

Veteran Who Always Gives Back to Others Receives Help From the VFW

'Service organizations like the VFW are not just about sitting around a post'

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When “retired” Major General Mike Regner was approached by the Marine Corps to continue his service as a senior mentor, he didn’t skip a beat when he responded “Absolutely!”

“It just means I get to keep giving back, just like the VFW does,” he said. There are eight senior mentors who work for the Training and Education Command at Marine Corps Base Quantico. Regner spends time across the states and overseas evaluating, teaching and mentoring younger men and women in the Marines.

Throughout seven combat tours, Regner remained positive and preserved his warm, boisterous personality. He reflects on a life in the military by highlighting the incomparable teammates he found in his brothers and sisters-in-service. He also remarks about what a gift it is in life to have a spouse and family that stays by your side through all the moves and deployments. He and wife Mary have been married nearly 41 years and have three children and six grandchildren.

“We had been married three months when I was first deployed, but we felt prepared by the network of support the military provides. But any time you’re away it is tough. It was challenging but it made us a stronger team,” he recalled.

He’s been deployed to Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, Korea, Okinawa, and Washington, D.C., to name a few. The challenges didn’t end with missing his family. Inevitably his time in machinery brought hearing loss and a regular ringing in his ears. Hard-hitting helicopter landings damaged discs in Regner’s lower back as well.

When he returned from Afghanistan in 2010, Regner found himself barely able to walk. The doctor confirmed the pain was from disc damage and fused 7 inches of titanium in Regner's

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back to immediately provide some relief.

About a year before Regner was set to retire, a friend and colleague at the Pentagon was going through a VA claim with Mike Figlioli, a VFW Pre-Discharge Claims Representative at the time. When Figlioli learned about Regner's recent bout of medical procedures, he stopped in his Pentagon office to chat and started gathering information to file his claim on the spot.

Regner is certain he could not have approached the VA with his 40 years of medical files without Figlioli. Then, when Figlioli was promoted to Deputy Director for the VFW National Veterans Service, his colleague Brad Hazell picked right up where Figlioli left off and helped see Regner's claim through.

"Men and women of any age don't always know everything our veterans service officers do. They're partially prepared to get out ... but I want them to be fully prepared. Because I had a relationship with Mike and Brad, they advised me along the way to make sure the doctors described exactly how they helped me each time. They went through every page of my record, knew what to look for, and communicated with the VA," Regner said.

Regner often tells fellow veterans and active duty personnel to seek help from the VFW and adequately prepare for discharge ahead of time.

"Service organizations like the VFW are not just about sitting around a post. They offer fellowship, camaraderie, opportunities to share ideas, and network as a young military member. They're not just there for the physical breaks either, but mental health and support. I also work for the Marine Corps League (MCL) as their Military Exposition Director and as their National Director of Government Affairs. I have a lot of experience with veterans' organizations and enjoy giving back to our Armed Forces and their families, whether it is the VFW or MCL, these patriotic organizations are the "go-to" sources ALL veterans should become familiar with. I advise every member of any branch not to wait to join the VFW," he said.

Regner makes a positive difference not only to his mentees but also to all the military friends he's made through the years, just as the people in the VFW have made a positive difference for him.

Figlioli said of Regner, "Major General Regner has been an exceptional advocate for VFW in referring many other officers and Marines to us for help with their VA benefits. He is still serving in the sense that he is still taking care of Marines and looking out for their best interests and that of their families. We couldn't ask for a more sterling example."