

I enlisted in the Army after being graduated from Trinity High School in 1990, deploying too many different countries with 1st Ranger BN, 2ID, and the 82nd ABN when I decided to get out of the Army and try something else in the May of 1999 and settled in Belmont, NC. I ended up doing various jobs in carpentry and construction and after about a year of that I decided to use the Montgomery GI Bill and attend Gaston College to receive my AA. I transferred to the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to obtain a BA in Poly-Sci with a concentration in International Politics. I then received my commission from the US Army in May 2004 and went back on active duty to Korea for a year and then I was sent to Fort Wainwright, AK where I was immediately deployed to Iraq with the 172nd SBCT. During my time in Iraq I was wounded twice. The first time, 13 APR 2006, I returned to duty after two days (against the advice of my DOC) to lead my PLT for the next four months in Mosul and where I learned the true definition of sacrifice, fear, commitment, and love. By the time we (the 172nd) were extended and sent to Baghdad in JUL 2006, my Soldiers and I had seen a more than our fair share of IEDs, sniper attacks, ambushes, and street to street fighting. I can't take the credit for our success in finding caches of explosives and hidden IED making facilities, nor can I say that because our Mortar Carrier Strykers looked different than the other Strykers in the BN that we had a \$500,000 bounty on our heads from Al Qaeda operatives in Mosul and then in Baghdad. I can say that my men and I owe our success and lives to two very important K-9 NCOs and their handlers.

The military working dogs were trained to find explosives and other bomb making materials and served our platoon well. On the night of 30 OCT 06, with only 9 patrols left, our success had to paid a price, insurgents hit us with everything they had starting off with an ambush from an EFP (Explosive Formed Projectile shape charge) which caught me and my Soldiers on fire and then hit us with small arms and Machine gun fire. I was severely wounded and spent the next 3 years recovering at FT Wainwright, AK and was after 16 yrs of Active Duty service I was medically retired in Aug 2009 due to the extent of my physical and mental injuries. The past three years have been very difficult for me to adjust to. I have a very difficult time in public settings and crowds so much that I end up missing out with my family on outings. Now, thanks to the Inmate Council at Hiland Mountain, and the women who have participated in the SPOT program I will once again be relying on my future success from the service of another canine, Bella.