

AFTER ACTION

report



AFTER ACTION report

CONTENTS
VOL.2 ★ 2010

2
WWProfile:
CLAUDE BOUSHEY

4
TOP 10 LIST

5
TECH TALK

6
LIFE AFTER WAR:
A CHALLENGE
OF GUILT AND
SURVIVAL

8
STILL CARRYING THE
FLAG: PARALYMPIAN
HEATH CALHOUN

10
IT'S ALL ABOUT
THE WATER

12
YOUR USO

12
FREEZE FRAME

13
UNSUNG HERO:
SARAH WADE

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



In this issue of the *After Action Report*, you will read about obstacles wounded warriors and their families have to overcome to be successful. Each story has different circumstances and different injuries – both mental and physical, but each outcome is the same: setting a new standard for success.

As you read about these warriors and caregivers on the following pages, I hope you find inspiration in their recoveries and achievements. Notice how success is not defined by the past. It is defined by their abilities today, and is accompanied by an acceptance and gratitude for their survival. From Ryan Kules, who gave an arm and a leg in Iraq, but still struggles with the loss of his combat buddies, to Ted and Sarah Wade, who define success through daily victories in recovery and independence. Each of these stories shows how the individual and family set their own definitions of success.

Wounded Warrior Project is there to assist these warriors on their journey, through programs such as Project Odyssey to help veterans deal with combat stress, adaptive sporting events to build confidence, and a network of staff, counselors, and warriors that provide support along the way.

Ask yourself the following questions as you read this *After Action Report*: How do you define success? Are you on your way to being successful? What can WWP do to help you?

I want to see you in the next *After Action Report*!

Sincerely,

Steve Nardizzi
Executive Director

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ON THE COVER
Heath Calhoun carries the U.S. flag at
the 2010 Paralympics
Photo Credit: U.S. Paralympics

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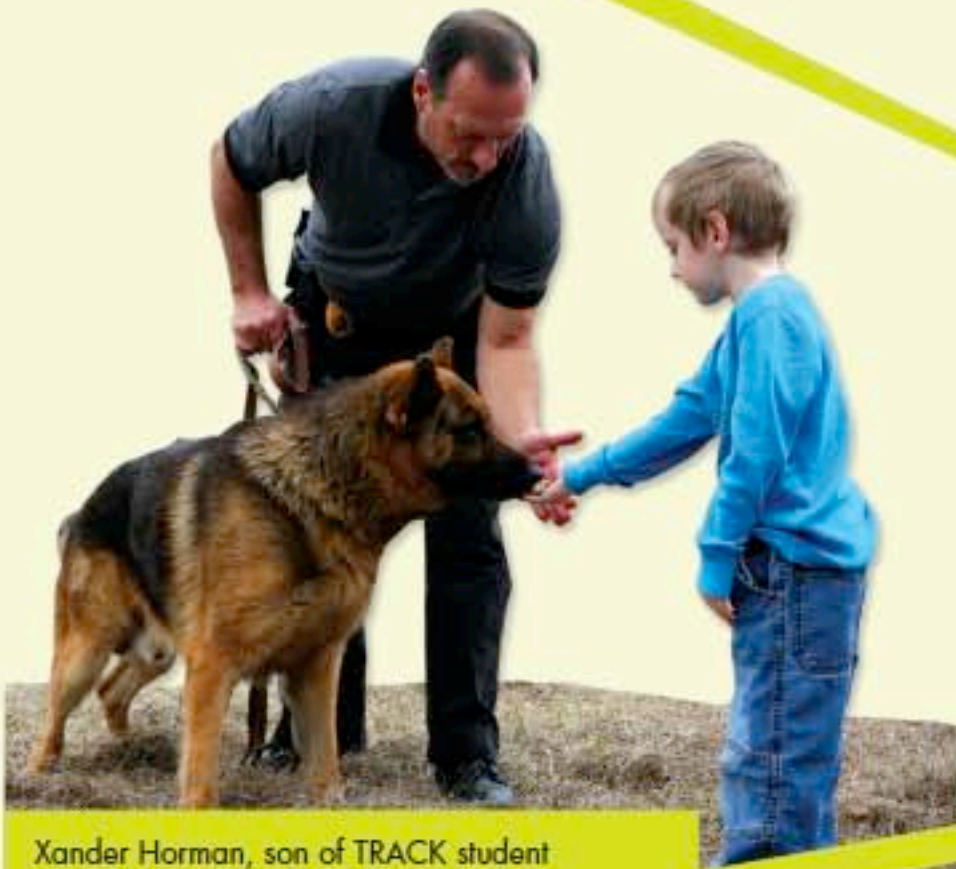
IN THE COMMUNITY



Jeremy and Charlene Feldbusch with Trace Adkins on February 27, 2010 at Petersen Event Center in Pittsburgh, PA.



