



Guest Editorial: Lessons from our American heroes

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Once again we are transfixed by the news of another shooting at an Army base by an afflicted veteran resulting in the deaths of our service members. "Broken" is the description too often applied to those who serve our nation and struggle in their return to its communities.

In July 2011, I was fortunate to learn of the inspiring stories of two other soldiers while watching cable TV. Comedy Central's "The Daily Show with Jon Stewart" featured an interview with Medal of Honor winner, Sgt. 1st Class Leroy Petry. On the other end of the media spectrum, Fox TV's "Huckabee" introduced his viewers to Wounded Warrior Capt. Scott Smiley and his wife Tiffany.

Both hosts were effusive in their praise for what the two young men had gone through in service to their nation. These soldiers received traumatic injuries in combat zones.

Army Ranger Petry lost his right hand throwing an enemy grenade that threatened the lives his soldiers. West Pointer Smiley lost an eye and was permanently blinded after a detonation by a suicide bomber.

Stewart was taken by the matter-of-fact way that Petry described the incident that led to the Medal of Honor recognition — "I was taking care of my own that day." Huckabee explored the challenges that Smiley faced recovering from his injuries - physical and spiritual. Both stories were inspirational and offered a greater appreciation of the impact of war on our military members and their families.

The phenomenal thing about these soldiers is what they did after their treatment as wounded veterans. While the standard procedure would have been medical discharge and retirement, both men fought to stay in the Army and continue to serve in meaningful ways.

Petry, with his prosthetic arm and hand, added an eighth deployment (six combat tours in Afghanistan and two in Iraq) to his 12-year career. Smiley became the first blind officer retained on active duty in the Army, commanded a company for Wounded Warriors in transition, and taught leadership to cadets at his alma mater, West Point. Smiley, now a major, is now an ROTC instructor at Gonzaga University.

http://cumberlink.com/news/opinion/columnists/guest/guest-editorial-lessons-from-our-american-heroes/article_37fbf1ae-be83-11e3-aa6c-001a4bcf887a.html

The lessons from these heroes speak to the American experience. Each traveled a different path to their current station of recognition beyond celebrity. They joined and served the military of a nation at war. Their talent and leadership skill found purpose in the Army. They embraced and embodied the values of duty, service beyond self, sacrifice and personal courage. They have persevered in the face of tremendous adversity and continue to lead others through their example.

With the political rancor we find in our society and media presented as battles between liberal and conservative camps, I wonder if we can take notice of the lessons from Petry and Smiley - our American Heroes.

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