

When I did my intake with Operation Motorsport Executive Director, Tiffany, she asked, “What do you want from this experience,” my reply, “I want to find my missing creative side, I want to write, focus, and discover my true passion for videography.”

I was an Army broadcaster, I had the pleasure of working all over the globe! Stationed in the beautiful country of Italy; delightful wines, delectable cheeses, and meats almost seeming to be flowing from rivers and lakes; of course, only on off days. My job was to capture video footage of Soldiers and/or their counterparts working together on a mission. Sometimes I would put together compilation videos with music, video, and photos for the companies to showcase at their family events when they returned from a deployment. I was coming to appreciate my job more and more as I interacted with our Allies. I was loving life, traveling, meeting new people, embracing a new me emerging.

But something happened to me, mentally. I began to lose my focus, I couldn't write my scripts or concentrate on my school assignments. I was failing. But I kept going until I arrived at Fort Bragg. Of course, as myths and rumors are everywhere, we Soldiers have our versions as well. I spoke to a few battle buddies which had been to the unit or knew of it, you know to get the details. Their sentiments were that of, “Oh no battle that's where your career goes to die.” Seems they were right!

I put the negative words of my friends to the back of my mind and went on with my assignment. What came next is what sent me past a place of understanding, I deployed four months after arriving at Fort Bragg in 2015. For nine months my newly purchased home sat with all my household goods in it, along with my car in the garage. The deployment had its issues, but the return home flipped my mind switch to off. My house in shambles because of the boxes strewn about in my home. I felt I had no time, no help, no way to get my home together so that life could go on. Later that year, a date that will forever stick with me like birthdays and anniversaries. 19 November 2017 I was admitted to the psychiatric ward. I suffered from suicidal ideations. The beginning of the end of my career.

I hope you are still with me at this point, I'm a bit of a long-winded writer. I'm working on that. Cheers! This is where I stop boring you with my sappy story and get to the part where Operation Motorsport has helped me. When I medically retired, I was lost, my career was cut short, I was 3 years shy of reaching 20 years, I hadn't made it to the senior ranks with my peers, again I was a failure.

Right after my final days as Staff Sgt. Renee Wilson I went to my first race at Virginia International Raceway! Can I tell you the EXCITEMENT! See what I did there. Wink Wink. I've never been to a racetrack, never had I been around such 'fancy' cars! Lamborghinis, Bentleys, Audis and BMW aka 'Beemers,' the ear-piercing fast car sounds. ZRRROOOMMM! I also didn't expect the crowd to be as upscale, I found a new home!

April 27, 2018, Tiff said, “Okay girl, are you ready cause we are going to put you to work.” She meant EVERY WORD of that, even up to the present day! I was given access to their Facebook page. I did Facebook live interviews with the owners of the teams and lives from my point of view. It was awesome but not entirely what I really wanted in means of getting back to a career mind. The next time I came to race I was a bit more prepared, I wrote out questions for the drivers, owners, and beneficiaries. I wrote out a semi-plan on what I wanted to cover, what shots I wanted to capture. I was coming back into my element. The best part was when Tiff asked me to write a story on the 24hr Enduro Race at VIR, one of my favorite races by far.

When I sat down in my office to write, I was nervous that I wouldn't write it the way they would want, or it wouldn't capture the OpMo audience. I've never written a story on sports before, so I was indeed out of my element. I looked back over the weekend and remembered the comradery, meeting new veterans, linking back up with old ones, watching everyone enjoy the atmosphere. All my battles whether Canadian, American, British, My Battles, period, came together laughing, speaking car talk, those of us who could anyway. Sharing war stories and being each other's shoulder when a trigger point was sparked.

I was still a bit overwhelmed trying to be everywhere and capture everyone, Kristen with Kohr, Katrina with Mini, and Liam Dyer, of course, driving the Mazda MZ-5 Miata, sweet car by the way. The 24hr Enduro gave me a whole new outlook on Mazda's, I want one, now. But I digress, if you are still with me, you can see I have my writing bug back. This alone is a testament to what Operation Motorsport has given me. They believed in me more than I believed in myself; when I felt at my lowest. There is no better way to come back from a fall than to have someone who understands where you've been, you are trying to grow into. I will never be the old me, I don't want to be. That woman is gone, a new woman is emerging and she, er, I have the help of fellow beneficiaries, the generous teams that let us 'play' with their cars, the ambassadors that get the word out, the invaluable volunteers, gracious donors, and last but never least, the founders Diezel and Tiffany Lodder. Without these two Operation Motorsport would not exist, and I would not have my writing bug back. Thank you doesn't suffice, but Thank you, OpMo crew!