

Navy Veteran Discovers a ‘Gem’ in VFW Pre-Discharge Representative

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Veteran James E. Jones, Jr. of San Diego, Calif., is a remarkable person surrounded by the love and support of his family and friends. He has spent 26 years of his life in service to his country, and is set to retire from the Navy in a few months.

Growing up in a small community in Alabama, Jones knew he wanted to leave but was too intimidated by the thought of college. Instead, he joined the Navy and traveled all over Europe, before spending 12 years devoted to the conflicts in Africa and Iraq.

He still found the time to marry his love, Gidget, and have two daughters, Alexis and Jameiah. Then, with the experience and confidence gained in the military, he graduated cum laude with a degree in criminal justice, focusing on emergency management and homeland security.

The years abroad were understandably not easy on Jones, physically or emotionally. Like many veterans, Jones knows what it feels like to be caught in enemy fire.

After returning from combat, he began the transition to civilian life. But, this transition wasn't an easy task. His wife Gidget noticed he didn't seem like himself. After 22 years of marriage no one knew James like his spouse, no matter how many years he spent away.

“She was always there to listen. And when she noticed a difference in me, she was the catalyst to get me to reach out and talk to someone,” Jones said.

The solace he found was in VFW Service Officer, Mark Barrett. Barrett has been instrumental in connecting Jones with helpful resources and together they've started on necessary documents for VA benefits before Jones' discharge takes place.

“Mark was amazing. In the military, the focus is on getting things done fast, and so I expect

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things to be overly rushed sometimes. But Mark sits down and takes his time. He's spent hours with me. He didn't make me feel like a number. He listened, gave advice and thoroughly explained things to me," Jones relayed.

Now Jones truly feels he is set up for success in "retirement." Soon he will move to Colorado and work in homeland security. In the meantime, he continues to attend doctor appointments and all his medical documents are recorded for his claim.

"I hope everyone gets the help they need from the VFW. For some reason, people are hesitant to take advantage of the assistance. But these people at the VFW are gems — they know what we've gone through," Jones concluded.