

War Dad

The word “difficult” is not big enough to describe how tough it is to divulge my deepest pain. If my book wasn’t going to help thousands of women and girls that are affected by soldiers coming back from Iraq and Afghanistan, I would have never told my story. When my “WAR DAD” came back from Vietnam, he was violent, angry, volatile, psychotic, a drug addict, a woman beater, a womanizer, a criminal, and a danger to me, himself, and, most of all, society. It’s ironic how we never hear about this stuff on the evening news.

More than 100,000 American troops are currently in Iraq and Afghanistan. An estimated three hundred thousand are living with posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Nearly a third of our soldiers develop serious mental problems three to four months after coming home. Many soldiers live with PTSD, amputations, mental and emotional instabilities in silence. About one-third of children of deployed American soldiers are at risk for developing psychological problems, mainly due to high levels of stress experienced at home. Many wives of veterans report experiencing more acts of family violence. This proves that there is secondary trauma to the family, especially the children. I was one of them.

My dad grew up in a blue-collar area of East Los Angeles. Seems that many boys in his area were drafted. And I grew up with the daughters. Many girls witnessed divorce, physical abuse, drug addiction and sometimes fell into it themselves. The effects of war can live on through generations if someone does not halt the effects. The war, drugs, and heroin took my dad away. Although my father returned alive, he was a casualty of the war. The life we would have had was gone.

The night that could have ruined my life began when my father took me to the neighborhood bar down the street from my grandparents’ house, Art’s Bar. I knew I wasn’t allowed at a bar establishment, much less sitting at the bar. To keep my dad calm, I asked for a nickel

so I could play a song on the jukebox. I chose “Angel Baby” and played it repeatedly. A man was sitting at the bar with us. He asked, “She’s been playing that song a lot. Can she play another song?” In a split second my dad was in a mad rage. Is this the rage that comes from going to war? “I’ll pick another song,” I said. Too late—my dad got up from the bar and began arguing with this man. “Stop!” I screamed as I tugged on his arm. I begged him, but he had that look in his eyes, and I knew he was at that point of no return. I was crying and shaking uncontrollably. They pushed through the wooden swinging doors and began to physically fight out on the sidewalk. This poor stranger had no idea who my dad was. My dad had fought in the Vietnam War. He knew how to kill! He was on drugs and alcohol. Both backed away from each other. They were in that wrestler’s stance with both arms out to the side. They were circling each other. I noticed that my dad had a fork

in his hand. I was screaming and crying out for my dad to stop, but it was

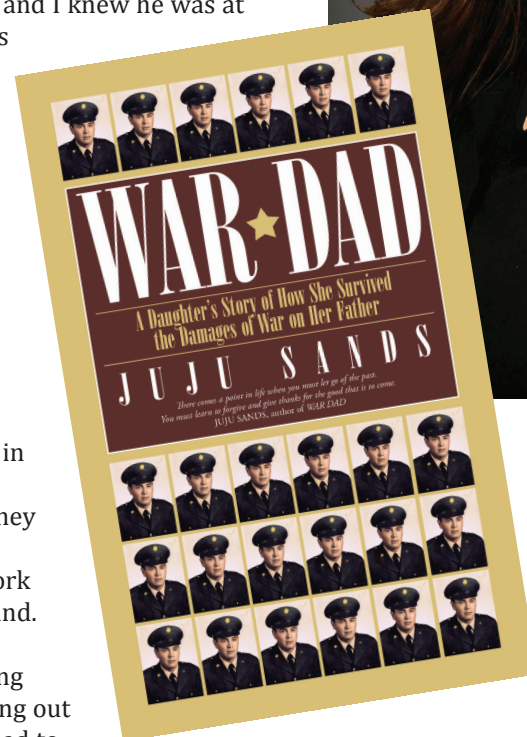
too late. He went toward the man and pushed the fork into the man’s body. He stabbed him. I took off running, crying hysterically and I couldn’t breathe. I wanted to faint. I knew I had to mentally overpower what had just happened and convince myself that it was all going to be fine. After years and numerous violent situations and dangerous nights, I built the courage to cut-off my relationship with my dad. I wanted a better life and I was going to get it.

In the early 1990s I was working in downtown Los Angeles. I was surrounded with smart, goal-oriented people, and learning so much about the finance world, stocks, Wall Street, and

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Juju Sands



A story that shows the strength of human spirit and love of a daughter for her father by author Juju Sands.
Email: juju@jujusands.com
www.jujusands.com
War Dad available at Barnesandnoble.com; iUniverse.com

the inner workings of the real estate industry. Life was great!

After years I located my dad again. I was faxed the Coroner’s report. They found my WAR DAD in an alley. Flies nesting in his nose and ears. His body decomposing as his right hand clutched a bottle of wine. He’d been dead for three days. According to the report, he died of liver failure and was labeled “a known local transient.”

As I’ve worked my way to success, not only was it for my family, but deep inside I wanted people to see that I overcame.

I accept the fact that all the horror my dad created could have transpired because of what he experienced in Vietnam. It was too much for him to cope with, and he lost it. I couldn’t possibly begin to comprehend the terror, fear, and pain the soldiers must have felt fighting that guerrilla war.

A special place in my heart is grateful to this man, my dad, who sacrificed his life not only for me, but for you and our country. ●