Ian Lennon channeled his inner Shaun White to conquer the slopes on a snowboard at Whitefish Mountain Resort. Five warriors and family members attended the adaptive sporting event in Montana. Festivities included a polar plunge, snowmobiling, and other winter activities infused with a patriotic theme.



Xander Horman, son of TRACK student Chris Horman, feeds a k-9 unit during a demonstration at WWP headquarters in February. State Attorney General Angela Corey and Chief of Staff Dan McCarthy stopped by to visit the warriors.



WAW PROFILE:

CLAUDE BOUSHEY

A Warrior Rising

It was June 13, 2004. The mission started as support reconnaissance for Army helicopter pilot Claude Boushey, but would soon turn tragic.

He was in the left seat operating the systems when the pilot warned him something was wrong. The fuel control had failed, and the entire rotor drooped off and was unable to sustain flight. Claude was quick to send a mayday call out before crashing into a swamp. The helicopter rolled on its side, the cyclic pinned against Claude's leg, sending a shriek of pain up his spine.

"I was in water up to my neck. I actually tasted the fuel in my mouth. I saw the engine smoking. I tried to get out, and I couldn't. I was pinned."

Fortunately, Claude's mayday call allowed for help to arrive quickly. He was taken to Baghdad Hospital and later MEDEVAC to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. After four surgeries, one lasting 14 hours, doctors thought if he made it through the operation, he would probably never walk again.

But Claude was determined to beat the odds. "It took me eight months to start walking straight again, so that was challenging, but I appreciate things now," says Claude, "I can walk." He didn't stop there. Fifteen months after the crash and several Army medical waivers later, he was approved to fly again and accepted a deployment back to Iraq. "I needed to go back, because I felt I didn't finish the job the first time. It was important for me both mentally and emotionally."

Claude's second tour of duty lasted from July 2006 to October 2007. "It fulfilled me as a soldier, a pilot, and a person. I'm fortunate I

made it back, because a lot of my friends didn't. I think about them every day."

Claude retired in December 2008. Today, he serves as a civilian pilot assigned to MEDEVAC missions for the Maryland State Police. He also works part time as a peer specialist with Virginia's Wounded Warrior Program and is involved with Wounded Warrior Project.

"My first priority is my family, but I make time to volunteer as a DAV driver for the DC VA Medical Center. It's really fulfilling. A combat veteran understands another combat veteran's emotional and mental state. I had a lot of close calls. I appreciate what a soldier goes through."



After Claude's accident in 2004, his children CJ (left), Brandon (middle), and Katie (right) came to visit him at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany.

U.S. Army, Warrant Officer (Ret.)

Residence: La Plata, MD

Injury: Broken back, broken femur, spinal cord 80 percent compromised

Alive Day: 6.13.2004

Q&A

What was your favorite childhood television program?

Gilligan's Island

If you could have any super power, what would it be?

Flying

If you HAD to change your name, what would you change it to?

John-Claude

If you could have three wishes granted, what would they be?

Fix the VA system, fix the school system, and end homelessness in the U.S.

List three goals on your life's to-do list:

Raise my three kids, retire for good, and help veterans

What's your favorite song of all time?

Aersomith "Dream On"

Who inspires you?

My wife, Kelly

Who inspired you most during your recovery and rehabilitation?

Cody Sharp, great friend, mentor, and wounded warrior

Did you receive a purple heart?

No, but my unit placed one on my retirement gift because they felt I earned it

How do you celebrate your alive day?

Reflect with my wife, Kelly; talk about the details of my crash while she shares the details of her notification and trip to Landstuhl

What is your most memorable military moment?

Crossing the border into Iraq on my second tour

What is your most memorable civilian moment?

Purchase of my first home

What do you miss most about the military?

Brotherhood



"It's about the ability, not the disability."

TOP 10 LIST

Although you won't see this list on David Letterman anytime soon, this is a good checklist to refer to when you are about to transition.



