



PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE
FORT LEONARD WOOD, MISSOURI 65473
VOICE: 573-563-4145
FAX: 573-563-4012
BY: Melissa Buckley
EMAIL: melissa.k.buckley2.civ@mail.mil

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Release No. 14-016

March 14, 2014

Recruit fights cancer to become Soldier

FORT LEONARD WOOD, Mo. – When one Fort Leonard Wood Soldier graduated Advanced Individual Training today, the occasion marked a nearly two-year battle to fulfill his desire to become a Soldier.

Severe testicular pain, while going through Basic Combat Training in 2012, was the first indicator of a fight for Pfc. Ozzy Asbell.

“When I went home for Holiday Block Leave in December (2012), I was having a lot of pain in one of my testicles. My wife made me go to the doctor. They said it was cancerous,” said Asbell, Company B, 84th Chemical Battalion, 3rd Chemical Brigade.

“It was so painful, but I never thought it would be cancer,” added Asbell, a 23-year-old native of Richland, Wash.

Upon reporting back to post after his holiday leave, he was sent to Columbia, Mo., for treatment.

“I was put on a medical board status, and they tried to discharge me. I was fighting that battle when I had another CT scan. That’s when they found my cancer for the second time. It had moved to my back,” Asbell said.

The second cancer diagnosis was the summer of 2013.

“That’s when I started the chemotherapy called BEP,” Asbell said.

BEP stands for bleomycin, etoposide and platinum chemotherapy and is commonly used to treat testicular cancer.

He went home to Washington for six weeks of the BEP, but needed surgery to remove the mass. Asbell spent six months at home, before he was cleared to return to Fort Leonard Wood.

He rejoined training for the third time since 2012 in January. Normally, a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear specialist requires 10 weeks of BCT and 10 weeks of AIT.

Now, Asbell just wants to fulfill the duty he committed to more than a year and a half ago.

“It feels great to know I will graduate March 14, 2014. I joined the Army for a reason. I’m ready to be a Soldier,” he said.

Asbell said he has had the support of his company’s leadership throughout this trying process.

“A lot of times as a commander, I see a lot of people on the cusp of quitting or giving up. When I took command last year, Asbell was one of the first people I bumped into. His platoon sergeant said he was a really good guy, and it was too bad we probably wouldn’t be able to keep him,” said Capt. Zebulon Pike, Co. B, 84th Chem. Bn. commander.

When Pike met Asbell he had been in the holdover status for several weeks.

“He never gravitated toward trouble and kept himself squared away. I sat down with Asbell, and there is just something about him. I could see that he is worth keeping. There are too many people who don’t have the heart of this guy,” Pike said.

“He has overcome so much adversity to be here. Because of his resolve to tough it out, I am encouraged as a leader. It makes me feel good to know the future of the Army is in the hands of Soldiers like Asbell,” he said.

Pike said adversity for a civilian trying to become a Soldier could make or break a person.

“Asbell just wants something more out of life. With his military bearing, discipline and his inner drive, it would be a criminal offense not to keep this guy. It was worth going out on a limb for,” Pike said.

Asbell said the Army has paid for all of the treatment he needed to fight his battle against cancer.

“I have seen the bills; they weren’t cheap. I am looking forward to walking across the stage at graduation, so I can finally earn my keep. I’m ready to do my job,” Asbell said.

The American Cancer Society estimates about 380 men will die of testicular cancer in the United States this year, and about 8,820 new cases of testicular cancer will be diagnosed.

The average age at the time of diagnosis of testicular cancer is about 33. This is largely a disease of young and middle-aged men, but about 6 percent of cases occur in children and teens, and about 7 percent occur in men over the age of 55.

“If you are having pain you need to get it checked out. Keep your head up,” Asbell said. “I feel blessed. There is always somebody who has something worse than you do. That’s the way I look at it.”

Watching as the new Soldier mastered the Army value of personal courage, Pike said he hopes Asbell's story will change the way leaders look at their troops.

"I hope Asbell's story emboldens other leaders to not just sign the paperwork — that is easy. I hope leaders will look at the human dimension and see the heart of the person they are dealing with," Pike said.

- 30 -

For more information, contact the Fort Leonard Wood Public Affairs Office at (573) 563-4145. Melissa Buckley is a Guidon staff member.

Encl. (1) Pfc. Ozzy Asbell photo

Photo outline: Pfc. Ozzy Asbell, left, Company B, 84th Chemical Battalion, 3rd Chemical Brigade, attends Mass Casualty Decontamination Class along with Pvt. Tyreek Woods.

About Fort Leonard Wood

Fort Leonard Wood is a thriving and prosperous installation that has evolved from a small basic training post 70 years ago to a premier Army Center of Excellence that trains more than 80,000 military and civilians each year.

Home to the Maneuver Support Center of Excellence, Fort Leonard Wood now trains and educates service members and develops doctrine and capabilities for the Training and Doctrine Command's U.S. Army Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear School, U.S. Army Engineer School, and U.S. Army Military Police School, three gender integrated Initial Military Training brigades, one of only five reception stations in the Army, and the Army's largest Noncommissioned Officers Academy.

Over the past several years, Fort Leonard Wood has received numerous additional responsibilities to include supporting the 4th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade, a large Forces Command unit that is responsible for all deployable capabilities at Fort Leonard Wood. A colonel-commanded Marine Corps Detachment and an Air Force Detachment, which are both the largest on any Army installation, are located on Fort Leonard Wood; a large Navy Seabee Detachment and elements of the Coast Guard train here as well.

www.facebook.com/fortleonardwoodmissouri
www.wood.army.mil