



## VETERANS NEWS AND NOTES

I JOINED THE ARMY AFTER SEEING NINE-ELEVEN ON T-V IN MY DORM ROOM. WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THIS MORNING THAT A PLANE HAS CRASHED INTO ONE OF THE TOWERS OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER. YOU KNOW I DID TWENTY-ONE YEARS, SO I CAN'T DEFINE ONE PROUD MOMENT, I CAN DEFINE MANY PROUD MOMENTS. I ENDED UP JOINING A RECONNAISSANCE UNIT AND WENT TO SNIPER SCHOOL. IT'S ONE OF THE HARDEST SCHOOLS THE MILITARY HAS. A PROUD MOMENT. WHEN I GOT HOME FROM MY FIRST DEPLOYMENT, I GOT TO HOLD THE FLAG AT AN OAKLAND RAIDERS FOOTBALL GAME. I REMEMBER THE F-SIXTEENS FLEW OVER AND I JUST HAD A HUGE CHILL GO DOWN MY SPINE. I WAS PROBABLY THE PROUDEST I'VE EVER BEEN. IT WAS A NIGHT MISSION AND WE WERE ON OUR WAY UP A HILL TO DROP OFF THE SNIPER TEAM AND ON THE WAY UP THAT HILL WE DROVE OVER A PRESSURE PLATE I-E-D AT FIVE-HUNDRED-POUND AMMONIUM. APRIL SEVENTH, 2006 I WAS SHOT IN THE LEFT SIDE OF THE HEAD. I GOT HIT IN THE FACE WITH THE BUTTSTOCK OF THE M-SIXTEEN SO IT FRACTURED MY ORBITAL FLOOR AND ALSO MY SKULL. I WAS DRAINED, IT WAS JUST HARD TO FUNCTION. I STARTED HAVING A LOT OF HEADACHES. I WAS ON THREE PAGES OF MEDICATIONS, FIVE SLEEP MEDS ALONE, NINE BLEEDING ULCERS. I HAD A PROBLEM, LET'S JUST SAY THAT. THEY KIND OF PILED UP, THE BRAIN INJURIES. I MADE A CONSCIOUS DECISION THAT I DIDN'T WANT TO LIVE ANYMORE. I KNEW IF I COULD DO ONE LAST THING FOR MY FAMILY IT WOULD BE TO GIVE THEM AN HONORABLE, BEAUTIFUL MILITARY FUNERAL. THEY CALLED ME OUT OF THE BLUE. THEY ASKED ME TO COME IN AND TAKE A TOUR AND SPEND AN AFTERNOON AND LEARN ABOUT THE PROGRAM AND I DID. LIFE HAS NEVER BEEN THE SAME SINCE. THE SHARE MILITARY INITIATIVE STARTED BACK IN 2008 AND IT WAS A RESULT OF BERNIE MARCUS, WHO RECOGNIZED THE GAPS THAT WERE OUT THERE FOR OUR SERVICE MEMBERS GETTING ADEQUATE CARE. THIS PROGRAM IS FOR ANY ACTIVE-DUTY OR SEPARATED SERVICE MEMBERS WHO HAVE SERVED SINCE NINE-ELEVEN 2001 WHO ARE EXPERIENCING EITHER A DIAGNOSIS OR JUST SYMPTOMS OF A MILD TO MODERATE BRAIN INJURY AND ANY CO-OCCURRING PSYCHOLOGICAL OR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SYMPTOMS OR CONDITIONS. THIS IS REAL WORK, MENTALLY, PHYSICALLY, IT'S GOING TO CHALLENGE YOU. THEY DON'T DO CHECKLISTS. THEY DO EVERYTHING OFF THE INDIVIDUAL. YEAH, PHYSICAL THERAPY, THAT'S GONNA BE DEALING WITH, YOU KNOW, MOTION, YOUR PAIN, BALANCE AND SO FORTH AND SO ON. AND THEN YOU HAVE RECREATIONAL THERAPY THAT'S GOING TO GIVE YOU THAT QUALITY OF LIFE BACK. THAT REALLY KIND OF GIVES YOU AN INSIGHT THAT YOU'RE ABLE TO DO CERTAIN THINGS, THAT YOU'RE NOT HINDERED FROM PARTICIPATING IN ANYMORE. WE CAN HAVE FOLKS COME IN FOR THREE DAYS AND IF THEY JUST NEED TO SEE A COUPLE OF DISCIPLINES, WE'LL DO THAT, BUT WE HAVE THE ABILITY FOR FOLKS TO STAY FOR EIGHT, TEN, TWELVE WEEKS IF THAT'S WHAT'S NEEDED AS WELL. EVERYTHING'S TAKEN CARE OF FOR YOU SO, YOU KNOW, IF YOU'RE OUT OF STATE, WE'LL FLY YOU IN OR YOU CAN DRIVE IN AND WE'LL REIMBURSE YOU BUT THERE'S APARTMENTS YOU CAN STAY IN AS WELL. IF YOUR CAREGIVER OR SPOUSE WANTS TO COME AND LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY, THEN THEY'RE MORE THAN WELCOME TO COME AND STAY IN THE APARTMENTS WITH YOU. I'VE BURIED TEN COURAGEOUS MEN, DADS, HUSBANDS TO SUICIDE. AFTER YOU'VE BEEN DOWNRANGE, AFTER YOU'VE DONE THE HARDEST THING IN THE WORLD, NO. I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A SELFLESS SERVICE GUY AND THIS PLACE IS SHOWING ME THAT I'M IMPORTANT ALSO. I THINK FOR THE FIRST TIME I'M LOOKING FORWARD. PERIOD.