



The MISSION NEVER ENDS

A FORMER ROTC STUDENT, Staff Sergeant (Ret) Alejandro (Alex) Del Rio, USMC, was an athlete from San Antonio who came from a long line of Veterans.

“In our family, on my mom’s side, it was a tradition that at least one male in each family serve. My grandfather and great uncle both served in WW2, my great uncle also served in Korea, and my uncle Frankie served in Vietnam,” shared Alex. “No one had been a Marine since my grandfather, so I joined in 1999.”

Alex served in the U.S. Marines for 10 years, including four combat tours. Alex sustained an injury in 2006 which resulted in the loss of both legs below the knee. Alex pushed himself hard to get back up and going after his injury and was back to work within 6 months. “I was ready to get up and finish my mission. I didn’t want pity. I was just doing my job.”

Alex’s daughter attended private school and the teachers worked with her, but she had difficult days. “She was very defensive and protective. When my family took me out for the first time, it was hard for me that my daughter had to push me because I couldn’t use my arms. One time there were people who didn’t move out of the way and she yelled out, ‘He lost his legs in war!’ And then she broke out crying,” shared Alex.

Alex is confident that one day his daughter will understand that you get up and keep going in life, regardless of the circumstances. “My injury brings up a lot of memories for her. She wants to be a nurse when she grows up now.”

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Alex’s oldest daughter was 5 years old when he was injured and she immediately began taking on a caretaker role. “My oldest daughter would get after me if I was limping, inspect my legs and arms and, when I had nightmares, she would wipe off my sweat,” shared Alex. “She started secluding herself. She always wanted to be with me. She was growing up too fast and I didn’t like that.” Alex remained in the military, serving as a Cadre RMAT Instructor after his injury and felt that his daughter was being affected by his choice. “I was gone a lot of her life for training and the war. She has trouble understanding it. She’ll say, ‘You lost your legs for this country, dad.’”

Alex has had two children since his injury so their perspective of their father is different. “They know what happened. They still inspect me and ask if I’m okay. The difference is they are so used to it. They will say, ‘Put on your legs, dad. Let’s go!’ It’s routine. It’s their normal,” explained Alex.

Still reflecting his responsibilities as a Marine reconnaissance specialist, Alex has shown his children that the mission never ends. His growth and perseverance continues to serve as an example for his family and other arounds him.