

Leadership and Tradition Combine

Despite an injury causing him to be medically discharged, one Company L Marine remained motivated enough to return here to accomplish his mission of becoming a Marine.

Private First Class Ryan Chandler, Platoon 3245, graduated Marine Corps recruit training today, adding to his family's legacy of military service.

Ryan comes from a family full of service members. He has two uncles and a cousin who are Marines, and both of his grandfathers were in the Navy. His father is also an active duty Marine stationed at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

"We have had a family member in every conflict the United States has fought in since the Chandler name has been in the country," said Ryan's father, Master Gunnery Sgt. Brad Chandler, operations chief, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment. "The first conflicts the Chandlers were in were the Revolutionary and Civil Wars."

Ryan grew up living the Marine Corps way of life. He watched his father work on Light Armored Vehicles and was around when his father served as a drill instructor in the same battalion he is now graduating. His father also served with Sgt. Maj. Robert Eriksson. Sgt. Maj. Eriksson is currently the sergeant major of the same battalion they served in, Third Recruit Training Battalion. Master Gunnery Sgt. Chandler was the senior drill instructor and Sgt. Maj. Eriksson was the senior green belt drill instructor of the same platoon for two cycles from 1992 to 1994.

Throughout high school, Ryan was among the top academically in his class. His family thought he would go to a university on a full-ride scholarship and were surprised when Ryan decided to join the military. He made the decision to join because he wanted to continue his family's tradition and make a good life for himself.

His father, mother and stepmother took him into each of the military recruiting offices so he could make an educated decision on which branch of service he wanted to join.

"I'll never forget what Ryan said when we walked out of the Air Force recruiter's office," said Cynthia Chandler, Ryan's mother. "He looked at us and said, 'I want to be a Marine.'"

Ryan's family was a big inspiration to him. He had always wanted to follow in his father's footsteps. He said he felt joining the Marine Corps was a good way to better himself and serve his country. He even chose infantry as his military

occupational specialty in hopes of becoming an LAV crewman like his father.

"When Ryan decided on doing something, he would do it to the best of his ability and he wouldn't stop until he finished what he started," said Tammy Chandler, Ryan's stepmother.

Ryan arrived on the depot in July 2005 and started training with Co. K. Unfortunately, he developed a hernia and was dropped to the Medical Rehabilitation Platoon. Due to his surgery, he spent more than five months in MRP before picking up training with Co. M.

While Ryan was in MRP, his father came to visit him before he went on deployment to Iraq.

"He told me no matter how long it took him, he would not stop until he was a Marine," said Master Gunnery Sgt. Chandler.

After a short time back in training, the hernia re-developed and Chandler was dropped to MRP once again. He was given the choice of staying at the depot for an additional six months or going home to recuperate. He chose to go home and spent a year in recovery.

When Ryan was home, he studied Marine Corps knowledge and stayed dedicated to going back to boot camp and accomplishing his mission of becoming a Marine. When his injury healed, Ryan reenlisted in the Marine Corps.

His mother commented she was not surprised when she received word of his decision. She said he had his heart set on being a Marine and that is what he would do.

On Oct. 23, Ryan returned to the depot for another try. He was given the guide position by his senior drill instructor the first day of training and maintained that position throughout his time at boot camp.

"He has a leader's personality and having been through some training already, I think it gave him the upper-hand over the other recruits. He knew his knowledge and knew how to take charge," said Sgt. Isaac Orta, senior drill instructor, Platoon 3245.

Ryan believes he has learned many important things from his training. He feels he has learned integrity and the traits of being a good leader. He also thinks these things, coupled with the continuing support of his family, will help him be successful in the Marine Corps and for the rest of his life.