for more adventures. So, I left Wisconsin and returned to Kentucky. I had planned to camp out for the summer in Kentucky, but was not able to due to COVID-19.

In the spring of 2020, I contacted HUD-VASH staff at the Tomah VAMC that had previously worked with me, and I requested to be screened for the program. I quickly received a voucher and secured housing. I have been all over the Country and the world and have seen everything a human being can possibly see, almost! Wisconsin is the last place I am going. The VA up here is like nowhere else. I appreciate HUD-VASH and everything the staff have done for me. They are like family!