

VFW Service Officer Helps Former Platoon Leader Recover \$225,000 From the VA

'It's amazing how life comes full circle'

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VFW Service Officer Ron Cherry sees hundreds of veterans in a year, but the veteran he saw on June 8, 2005, was very different.

“Truman Doyle* was referred to me by a friend. All I knew about him was that he was homeless, suffering from schizophrenia and had been denied by the VA previously. It was really a heartbreaking situation.”

Doyle sat across from Cherry and began to recount his struggles when something caught his eye. It was the picture of a young Ron Cherry in the

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Army.

“Hey, I know that guy,” Doyle said. “Is that you?”

Doyle and Cherry quickly figured out that they had served together during Basic Training at Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., in 1989, and Doyle had continued on to Advance Individual Training (AIT). What’s more, Doyle was Cherry’s platoon leader!

“It’s amazing how life comes full circle,” Cherry said. “I was so determined to help him any way I could.”

And that’s what Cherry did.

“Initially, we filed a claim for Pension benefits in June 2005, and, unfortunately, he was denied again,” Cherry described. “As we continued to talk about his past military experiences and some of the problems he had while on active duty, I decided to file a claim for service-connected compensation for mental conditions associated with his service in the military. After a year or so of waiting, he was denied again but this time for compensation. I felt strongly about the case so we decided to appeal the decision immediately.”

During the lengthy appeals process, Cherry was able to recover records and present evidence that Doyle’s mental health challenges began in the military. That was the game

changer Doyle desperately needed.

“Doyle had the difficult job of loading and firing missiles in the military. One wrong move, and there were disastrous consequences. The evidence suggests these experiences triggered serious mental health issues,” Cherry explained.

The VA agreed with Cherry in 2016, and Doyle was awarded \$225,000 retroactive to 2009—a life-changing award for Doyle.

“Life isn’t easy for Doyle or his mother, who cares for him, but these funds help relieve some of the burden. I’m told they are going to buy a house,” Cherry said. “I’m proud to help any veteran, but especially a brother-in-arms who played an important role in my life. That is an amazing honor.”

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** Name changed to protect privacy.*