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Atlanta sailor serves country, saves lives

By Lance Cpl. Mark Garcia, Regimental Combat Team 6
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Blackanthem Military News

FORWARD OPERATING BASE JACKSON, Afghanistan – To serve his country, Petty Officer 3rd Class Lamar Jackson decided to follow in his father's footsteps.

Growing up, Jackson saw the camaraderie his father shared with his fellow Marines. Jackson knew he wanted to be a part of that experience.

"Seeing that brotherhood that they had was something I always admired," said Jackson, a corpsman at the Battalion Aid Station for 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 6.

Jackson enlisted as a corpsman in the Navy because of his admiration for Marines and the desire to do something with his life.

"I became a corpsman so I could work with Marines," Jackson, from Atlanta, said. "I also wanted to start getting into the medical field. It was the one job that allowed me to do both. I just didn't want to be in the same place my whole life. I wanted to get out and see different things and experience different things in the world."

Jackson has been a corpsman for three and a half years. Before enlisting in October 2008, Jackson played football in college and worked full-time at a retirement home kitchen.

"When I was in college and played sports, my teammates and I had close relationships, but it was nothing like the bonds I have with people in Afghanistan. You have to trust them with your life, so you grow close to people," Jackson said.

He's been stationed at Camp Pendleton and Twentynine Palms, both in California. Jackson says he enjoys the high pressure situations the often faces.

"You're the guy once everything starts to go south," Jackson said.

"You're the person everyone's looking for. I like being in the situation where everyone is counting on you. There was one time some Afghan locals were injured by an improvised explosive device, so we had to provide them with aid and ensure they were stabilized before they were moved anywhere."

Jackson is currently on his first deployment, and says it has been a life-changing experience. He remembers experiencing significant culture shock when he first arrived in Afghanistan.

"It's jarring just to see how a piece of candy changes kid's whole day. In America, that's something we take for granted," Jackson said.

Jackson plans to get out of the Navy and continue his education once he completes his current enlistment.

"I plan on going to the University of Southern California once I'm out and (attending) their physician assistant program," Jackson said. "After that, I'll get a job in a hospital. Eventually though, I would like to move into the health care administration side of things. It won't be as much hands-on work. Instead, I'll be more focused on looking after the doctors and what they're doing."

While Jackson misses his friends and family, he misses his wife the most. To cope with being away, he says he focuses on his job.

Jackson's daily tasks include ensuring Marines and sailors are both physically and mentally healthy. He also helps Afghans, some of whom have been injured by IED blasts.

"He's one of the most motivated and dedicated corpsman," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Alexander Burkhart, the assistant leading petty officer at the BAS, and from Astoria, Ore. "He loves the Navy. He gets the job done. His Marines like him a lot. He's able to figure out what needs to be done and gets it done without any supervision. I have a lot of trust in him and his abilities."

ADDITIONAL PHOTOS:



Petty Officer 3rd Class Lamar Jackson, from Atlanta, checks a patient's pulse during a training exercise, June 8, 2012. Jackson, a corpsman at the Battalion Aid Station for 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 6, was inspired by his father to serve his country. Photo by Lance Cpl. Mark Garcia, Regimental Combat Team 6



Petty Officer 3rd Class Lamar Jackson, from Atlanta, checks a patient's ear drums during a training exercise, June 8, 2012. Jackson, a corpsman at the Battalion Aid Station for 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, Regimental Combat Team 6, was inspired by his father to serve his country. Photo by Lance Cpl. Mark Garcia, Regimental Combat Team 6

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