

Soldiers have a very relaxed way about them and are quite easy to point out, especially the well-built, short-haired and respectful ones (1). They tend to be noticed from a mile away. As I walk down Sergeant First Class Eric Johnson's path to his very modern home in orange county California, I see thousands of abandoned toys all over the ground, indicating to me that he must have a young child (2). As I ring the doorbell a young voice yells "I'll get it!" quickly followed by "Oh no you don't." I immediately feel like I'm standing at the front door of a very joyous family home (3). A man who seems to be in his early to mid-30's introduces himself. "Hello, you must be Mr Smith, I'm Sergeant First Class Eric Johnson (4) , but Eric is good enough." Eric then introduces his son, Joshua, who is clinging to his fathers' leg. "Right, let's get into it" says Eric.

Like many young men across the world, Eric grew up in a small town with just enough money to buy food and pay for rent every month without having any money left over for luxuries. He tells me this did not affect him very much at all apart from the fact that his imagination grew as they did not have money for their own toys so he would have to imagine sticks as guns or slides as rollercoasters. As Eric's imagination grew, so did his dreams and aspirations for representing his country, America (5). Eric told me he always had a very happy family with his older brother and his parents but when his brother was 17 years old he committed suicide which tore Eric's family apart, ending in his parents getting a divorce and his mother becoming abusive and reluctant to care for Eric (6). When Eric was old enough he decided to run away to live with his father, which turned out to be one of the best decisions he had made. ... (paragraph continues)...

Once Eric had finished high school, he gained a full scholarship to NYU but decided to turn it down and turn in the other direction of serving in the U.S. military and began his training as infantry but was quickly recruited into the EOD training squad (7) where he learnt all the tricks and trades of defusing various explosive. His passion for mechanics grew into a love of defusing bombs and as a result of defusing bombs; saving lives. He told me it wasn't the adrenaline that kept him in the army it was the fact that he was able to save lives every day and have people rely on him to do something good. "The best feeling you'll ever get, is the feeling of preventing the death of an innocent man or woman without them even knowing they may die" whispers Eric (8). But he left it there as it was bringing too many emotions back. ... (paragraph continues)...

Eric tries his best to spend as much time as he can with Joshua (9) I could see that. I think it was because Eric did not want the same life for Joshua as he had when he was a boy with his brother passing. Also the risks Eric was taking when joining the army made him feel guilty (10) so he was trying to make up for that. When I asked what the best thing about being home was, Eric replied simply with "I love my family" (11). I know at that point he would choose his family over his job any day. He started to grin and added "The food is good too." We both laughed and by this point in the interview it had become more like catching up with an old friend; telling stories and having a laugh.