

For many of us sleeping in a bed we take for granted. Growing up I shared a bed with my two older brothers until we got to middle school, but it was still a bed. There were times in the field as a Marine where I would have welcomed a bed over sleeping in mud, sand or the rain. But as a Marine that was **my choice**. I **chose to go defend this country** and carry a rifle as a young infantry Marine of Lakota descent. Charles can also attest to sleeping in the mud and sand during his combat tours in the Middle East. He is now a disabled USMC Combat Veteran.

Jump ahead many years to when I was a director at St. Labre Indian School in Montana on the beautiful Northern Cheyenne Reservation. We did a great deal of community outreach. We strived for systematic improvements for the community through many avenues. I was very involved oh so many years ago with this process. In fact, over the past 18 or so years I have worked with hundreds of programs on dozens of reservations in 15 different states to help people. Yet some experiences stay with me. I could tell stories for hours of work.



Many years ago at an Elderly Nutrition Center on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation I was approached by an elderly lady. She was 73 years old and named Margie. She asked, “Mr. Ramsey do you ever get beds?” I told her no. She went on to tell me she was raising seven grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Then she broke my heart. She told me they all slept on the floor with emergency blankets, and if I ever had access to beds please remember her. I had a lump in my throat as I nodded my head yes.

Margie said she had made beds with the gray disaster blankets we often distributed to families. She said she wanted beds for the kids and that would be enough--she could still sleep on the floor on blankets. My tight lips just nodded. I did not have an answer. Yet I knew I had to do something. I could not let this beautiful 73 year old Native American Elderly lady, who was an absolute treasure, sleep on the floor. If I could not find beds I would buy them myself.

When I returned to my office I was on the phone with every program I could find. Asking for beds. And thank God for **YMCA of the Rockies!** They had just sent 110 twin mattresses to a friend of mine’s program in another state. I called my wonderful friend and asked for as many beds as I could get. She asked when I could come get them. I told her tomorrow morning.

My next phone call was to my maintenance department telling the maintenance manager to have a pickup and horse trailer ready for me at 5:00 AM the next morning because I was on a mission. My maintenance manager did not ask why. He understood when the "Marine Major" wanted something it was best to support the mission.

At 5:00 AM the next morning I was driving 250 miles to get beds. I pulled into my friend's warehouse facility to their smiling surprise. After many hugs and thanks I had 40 mattresses stuffed into the school's gooseneck horse trailer heading back to Margie's house in Montana.

When I backed that horse trailer full of mattresses into Margie's yard, she was more than shocked as the sun was setting. There I was, a man usually wearing a suit and tie, now in my blue jeans, swinging open the back gate on that horse trailer. Margie was in tears and thanked me emphatically as I carried those 8 mattresses into her house. Then I met the young children in the house. They were so excited.

It was a long day that day driving over 500 miles, but it was a great day. I have commanded hundreds of Marines. I was a school superintendent. I was a director of a large private school. But this day being a delivery man was one of the **best days ever**.

To this day I have sought out beds for elders and children on reservations. Like I wrote many take this for granted. When we delivered wood to **Rudy Shoots Twice** he too asked for a bed. Here he is a disabled **Warrior** in a wheelchair without a bed. The mattress in his living room was for his grandchildren. He slept on blankets on the floor in his room. Now he has a new mattress thanks to donors like you. His situation has brought that lump to my throat many times.

We know we cannot be everything to everyone. **BUT damn it, we can do a lot. AND WE DO with your continued support.**

