

Half-Million Dollar Retroactive Pay Changes a Veteran's Life

Vietnam veteran receives long overdue justice

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Vietnam left Marine Corps veteran Joe Miller* with wounds—physical and mental—that would ultimately threaten his life and his peace of mind.

Miller suffers from severe hearing loss, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Ischemic Heart Disease connected to herbicide exposure in Vietnam.

In 1996, Miller filed a VA disability claim and was denied. At that time, Ischemic Heart Disease was not considered presumptively service-connected. The rejection left Miller extremely frustrated.

Miller went on to have major open-heart surgery in 1996.

In 2011, when he heard that Ischemic Heart Disease was finally added to the VA's presumptive list, he decided to file another VA claim. This time, he had the help of VFW Claims Consultant Rachel Powell.

“Ms. Powell did a good job of explaining things to me in a way I could grasp,” said Miller. “She’s a very nice lady.”

“Mr. Miller was struggling not only with heart troubles, but a serious case of PTSD and hearing loss. I encouraged him to file for those disabilities as well,” Powell explained.

In April of 2013, Miller was rated 100% disabled. Thanks to the Nehmer Rule, which states that the VA must consider the effective date of Miller's claim to be in 1996 when he first filed, Miller received nearly \$500,000 in benefits and retroactive pay.

“I was so stunned ... I just sat there,” said Miller. “It took a long time, but it worked out. I am getting treatment for the PTSD, which is a relief.”

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Miller is still having some heart issues but is doing much better. He is grateful to Powell for helping him understand the VA system and changing his life.

“Ms. Powell was beyond helpful, and I’ll never forget it,” Miller concluded.

*Name changed to protect privacy.