The top 10 things a warrior should know about benefits:

- 1** Get some help for your claim. No one should do it alone (VA-Form 21-22).
- 2** Before discharge, get two good copies of your medical records.
- 3** Know the difference between post 9/11 GI Bill and Vocational Rehabilitation.
- 4** You can receive more than one clothing allowance if you have qualifying disabilities such as skin conditions, bilateral amputations, and bilateral knee braces (VHA-Form 10-8678).
- 5** Vocational Rehabilitation is for more than just education. There is also independent living assistance (VA-Form 21-1900).
- 6** Get dental treatment prior to discharge.
- 7** You can receive temporary 100 percent disability rating for hospitalization for service-connected conditions or surgeries for service-connected conditions (VA-Form 21-4138).
- 8** You have to contact the VAMC within 72 hours of emergency treatment if you want the VAMC to pay for it.
- 9** Parents can be listed as your dependents if they are your caregivers and have stopped working to assist you (VA-Form 21-509).
- 10** Enroll for VA healthcare as soon as you can (10-10ez).

Go to VA.gov to view a list of all available benefits. Any additional questions can be directed to service@woundedwarriorproject.org.

TECH TALK



The i-LIMB

The i-LIMB hand is the world's first commercially available bionic hand with five individually powered digits. It is lightweight and uses a battery and a force-sensitive resistor that responds to muscle contractions and impulses in the remaining limb to move the i-Limb's life-like fingers. For more information, visit www.touchbionics.com.



Virtual Reality for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The U.S. military is using virtual reality to help with PTSD. By recreating battlefield situations, servicemen and women relive their traumatic experiences, which helps lessen their fear of their memories instead of suppressing them. For more information, call 253.968.4793.



QuikClot

QuikClot is a homeostatic agent that rapidly stops severe bleeding. Today all U.S. military branches carry packets of QuikClot to kick-start the clotting process. It has been confirmed that QuikClot has saved more than 150 lives in Iraq and Afghanistan and is available for civilian use. For more information, visit www.quikclot.com.



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Todd Schroeder's Status Updates



Todd Schroeder posted 4 days ago:
Kissing hands and shaking babies!

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Todd Schroeder posted 4 days ago:
Pickles for the first one to bring me a cucumber

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Todd Schroeder posted 4 days ago:
Got a call from Boston the other day. It just called to tell me it is still very Irish

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WWP Connect

WWP Connect is an exclusive online social network for wounded warriors and their family members. Connect offers a central resource to talk to other warriors, learn about events in your area, ask questions, discuss warrior issues, and have fun. In each *After Action Report*, WWP will focus on a Connect feature. We are featuring Todd Shroeder: His witty and humorous updates make his profile a must read! Get connected at <http://alumni.woundedwarriorproject.org>.

Why did I live when other people died?

That's a question all too common for warriors returning home from Iraq or Afghanistan.

Combat veterans experience life-threatening events, witness traumatic incidents involving multiple deaths, and survive – sometimes unharmed – while peers or friends suffer devastating losses of life or limb.

We rightfully welcome them back as heroes with our utmost thanks. But, deep inside, survivors often struggle with a self-inflicted emotional dilemma: *I should have died, and they should have lived.*

This is often referred to as “survivor guilt.”

Take for example the story of Ryan Kules, who lost his right arm and left leg in Iraq in 2005. The two other service members in his vehicle were killed.



Ryan Kules playing with his two daughters, Jillian (top) and Liv (right).



“To this day, I live with the fact that I lived and they didn’t,” says Ryan. “That’s something I think will always stay with me.”

According to Ryan, he relived that day over and over in his mind, trying to figure out what he could have done to change the situation. It’s a textbook symptom of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). As Ryan sought the help of a VA medical center, he began to face the truth that combat often involves events completely out of the warrior’s control. The survivor must learn to accept that he or she acted the best way they could in the given situation.”

“Saying how I was feeling out loud was very beneficial. It made me realize that it was not rational for me to feel guilt for something that I did not have any control over.”

“Warriors suffering from survivor guilt often struggle with sleeplessness, nightmares and flashbacks, relationship problems, paranoia or distrust, difficulty concentrating, and a preoccupation with the traumatic event or death,” according to Maggie Haynes, Wounded Warrior Project’s director of Combat Stress Recovery Program. “Physical symptoms typically manifest themselves as headaches, stomach or heart problems, dizziness, and an inability to enjoy pleasurable activities.”

Andrew Coughlan knows these symptoms all too well. In July 2004, as mortars exploded around them, Andrew and his teammates of Bravo Company 1-32, 10th Mountain Division, left their tent and took cover in a cement bunker. But soon the bunker took a direct hit.

