

Hunter De La Hoya

Johnathan Aboytes-Monjaraz

Period 2

Lance Rodriguez

Army

3 years

Lance Rodriguez

Lance Rodriguez is an Army veteran that comes from a military background. He was told by his family to join into the military, they said it would offer him some structure in life. He graduated from high school in the year 2000 and Lance listened to his family and went on to join the Army. He started boot camp at the age of eighteen.

When Lance went to join the military it was accepting anyone because 9/11 had just happened. Lance did not even have his high school diploma and they still accepted him. One man who was in his camp had actually just gotten out of Juvenile Hall. Boot camp was very strict on sticking to a schedule; even the bathroom breaks had to be planned out into your day. They only had Sundays off. In boot camp he received machine gun, grenade, and tank maneuver training. His camp of one hundred-twenty five men would go on road marches to clear their minds. The road march was actually thirty-two miles long and if he failed, he would be out of boot camp. While Lance was running his last four miles of the march he injured his foot and had to wrap it up and run through the pain. To help Lance get through his trainings he would sing to keep his mind off of things. In the year of 2001 on October 1st was when Lance joined the military and began

boot camp.

Lance deployed to Iraq on March 26, 2003. He had three MOS (military occupational specialty); 11 Bravo (Infantry), 11 Mike (Mechanized), and 37 Fox (Physiological). He went to a few countries in his military time like Germany, Italy, Ireland, Turkey, Kuwait, and Iraq. Within his first week of being deployed he went to Iraq four times. The weather was very hot in country, around one hundred and forty degrees sometimes. All the soldiers slept wherever they could. They actually stayed in a little hut they had built with sandbags all around them and large tarp over the top. The sand dunes would be used by them as directions of where to head or whether it was north, east, south, or west. At night the deserts would actually shift the sand and confuse them on their directions in the morning. During the invasion, it was very difficult to stay in touch with any family. Finally, After three months Lance was able to write to his family but sometimes the letters would get lost. The enemy would actually blow up the mail tucks and it was a struggle to stay in contact. While in country, they would stop anywhere they could to get some food and to drink some water. The money out there in country was worth more because they wouldn't be able to carry it all. The weapons that they were using were 9mm pistols, M240 heavy machine guns, M4A1 Sharp Shooters, M203 Grenade launchers and 12 gage shotguns. It was hot already in the blazing deserts and to make it even hotter they had to carry around eighty pounds of extra weight on them. The pack itself was sixty pounds and the armor they carried was twenty pounds. They were never to go anywhere alone. If they found themselves alone they were not allowed to scream out. It was very difficult to stay clean out in country and the longest Lance went without a shower was three months. At the base they were in a group of around three.

The vehicles they had would get damaged all the time and around every two weeks they had to be fixed. Out in country there were a few things that he had to watch based on his actions. He could not show the bottom of his foot because that would mean he was putting them below waste. He had to watch what hand he shook with. They had no toilet paper so they all wipe with their left hand as they pour water to help clean with their right hand. It was also illegal for the men to pat down the women.

Lance's last day in country was on November 7, 2004. He said that when he turned in his badge he felt very alone. Coming back to a normal life was very strange and hard to get used to. One of Lance's greatest memories out in country was when he and his squad leader lit pebbles on fire, threw them with a shovel and they made a generator catch flame. They actually almost received a medal due to the fact that they acted quickly and put out the fire before it spread and took down the whole building. Lance's view on war have changed and he sees it as wrong now. He says that it changes you and you lose a lot. He now has more respect for military and he's just glad to be home.