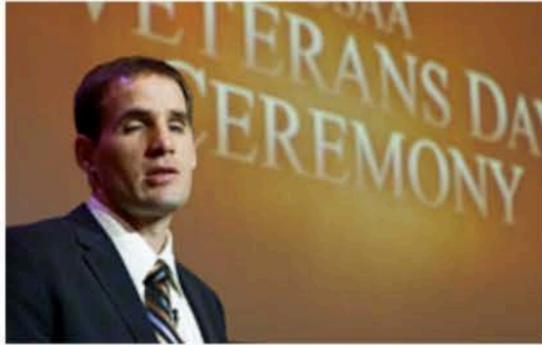


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Officer doesn't let blindness stop him

2/1/2013 - [Enterprise News](#)



Capt. Scotty Smiley spoke about service at USAA's Veterans Day Ceremony.

entered my eyes."

Why he still serves

Surviving an explosion that almost killed him was just the start of Smiley's ordeal. Recovering at Walter Reed National Medical Center, he struggled with the reality of losing one eye entirely and his sight in the other. He asked, "Am I truly blind? Will I always be blind?"

The day he received the Purple Heart in his hospital bed was difficult. "Receiving a Purple Heart was recognition that my life was changed. Yes, you were wounded. Yes, you are blind."

With the support of his wife, high school sweetheart Tiffany, he admits to spending time "under a cloud," wondering why this had happened to him. He embraced a mourning process for his sight, working to focus not on the hardship, but on the good that has come from it. "You have to accept the life you've been given," he says.

And he worked to get to an even more remarkable place in his heart. "I had to forgive the man who had blown himself up," he says.

The struggle strengthened not only his personal faith, but also his desire to serve others and his country. "One of the Army's values is selfless service. I don't think anyone would ever say Scott Smiley has not served his country," he says. But he wasn't ready to stop.

Still fit to serve

Once an Army medical review board declared Smiley mentally and physically fit to serve, he was ready to move forward. Despite his blindness, he earned a Master of Business Administration from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. A graduate of the U.S. Military Academy, he went on to teach military leadership at West Point and to command the Warrior Transition Unit at West Point's Keller Army Medical Center. He also earned the Army's prestigious MacArthur Leadership Award, which recognizes junior officers who demonstrate the ideals espoused by Gen. Douglas MacArthur: duty, honor, country.

When he wasn't working, he challenged himself in the great outdoors. "For me, being blind wasn't necessarily a total transformation of my life. Many of the things I do now, I did before. I just do them differently," Smiley says. Things like, say, skydiving.

Always physically active, Smiley jumped in tandem with the U.S. Army's Parachute Team, the Golden Knights. He skied in Vail, Colo., surfed in Hawaii and completed triathlons. "I did not want to give up physical activity," he says. "It's just my personality." His efforts led to a 2008 ESPY award from ESPN as the Best Outdoor Athlete.

Inspiring others

His athleticism and positive attitude garnered Smiley an invitation to speak to groups nationwide, including the U.S. Men's Olympics Basketball "Dream Team" before their 2008 and 2012 Summer Olympics gold medal victories. "I wanted to give

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About Capt. Smiley

Capt. Scotty Smiley, who was blinded in April 2005 by a suicide bomber in Iraq, visited USAA in Nov. 2012 for our [Veterans Day Ceremony](#).

- [Watch a replay](#) of his address to USAA on Connect.

Capt. Smiley received the Bronze Star and Purple Heart, recently taught the core course in leadership at West Point and commanded the Warrior Transition Unit at West Point's Keller Army Community Hospital.

