The VFW Helps Injured Veteran Receive 100% VA Rating

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Charles Honaker of Vancouver, Wash., joined the United States Army when a recruiter visited his college campus. He served for "20 years, one month and one day" in the I-18 Airborne Military Police Company at Fort Bragg, N.C., and as an Army recruiter.

"The values instilled by the Army have led me to leadership opportunities and lifelong friends," Honaker said.

The support system the Army has provided him over 20 years has been vital. When Honaker's wife, Becky, became sick with a disease that shut down both of her kidneys, he didn't even question the decision to give her one of his. The Army not only gave him six months off for recovery but also covered his wife's entire hospital bill so the family could focus on healing rather than worrying about the costs of treatment.

While Honaker was serving at Fort Bragg, he was conducting a multi-branch training program with a large number of troops on a continuous airborne jump. Being the third person up, he jumped from the plane as the light turned green to go. Little did he know that immediately when he jumped, the light had turned red. Gusts of wind blew him off course. As his body slammed on the ground, Honaker landed back first causing him to suffer chronic injuries to his back and neck.

Honaker continued to serve for two years after the accident, but daily work was near impossible due to the constant pain he was suffering. The pain only became worse after he retired from the Army and could no longer work.

Even before his retirement, the VFW had been a constant presence in Honaker's life. When he was recruiting in a new area, his first step was always to connect with the local VFW Post.

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As he struggled to file his VA claim after he retired, Honaker knew that he could turn to a VFW Service Officer for expert assistance.

Debbie Proctor, of the VFW's Vancouver, Wash. office, was instrumental in helping Honaker receive a 90% rating and resubmitted for a 100% rating. "VA claims take a lot of time, and even though there might be a denial the first time around, do not give up. We will continue to work toward getting veterans the benefits they deserve," Proctor said.

Through yoga and counseling, Honaker has begun taking steps forward in his healing. He is using his Chapter 31 benefits to attend Washington State University in hopes to become an elementary school principal.

Learn more about the VFW's National Veterans Service (NVS) program.