



VETERAN SPOTLIGHT

Gunnery LOUIS SCHWARTZ

Louie Schwartz stood staring at the side of the refrigerator, unable to believe his eyes.

“It was my report card from El Camino College, and it was straight A’s. It was the first time in my life that my father had ever been proud enough to display it - I was twenty-three years old.”

Louie Schwartz credits his stint in the Marine Corp for changing his outlook on life, and for making him realize his full potential.

“Up until this point in my life, I hadn’t been the best student, but I knew that I had to have good enough grades to achieve my dream, which was to serve in the USMC.”

And so the South Bay native did just that, maintaining his GPA while serving in the Redondo Union High School ROTC. He enlisted in the United States Marine Corp. immediately after graduating in 1994` and was soon on his way to boot camp at nearby MCRD in San Diego.

He graduated from boot camp in January 1995 and headed up the road to Camp Pendleton’s SOI (School of Infantry) to begin his specific MOS training.

“I was initially slated for basic infantry, but after graduating as the honor graduate with my class, I was offered a chance to become an anti-tank and demolition “assault-man.”

He and another Marine were the first two graduates from his assault man class to be assigned to the battalion in that capacity, but Louie Schwartz wanted to set his sights even higher.



“I applied for recon training with 1st Recon Company and was accepted and put through ‘The Pipeline’ as it was called.”

The pipeline consisted of some of the hardest training the young Marine had been through: amphibious assaults, land navigation and rappelling. It was, in his words, “pain, misery and agony,” every day – but he reveled in it, and considered his fellow Recon Marines to be the best he had ever been associated with.

He left active duty with the Marine Corp in 1999, but stayed on as an active reservist. In the meantime, he enrolled at El Camino College where he made the dean's list before moving on to UCLA. He wouldn't be a Bruin for very long before being called up to serve in Operation Iraqi Freedom in early 2003.

"Being with recon, it was our job to try to clear the path for the troops that were going to be coming in for the invasion. We would skirt around Baghdad in the middle of the night and locate potential threats to our troops."

Schwartz never considered himself special for being in a Reconnaissance Unit.

"We don't win the wars," he says humbly. "The infantry guys do. It's just our job to try to let them win it with the fewest casualties."

Schwartz returned after a seven-month deployment and continued his studies at UCLA, where he graduated in 2004. In 2006, he joined the Gardena Police Department while still maintaining his active duty reserve status. Becoming a member of the Gardena Police Department was, in his words "One of the greatest moments of my life."

He was called up again in 2007 for another seven-month deployment in Iraq, this time as a joint tactical air controller, whose job it was to find threats to our troops from the air. It was here that Schwartz had his biggest find and the one that he is most proud of.



"I noticed an anomaly with an image of a road our troops were going to be travelling on. We had a special unit check it out and they found that it was an IED with a delayed trigger mechanism that would have taken out two squads of men. I was glad I was able to spot it and to save them."

Gunnery Sergeant Louie Schwartz will retire from the reserves in December of 2015. He currently works in the intelligence community.