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AUTOBIOGRAPHY & MEMOIR

A War of Nerves: A Veteran's Battle with PTSD and Injustice
Greg Hardin
Xlibris
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Three Stars (out of Five)

In his short book *A War of Nerves*, Greg Hardin writes an indictment of his treatment by medical and legal bureaucracies.

Hardin's father and uncles served in the United States military, including an uncle who was "part of the D-Day invasion at Normandy's Omaha Beach." That spurred Hardin to enlist in the US Air Force after growing up mainly in Washington, DC and Alabama. As he confesses, he had been a casual student, and with his family's red-white-and-blue military background, he thought a period of military service would be worthwhile.

There are indications Hardin liked the order and discipline. However, after being sent to Chanute Air Force Base in Illinois for training as a nuclear missile systems analyst, he realized military service isn't all fancy uniforms and John Wayne heroics. Hardin was trained to load target information into nuclear weapons. He doesn't identify the Air Force base where he eventually served. His sparse picture of duties involve alarms ringing—test, or real attack, he doesn't know—with him hurrying to a giant B-52 bomber to prepare the missiles and bombs aboard to kill.

Hardin writing about his USAF Cold War experience holds interest. He even details one scary incident when he and his working partner were called to disarm a missile onboard a B-52 that had "stuck in the armed position." With incidents like this, and regular monitoring by counterintelligence, there was stress.

Admirably, there's no indication he begrudges his service, but he believes his military job working with doomsday weapons—"the memories remain with me still"—triggered his post-traumatic stress disorder, which he notes is manifested in him by "intense stress, worsening depression, poor concentration, apathy, emotional rage, anxiety, startle reflex, and other similar symptoms."

Hardin's stress was later aggravated by an injury to his back. He was then working post-service for a tire manufacturing company in Alabama. Sadly, he later learned that because of a

congenital defect he shouldn’t have been assigned to that particular duty. Worse, he believes he was misdiagnosed by the attending physician. Finally, his penultimate treatment, the pinning of a vertebrae by pedicle screws not meant for his condition resulted in near-unbearable pain and further depression.

It is during the latter portion of the book that readers must call on reservoirs of empathy. Hardin has had a difficult time, surely, but the book focuses on those difficulties and is rarely leavened by positive experiences, one being his successful studies to become a registered nurse.

Hardin’s first attorney let his injury case expire without action before the statue of limitations. His case against the manufacturer of the pedicle screws was unsuccessful. An Equal Employment Opportunity Commission case for accommodated employment failed. Hardin writes clearly of these trials, with the narrative singularly focused on his circumstances from his point of view, with images of letters related to his story sometimes inserted in text.

Hardin, a competent writer, should be congratulated for his military service—and for speaking out. While his skills aren’t literary, his words transmit his intent clearly, and *A War of Nerves* is certainly an object lesson for those dealing with bureaucracies, whether they be military, corporate, medical, or legal.

Gary Presley