

Reader Views

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My Tour In Hell: A Marine's Battle with Combat Trauma

David W. Powell

Modern History Press, an imprint of Loving Healing Press (2006)

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Reviewed by Paige Lovitt for Reader Views (5/06)

“My Tour in Hell” is the first book in “The Reflections of History Series.” It is a very powerfully written autobiography by David W. Powell about his horrific experiences while serving in Vietnam and how his life drastically changed upon his return to the states. The horrors that Powell had to endure while in Vietnam caused him to experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As a result of this disorder, he is unable to maintain steady employment, healthy relationships, and he has difficulties with his emotions. The disorder also affects his ability to sleep, and keeps him stuck in a hyper vigilant state.

Powell goes into great depth about what he experienced in Vietnam. He makes himself vulnerable to his readers by writing about his reactions to situations that he encountered. He has to deal with his own reactions when he kills. He also has to deal being abandoned by his comrades while under enemy attack. He sees people shot, raped, or killed for no reason. He learns to keep his mouth shut about while he watches supposedly honorable soldiers commit these crimes. He watches while soldiers intentionally injure themselves as a way to get out of the military. These same men receive Purple Hearts because they were injured in war. There are pictures included, that make the people that he was involved with more real. There are also some horrible pictures of victims of the war. These are hard to stomach, but show the reader that these people really did exist.

When Powell returns home, his life is a mess. His marriage ends. He is unable to maintain relationships with his children. He goes from job to job. He finds that he has become obsolete because his computer programming experience is two years out of date. His self esteem suffers and due to his experiences he has difficulties taking orders from superiors. Along the way, Powell learns about a technique called “Traumatic Incident Reduction” (TIR) and is able to use the techniques to free himself from the symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

I highly recommend this book for people who are either experiencing PTSD or are close to someone that has it. I think that Rehabilitation Counselors who work with military veterans would also benefit from reading this because it will give them a greater understanding of what these veterans have gone through. War Veterans would also gain something from reading this book because they will find that they are not alone in dealing with the trauma created by their experiences.

I asked a disabled Marine Vet if I should share this book with my nephew while he is in Iraq. I wasn't sure if it would be too much for him to read while he is involved in combat. The Marine felt that it would be good for him because it talks about the problems and symptoms that he might experience and most importantly how to deal with them. "My Tour in Hell" shows that there is hope for people that are experiencing PTSD.