“I looked down, and I was covered in blood, and my buddy Charles was laying outside face down... Charles had shielded me from the blast. He was killed instantly. All those killed and I was never touched,” says Andrew. “I had survivor’s guilt, anger, and nightmares. Every night, waking up, head pounding, ears ringing, a nasty taste in my mouth.”

LIFE AFTER WAR:

A CHALLENGE OF GUILT AND SURVIVAL

It wasn't until Andrew returned home that he learned he was suffering from PTSD. He spent nearly four months at the VA. And now, with the support of family, friends, other combat veterans, and Wounded Warrior Project, Andrew's nightmares have subsided.

The stories Ryan and Andrew bravely share are common in the current conflicts.

"For a war that began on American soil, survival has been completely redefined for both civilians and military alike," says Haynes. "That sense of loss continues on the home front through physical and emotional sacrifice. Guilt can make it difficult for survivors to allow themselves to be honored and thanked. Warriors may feel ashamed and unable to see the good they have done for their country. They must learn it is okay to feel sad about someone's loss without taking responsibility for that person's death."

If you suffer with survivor guilt, you are not alone. Ryan and Andrew are only a few examples of the warriors who are coping with these very real and complex emotions. Learning to better cope with survivor guilt does not mean forgetting the sacrifices of our fallen warriors. It means honoring their memory by remembering what we're fighting for.

To speak with another warrior who may be experiencing survivor guilt, contact Wounded Warrior Project's Peer Mentoring program at battlebuddy@woundedwarriorproject.org. To find a counselor in your community or additional resources, contact the Combat Stress Recovery Program at csrp@woundedwarriorproject.org.

Andrew Coughlan, with four hero bracelets, remembering his fallen comrades.





Just a few short years ago, 30-year-old Heath Calhoun seemed unlikely to ever walk using prosthetics, much less become a Paralympic athlete.

Heath recently competed in the Paralympic Winter Games in Vancouver in men's sit-ski super G, and super combined events. Although Heath did not medal, he once again proved himself a champion. His teammates thought so much of him; they elected Heath to carry the American flag during the opening ceremonies.

"I looked at it as a huge honor," Heath says. "I wanted to hold that flag as high as I could."

An Army Staff Sergeant in the famed 101st Airborne Division, Calhoun was serving in Iraq in 2003 when his convoy was attacked. A rocket propelled-grenade hit his Humvee and exploded. "I was lying on my side. I could see my legs were really messed up," Heath says. He yelled to the driver to call in the incident, and that's all he remembers. Ultimately, Heath would lose both legs above the knees.

Never one to give up, Heath spent nine months rehabilitating at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. As he became accustomed to life as a double amputee, he was introduced to various adaptive sporting events through the Wounded Warrior Disabled Sports Project, a partnership between Wounded Warrior Project (WWP) and Disabled Sports USA. The program helps wounded veterans gain confidence, independence, and adapt to life after injury. Nearly 2,000 wounded warriors have participated in WWP's adaptive sports program since 2003.

In spite of his athleticism, Heath still found it difficult to find prosthetic legs that would enable him to walk comfortably. That would change in June of 2006 when Heath spoke at the Amputee Coalition of America national conference. He saw other amputees with injuries similar to his walking independently, driving unmodified cars and participating in sports. Once Heath was fitted with prosthetic legs and computerized knees, his competitive spirit kicked in.

Heath's interest in monoskiing began just five months after his injury. He would become

STILL CARRYING THE FLAG: PARALYMPIAN HEATH CALHOUN

involved with the Vail Veterans Program, an organization that provides recreational opportunities not only to veterans, but also to veterans' families and primary caregivers. In this way, Heath was able to share his passion for skiing with loved ones. He soon realized he could compete on a world-class level.

Heath would ultimately move to Colorado to train with the USOC Veterans Paralympics Performance Alpine Skiing program with Challenge Aspen. His dedication paid off at the 2009 U.S. Adaptive Alpine National Championships where he won gold in the men's sit-ski super G and silver in the sit-ski slalom. But, he says nothing was more thrilling than representing the United States in the Paralympics in Vancouver.

"My military service was kind of left incomplete; it was taken out of my hands by the explosion that took my legs," Heath says. "So being able to represent my country on the world's biggest stage is huge for me. It can also give me some closure from starting in the military to finishing up here as a Paralympian."

