



MS Learn Online Feature Presentation

Donnie Horner- A Veteran's Perspective

Donnie Horner As a service member, it was a shock. I think at the time, when I was serving in the Navy, I felt very invincible. I was a 25-year-old guy that had just graduated from college, went to the naval academy, really riding high, and then you're driving an aircraft carrier and it's a real rush. You're driving it at night and you've got planes flying off the flight deck of a carrier. Well, MS strikes. I'm the officer of the deck onboard a ship and my legs are giving out and I'm looking to my buddy and I'm saying, "Man, I can't stand up straight, what is going on?" So, it really rocked my world.

The Navy transferred me from San Diego, California, where my ship was based, to Jacksonville, Florida. So, that was a huge change and had a huge impact on me, because I had to leave what was then my home, start a new home after being diagnosed with MS. So, I had to move across the country, get treated at the neurological center in Jacksonville, Florida, and, boy, that was the toughest time of my life.

When you're a service member you think that you have a career for five years. Well, mine was stopped short at two, and I'm thinking to myself, "What am I going to do now?"

It's really, really rocked my world. It took me, I'd say, six months after diagnosis just to figure out where I wanted to go with the rest of my career. And when I was in the service, I didn't really have to worry about that.

Donnie Horner As an MS patient, I am constantly, constantly on the look for more money going into research. If you take a look at MS, it's one of the most misunderstood diseases probably in the world. The numbers say that we have 400,000 people living with it in the United States, it's probably more. It gets confused a lot because it sounds like scoliosis as a problem with somebody's back. A lot of people when they think MS and multiple sclerosis, they think, well, it's a middle-aged woman that was diagnosed. They think Annette Funicello.

Now we're starting to see with folks like Montel Williams, and his name is escaping me right now, but Meredith Vieira's husband, that the American public is starting to become more aware that MS is an equal opportunity hater. It goes after folks that are diagnosed when they're 16, it goes after service men and women when they're 25, and it goes after the typical, which is the most popular target, the middle-aged women.

But research funding really means the world to me. Why? Because I think it's our greatest hope. If we're not actually studying how we're going to defeat the disease, then all the advocacy, all the assisted living, all the insurance coverage that you can buy is not going to cure it. So, we have to take a real hard look at how are we going to partner with the greatest hospitals, the greatest doctors, the greatest researchers in the world and really find the actual cause of this?