

Stephen G. Henderson



“I have seen war. I lived it. War saturated me.”

In Iraq, crossfires trapped us while we transported vehicles filled with blood for American troops. Sleepless nights. A continuous threat of the enemy's presence.

In Afghanistan at night, mortars showered us from the sky. In the day, frequent attacks drove us to hide in bunkers with weapons drawn. Our defenses were breached. We lined the street at attention as the bodies of fallen soldiers were escorted to the flight line. A constant reminder of what could be next for us.

In Qatar my enemy was domestic. An abusive 1st SGT and Master SGT. Isolated, yelled at, cursed at, forced to eat alone, made to perform menial and degrading tasks. Mental abuse to the point where I took off my NCO rank and threw it on the floor. I told them they could have their army.

Eventually, I left the military and big pieces of myself. Life was in fragments and I was trying to understand what I could not explain. A marriage was sacrificed. It felt uncomfortable to receive hugs from my kids and I stopped calling people and stayed indoors. I lost my passion for what I used to do and could not remember what brought me joy or motivated me. Employment was also a rollercoaster. Life was just paused.

Years later a random call from a white guy led to an unusual question, followed by coffee, followed by a trip to Warfighter Advance where I met other veterans, survivors, and warriors of all colors, from all branches and locations in the U.S.

I now have people in my life to help me make sense of the shattered pieces and to talk with. They help me out of my darkness, my isolation, and they remind me that I am not alone.

We owe Warfighter Advance to every military veteran. It is a community that will stay with them for a lifetime.

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