Next Stop: Richmond

Heath will serve as the grand marshal of the self-titled Crown Royal Presents The Heath Calhoun 400 NASCAR Sprint Cup Series race on May 1, 2010 at Richmond International Raceway.



Photo Courtesy: Getty Images

More Highlights from Heath's Amazing Career

2008

First Place, Slalom –
Eastern NorAm

2008

Colorado Ski County
Adaptive Athlete of the Year

2007

Wounded Warrior Project –
George C. Lang Courage
Award Recipient

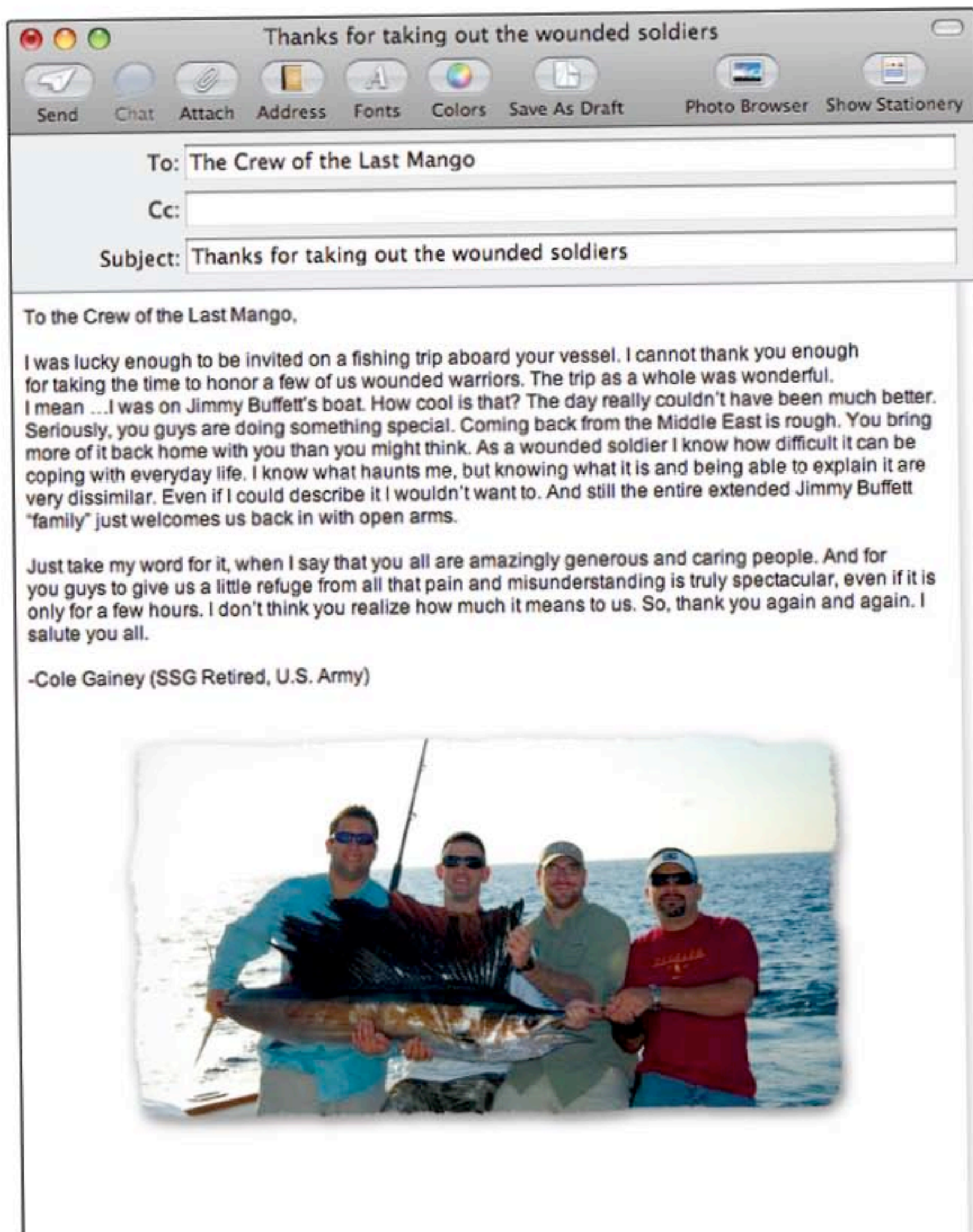
2005

Coast to Coast, Wounded Warrior
Project's Soldier Ride

2003

Wounded Warrior Project,
Founder

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE WATER



Nothing like *Havana Daydreamin'* to forget the places we've been and head for that *One Particular Harbour*...

