



Bethlehem, PA  
Purple Heart

### CORPORAL DANIEL LASKO

Warrior is a fitting description of Dan Lasko, but his life is not at all the Marine Corps career he envisioned. He was sworn into the Marines only a few hours before the tragic 9/11 attacks took place. Even though he could have backed out before boot camp started, Lasko is a believer in following through on his commitments.

When he signed up, Lasko said he saw the Marine Corps as an opportunity to volunteer and serve his country.

"Initially, my plan was to complete the standard four years of active duty and move on," explained Lasko. "As I got further into my duty, I started to enjoy it. I was climbing up the ladder and gaining rank quickly in three years. Making it a career was now an option for me as I was gaining experiences, traveling, and making new friends along the way."

But, life did not go quite as planned. Only a month after being deployed to Afghanistan in 2004, the convoy Lasko was riding in crossed over a trip-wire that detonated a homemade bomb. He took the brunt of the explosion and his foot was severely injured.

"To me it felt like a slow motion movie," Lasko described. "Two bright flashes of light and then total darkness."

Several operations later and Lasko was left without a leg, along with many hurdles and decisions ahead.

It was this tragedy that set Lasko on a course that would not only change his life, but those of other injured veterans.

While recovering in the Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Lasko was helped by members of the Injured Marine Semper Fi Fund, a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide financial assistance to Marines injured in combat.

"When I was discharged in 2005, all I had was my military experience, and coming home to try to find a job was pretty much impossible," Lasko recalled.

But, if you've ever known or spoken to a Marine, you know – "Once a Marine, always a Marine." And that reconnection with fellow Marines gave him more hope. Using his GI Bill, he went back to school.

As soon as he was able to, Lasko wanted to give back. He joined Team Semper Fi, a group of injured Marines who raise thousands of dollars for the Semper Fi Fund by competing in races. He went through a series of grueling, physically-demanding races, marathons and triathlons.



He even competed in one of the world's hardest races: the Escape from Alcatraz Triathlon.

Lasko, who earned the Purple Heart, is indeed a warrior and hero. He managed to balance going to school with the intense training and traveling needed to support Team Semper Fi and his fellow Marines.

In January 2009, he graduated from Northampton Community College in Pennsylvania, where he majored in criminal justice. Just before finishing school, he learned about the Wounded Warrior Program, which was established to create two-year fellowships for wounded or disabled veterans with the House of Representatives. He was selected as the first Marine in the country to be a part of this program.

Lasko now works for Rep. Allyson Schwartz in her Pennsylvania office as a caseworker specializing in veterans' affairs.

Knowing his career plans took a slight detour, Lasko was asked what advice he would give young adults contemplating the military as a career.

"My personal opinion is that every young man and woman should serve at least two years whether it is the military or some other service to our country. By doing this they can obtain a self-rewarding experience. "

*Excerpts from article by Katherine Noll, Northampton NOW, April 8, 2009*