

Vincent Rios



Sergeant Vince Rios leading his men before he was injured 2/69

On February 6, 1969, six days before the end of his second tour in Vietnam, Acting Platoon Commander, Marine Sergeant Vincent Rios, was on patrol over a mile-long rice paddy. He was to advance his company's position in an area he knew was heavily mined due to previous experiences. Sgt. Rios stopped the platoon and advanced to speak with his point man. He set off an enemy explosive device which immediately vaporized both his legs, left his right arm dangling from his shoulder, and partially amputated his left index and ring fingers.

Sgt. Rios was awarded three purple hearts (having been shot twice in previous actions) and two Bronze Stars with "V" devices for heroic achievement and meritorious service for his service in Vietnam.



April 1969 at Oak Knoll Naval Hospital in Oakland CA. Sergeant Vince Rios received his 2nd Bronze Star and 3rd Purple Heart

Vince spent ten months in military hospitals recovering from his injuries. His treatment was three-pronged, consisting of physical therapy, surgeries to close and later graft wounds, and occupational therapy. Interestingly, Vince was told by the military doctors that he would never walk again because of the grievous nature of his injuries.



November 2001 in San Leandro at Veterans Memorial Building USMC SOS Breakfast

He did not accept that he would never walk again and, using his considerable initiative and tremendous persistence, he devised a new concept for his prosthetic right arm and crutch that allowed him to stand and walk within ten months of the loss of both his legs and right arm. He daily utilizes his self-designed prosthesis and crutch to stand from his wheelchair and walk to and from his car.

In the effort to rebuild his life Vince dedicated himself to obtain an education and work to serve veterans. He earned four college degrees. He has an A.A. degree in Behavioral Sciences, a B.A. in Psychology, a M.A. in Interdisciplinary Social Science, and a M.A. in Public Administration.

Vince was honored as California's Disabled Veteran of the Year 1999 from the Disabled American Veterans

Vince's professional life has been spent working in various positions that has allowed him to assist his fellow veterans. He was appointed in 1989 as the Assistant Regional Administrator, Department of Labor's Veterans Employment and Training Service, Regions IX and X, till his retirement in July 2001. In this capacity he helped tract regional veterans programs and how federal monies are spent by the states for veterans programs. He then was recruited by the Association for Service Disabled Veterans to serve as the Director of Development, and the Western Region Representative for the Washington based POW Disabled Veteran-owned Business advocacy group.

Vince Rios is a recipient of numerous civilian awards for community service:

Outstanding Federal Employee 1981

First recipient of the Department of Labor's "Wall of Fame" award 1994

Golden Gate University's Alumnus of the Year, 1996

Sgt. Rios was selected in both 1995 and 1996 by the Oakland Athletic's to throw out the first pitch.

Vince is a life member of Disabled American Veterans, American Legion, Veterans of Foreign Wars, First Marine Division Association, Third Marine Division Association, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and Navy League.

Vincent Rios, currently resides in South San Francisco with his wife Cheryl.