

Let Us Stand Together

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Written May 17, 2017

“Bravery is not the absence of fear, but action in the face of fear” – L. Fields

As I step in the gym this morning, I can't help but feel reflective as to how much my life changed two years ago today.

May 17, 2015. It was a beautiful Sunday morning, and I was working my beat. My trainee and I were talking about what she wanted to do that day. It was a day like so many before. A call aired over the radio that units needed assistance, as a vehicle was refusing to stop.

Because we were only a few blocks away, we responded to the call. The vehicle pursuit became a foot pursuit, and then subsequently, a gun fight. The suspect pulled a gun on my fellow police officers, and in turn our officers returned fire. During this gunfight, I was shot in the neck. And as I lay on the ground, feeling the blood spraying from my neck, my partners, without hesitation, performed any and all life-saving measures. Those same officers transported me to the closest trauma hospital. Thanks to their quick thinking, as well as the hospital trauma team, I SURVIVED.

However, it isn't the incident that I am thinking about on this particular day, but rather how I survived the aftermath. As the shooting faded into the past, I was left with little to no use of my arm, due to the damage of the round. I required assistance with the most basic needs in life: eating, getting dressed and performing basic functions in my day-to-day routine. I was forced to learn how to pick things up again, to get food on a fork and into my mouth without spilling it down my shirt ... mundane things that so many of us take for granted.

At times I felt defeated and angry. But I never gave up, and no one ever let me give up. When I was finally cleared to get back in the gym, I was handed a 2-pound weight. I remember feeling insulted; I had just deadlifted 250 pounds a few months ago prior to the shooting ... and they now hand me 2 pounds? Whereas I didn't expect to jump right back in at 250 pounds, I was thinking 20-25 pounds, maybe?

My trainer told me to bear with him, that he would get me back where I wanted to be, and to trust that he would get me strong again. And trust him I did. I did this, not because he happened to be my fiancé, but because he has always been a good coach, and I had 100 percent faith in him. I trusted him completely. Even so, on that first day, two pounds felt like 250. I remember thinking God was certainly testing me. But I knew I would have to start somewhere, so I began by simply putting one foot in front of the other.

And progress I did, one day at a time, one step at a time, one pound at a time.

Two years later, I still have days where I feel like putting one foot in front of the other is the only progress I'll make. I still have gym days where I question if I'll ever be normal or strong again. I am still fighting to gain strength and mobility in my neck, shoulder and arm. But every day, when I wake up, I know that I have become stronger physically, mentally and emotionally. I refuse to look back. And I am thankful for having this attitude, because I am back to work, on full duty.

For my beliefs, I know God kept me here on this earth for a reason.

He knew it wasn't my time. And on that fateful day, and every day since, I've realized that what is said is indeed true:

Every day is a blessing.

Without my partners I would not be here and I am forever in their debt. Without my friends and family, I would not be as strong mentally and emotionally as I am. It is an honor to be alive and an even bigger honor to have the ability to share my story. For those who have similar stories, know you are not alone. We stand together as one. Always.

As I write, this week is National Police Week, a time we honor those officers who have paid the ultimate price in order to keep our streets and citizens safe. Here, we remember not only these fallen heroes and their families, but we are also reminded as to why we do what we do, why we willingly put our lives on the line.

Let us remember why we stand at the front lines between good and evil. Remember why we fight the good fight. Remember that it is our duty to never give up, and to all of my brothers and sisters, it is imperative that you know: I stand with you.