

Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry, US Army – 75th Ranger Regiment, Ft. Benning, Georgia. Ranger Ready”.

Interviewed by Kat Boynton and Emarah Cousar – A Backpack Journalist Interns.

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Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry, USA was awarded the Medal of Honor. Our A Backpack Journalist Interns have had the opportunity to meet Sammie Davis, a Viet Nam Medal Recipient at AUSA however it was an arranged meeting. Sgt. Petry was an impromptu meeting and by chance. He was waiting to speak before the general session and had about 30-minutes open. We arrived early, and asked, and he said yes. Following this interview and his presentation to the general assembly at DCOE, walking out both Kat and Emarah commented that meeting and spending time with SGT. Petry was an honor and with great meaning. They got to spend one on one time with a real American Hero. For further information on Sgt Petry, please follow the link at the close of this article. By the way, his presentation to a room filled with mental health professionals was filled with a great sense of humor and dedication as an American Soldier.

KAT: You're a Wounded Warrior; you've been deployed nine times. How has that affected you and your family?

PETRY: It was definitely a learning process for all of us. Reintegrating. I think we still haven't gotten it perfect. I think we found out how to work with each other to make it easier as the deployments went on. We found strength in family.

KAT: Would you agree with the statement that the reintegration is the hardest part?

PETRY: For the soldier it is easier, the family I believe it is harder. Because we get home, spend perhaps a month off and go with the family. The Soldier has to continue forward, because the war is still on. We continue to train the new soldiers that are over there waiting for us. As we get back, we're just getting ready for the next deployment.

KAT: How has your injury affected you?

PETRY: It's opened my eyes. And not just my wound, but also other soldiers wounds that I visit and I work with. Just to see their resiliency. Just the great attitudes they have towards life . . . It's impressed me. It's motivated me.

KAT: Do you think you have become more resilient? How has that played a part in your acceptance of your injury and being deployed nine times? How do you think resiliency helped you deal with all that?

PETRY: It definitely helped. I don't think you can really become more resilient. You can definitely build up resiliency to diversity. An example: Animals get injured in the wild,

and they find a way to adapt or else they get eaten. I wanted to keep living my life, so I found a way to get through it. And a lot of that comes from support of family, friends, and fellow service members that supported me. Plus, I grew up in a family with a lot of boys, and at any time, we had a lot going on including stitches! It toughened me.

EMARAH: How would you personally define resiliency?

PETRY: I think you can achieve resiliency through help and support... and reaching out to others. Being prepared as a soldier is also another good start to finding your own resilience. Also, I believe that by my giving my support and encouragement to others that I continue to build my own resilience and help other soldiers we well.

KAT: Most wounded warriors that I see do not stay in the military. So what was the process to be able to do that, and did you think you were going to be able to?

PETRY: It was offered to me and I was excited at the offer, but I went back and forth for a long time. Do I stay in or get out? My wife got a little edgy about it. She would say, "Well what is it? Are we staying in, or getting out today?" I would tell her I didn't know and we'd figure it out tomorrow.

It was, what they called: PEBLO (Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officer). He took care a lot of the paper work stuff for me, and was able to keep me on active duty. I chose to stay active duty because I love serving and I love my job working with wounded warriors.

For me to speak to all the great accomplishments that men and women in uniform are doing is an honor. I really enjoy it. Also, attending conferences like DCOE and to be made aware of what we are doing for our service members and their families allows me the opportunity to share with others.

KAT: What would you say to someone on their first deployment that feels like they can't handle everything going on?

PETRY: The same thing I said with resiliency. Reach out to your fellow soldiers. Together, get Motivated. That's all we really need. We need someone to push us. We do it in the military already, so when we get injured, it's no different.

KAT: Any closing comments:

PETRY: Everyone in the military seems to be competitive. You see someone doing better; you want to try to do better. And so I tell them to keep their chin up, and fight through. I've seen some terribly severe injuries. A young kid, 23 years old lost all 4 limbs, but he had the greatest attitude in the world. I

It's also a mentoring process. Getting visits from people like that make them say, "Okay, maybe I can bounce back from this. Maybe, I'm not that bad. Maybe through recovery. If I just give it some time, and do my best."

And that's all you can do; give it your best everyday."