This may sound like a fictional tale pulled straight from a verse of a Jimmy Buffett song, but for Jon, Julio, Dennis, and Cole, it's real. After being offered a day of fishing out on Jimmy Buffett's boat, "The Last Mango," these four veterans grabbed some *Boat Drinks on a*

Sunny Afternoon and set out for a *Lovely Cruise*. Mr. Buffett, an avid supporter of Wounded Warrior Project, offered his boat, captain, and crew for the day so they could relax and fish... or as Jimmy would put it... A day of *Livin' it Up*.

Somewhere between the sunset and the *Stars On The Water*, the boat headed *Back To The Island*. They must have all been thinking... *The Stories We Could Tell*...



Wounded warriors Julio Salazar, Jon Pruden, Cole Gainey, and Dennis Colton aboard Jimmy Buffett's boat, "The Last Mango." Vinnie Lasorsa is the captain of the "Mango" and organized the fishing trip.

YOUR USO



The USO continues to adapt to the changing needs of troops and their families. Since its founding in 1941, the USO has established a global support network for troops wherever they serve.

While programs might change, the USO's mission has stayed the same. The organization is committed to lifting the spirits of America's troops and families. Programs range from expanded support for military spouses and children to providing a needed touch of home for troops at remote forward operating bases. The USO is constantly seeking new ways to provide troops and families with the support they need.

Today, that support extends to those who have been wounded in battle. The USO is embarking on a \$100 million campaign in 2010 to assist the needs of wounded warriors and WWP is proud to partner with them on several initiatives in the U.S. and Landstuhl, Germany. These efforts will increase awareness, generate resources to accommodate current and future needs, and provide critical support to wounded warriors and their families when they need it most. For more information, please visit www.uso.org.



Sloan Gibson with Sergeant Rob Brown at the "IED of Golf," an event to support wounded warriors, Chevy Chase, Maryland, 2009. USO photo by Mike Theiler.

FREEZE FRAME



January's WWP Alumni photo contest winner is Rob Roeder who met Toby Keith on June 27, 2009 in Tampa, FL. Thanks for the awesome picture!



**WOUNDED WARRIOR
PROJECT™**

ALUMNI

Enter to Win

Submit a photo of yourself wearing WWP logo apparel. The most interesting pictures will be featured in our electronic newsletter and in the *After Action Report*. At the end of the year, Alumni will vote for the best picture to win. Good luck!

Submit your photos to
alumni@woundedwarriorproject.org

UNSUNG HERO:

SARAH WADE

During the summer of 2003, Sarah Wade considered her life hectic. She was going to school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill during the day and working nights. Her fiancée, Ted, was in the Army, so her free moments were spent driving to visit him in Fayetteville, NC before he deployed to Iraq.

Today, Sarah would give anything to have a day like that: planned and predictable. On Valentine's Day 2004, Ted was severely injured when an improvised explosive device detonated under his convoy. He sustained a severe traumatic brain injury (TBI), his right arm was completely severed above the elbow, he had wounds to both his legs, and his vision was impaired.

"Ted was one of the first five severe brain injuries," Sarah explained. "They weren't hopeful he would survive." Ted finally woke up after two and a half months in a coma. "Due to the severity of his brain injury, Ted is sometimes unable to fight for himself, so his struggle has become my own," says Sarah.

Sarah left school. She left her job. And she has been Ted's primary caregiver ever since. A job with no salary, no benefits, and a lot of uncertainty. "The last six years we have been in crisis mode, trying to manage the peaks and valleys," Sarah explains. "I don't like things to be unpredictable, but I don't know what's going to happen day to day." Ted's impairments are not physical. He has balance issues and problems that are related to his TBI. Ted knows how to get dressed, but cannot pick out what to wear. He knows how to eat, but does not know how to prepare it. Sarah has to assist Ted in most daily activities. "Ted is aware and up and moving but gets bored very easily, which leads to depression," she explains.



Sarah Wade with her husband Ted.

Sarah is hopeful that help is on the way. That someone will realize caring for Ted is a full-time job worthy of his sacrifice. She has become an advocate for all caregivers and takes it one day at a time. "Ted is a miracle. He has gotten better, only because I have been able to endure it all," says Sarah. "That is the success."

SOLDIER RIDE



Jeremy Stengel leads the pack during Soldier Ride Miami to Key West earlier this year.