



Master Sergeant (Retired) Ralph Waller

Ralph took part in Operation Motorsport activities in 2017. We asked him to share his insights into Operation Motorsport and the Race of Remembrance.

1. Can you give us some background into your service.

Ralph Waller: I served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1997 to 2017. I was a founding member of the U.S. Marine Corps Special Operations Command in 2006. I did two tours in Iraq and three tours to Afghanistan.

2. Why are you interested in motorsports?

Ralph: I grew up in Tennessee where NASCAR was very popular. My family worked on race cars and drag racing motorcycles. We spent many nights in the garage working on vehicles of every type.

3. How did you learn about Operation Motorsport?

Ralph: I learned about Operation Motorsport through the USO of North Carolina's Pathfinder program. I met the USO representative and the first question he asked me was, "If you could choose your dream job, what would it be?" I immediately said, "a race car driver!" I laughed but he then told me of a recent opportunity with Operation Motorsport. Of course I took him up on it and that landed me at Virginia International Raceway with Tiffany and Diezel Lodder! So I attribute that to a little bit of fate for sure!

4. What do you think about the Operation Motorsport mission statement?

Ralph: The Operation Motorsport mission statement is absolutely a fantastic concept! The idea of bringing disabled veterans together around motorsports is brilliant. Within the race teams you have a very similar atmosphere of brotherhood/sisterhood, competitiveness, and a defined purpose of winning races! Motorsports is unique because many veterans can jump right into a race team and be a contributing member. The race teams I've been a part of circle around the new veterans amongst their team and make them feel right at home!

5. You were at VIR last season. Had you ever been to a motor race before this time?

Ralph: I have ... I've been NASCAR races, dirt track races, and drag races. I love racing! I would watch folks race lawn mowers if I knew where it was going down! LOL

6. We understand you were at the Race of Remembrance. What was your experience ... your thoughts?

Ralph: The Race of Remembrance was an absolute pleasure to witness and participate in! I was very fortunate with the team I was attached to. The leadership structure of Mission Motorsport transcended down to my race team and we worked flawlessly together. Our team consisted of several full time Mission Motorsport guys and a handful of us "newbies." Two of our drivers were disabled veterans and they were fantastic to be around! We were there November 10th last year, which is the U.S. Marine Corps birthday. One of my drivers was a Royal Marine and that night, he bought me my first beer. He said, "from one Marine to another, Happy Birthday Marine!" I thought that symbolized what the entire event was truly about ... American, Canadian, and U.K. veterans bonding through the competitive nature of motorsports.

Additionally, Mission Motorsport did a fantastic job of reiterating that the ROR was a Remembrance first, with a race built around it! That was important and a powerful statement. They were committed to ensuring the veterans and our fallen brothers and sisters, were the focal point of the event, and everyone knew it.

Finally, this massive event was a humbling experience. Mission Motorsport is the U.K. pioneers of connecting and helping disabled veterans through motorsports. Such a brilliant concept that has proven to benefit countless U.K. disabled veterans. I saw it with my own eyes. I salute Operation Motorsport for pioneering the concept in North America! We have plenty of disabled veterans and many of these folks love motorsports. At the end of the day, if Operation Motorsport helps just one veteran get back on their feet, then they have made a difference.

7. How do you see Operation Motorsport's programs helping wounded injured and sick war heroes? How does it work? How do you feel it make a difference?

Ralph: You have to realize that Operation Motorsport is a tight knit group of patriots who care deeply about the well-being of disabled veterans. The Operation Motorsport pioneers, Tiffany and Diezel, go out of their way to ensure the beneficiaries are well taken care of. The objective is simple ... meet at a great race track, receive a very warm welcome from Tiffany, Diezel and crew, get implanted into a first-class racing team, and then experience motorsports like you've never been able too! You are literally in the pit crews of high-end professional IMSA race teams! While you're there, you're helping them out in any way you can. They are just as interested in you and your military experience, as you are them and their racing experience. Ultimately, you could find yourself with a future job opportunity in motorsports! At the end of the day, the veterans will make friends and great contacts within the motorsports industry. I still keep in touch with several of the guys from one of the top IMSA Race teams to this day.