

Veteran's Affairs Living Openly

Becca: US Navy/Technician. I'm Becca and I served in the Navy from 2004-2009 as an aviation electrician. Forward deployed, Germany Afghanistan. I was stationed in Washington State as well as California.

Tim: US Marine Corps technician. My name is Tim, I served in the United States Marine Corps from 2008-2011. I was in 1st Battalion 1st Marines. We deployed were on the 31st ____ [00:23]. I went to the Middle East.

We met when we were doing campaign work for Scott ____ [00:32].

Becca: Yes, I think it was a forum we were doing or something...

Tim: Yes, I organized that..

Becca: I know I helped, I was on the call, and then we actually met in person when we were doing campaign stuff and realized like "oh that's who each other is".

Tim: Veterans and LGBT people, that's our thing.

Becca: Yes.

Tim: Serving as somebody who feels like they can be kicked out of the Military at any time, under "Don't ask don't tell",

Becca: Yes. Always having this fear that somebody would find out or this that or the other.

Tim: I had an identity crisis. When I got out I was, I had that double life. It sucked. It really wore me down. For about a year I was just hiding creating different Facebook accounts, like I don't know why.

Becca: Its such a habit to hide it.

Interviewer: How did your friends react when you came out?

Tim: I went back and told each one over the span of like 6 months, just whenever it came up and they were all really cool. It was one of the best feelings in my life to be able to tell them you know, " you always got mad at me because we didn't hang out" "you thought I didn't like you and you told me like we were family" That's why. Because I couldn't put that information on your plate and make you be responsible for holding information that is breaking the UCMJ. I didn't want to put them in that position.

It felt good that I didn't have to lie anymore and could be who I am, no more misleading.

Interviewer: What did your Health Care Provider say?

Becca: I remember when they first asked like you know, "are you straight, lesbian, bi, ... etc" and I'm like "oh I'm bi"and then I panicked, and I thought "oh what have I done" you know. I realized that it was ok. They were like you are fine. We just need to know;



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it helps us paint a picture, and immediately it was like a huge sense of relief being able to be open and honest with my care provider. It is a good feeling to know that you are accepted and that your coverage or your health care or any of that isn't going to be taken away. You are not going to lose work, or anything else over it.

Tim: Veterans need help out there.

Becca: People don't often know where to even go to look or to find help.

Tim: The VA is actually really, really supportive on all fronts when it comes to LGBT issues.

Becca: They connect the dots.

Tim: They are knowledgeable about other support groups that can help you know; it takes a village. So, it's talking to each other, being there for each other that helps get people out there. There is no commercial or movie or rock concert that is going to educate the masses though. You need to ask for help you know. We have got to tell each other.

Becca: If you are gay, lesbian, trans, there is us out here, so.

Tim: Yes. There is family and support.

Becca: I know we are here, come find us.

Tim: You are who you are. Your sexuality doesn't define you. Your service defines you much more than your sexuality. Be open to yourself and who you want but don't feel like you need to go on an apology tour. You are in the military where everything was dictated for you and now you are not, and you have to step up and dictate it for yourself. Like how do you want this new chapter in your life to be? You don't have to live in a walled-up world anymore. Be you but don't wait.



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