



SPECIALIST JOSH EVANS

UNITED STATES ARMY

GLOBAL WAR ON TERROR

Operation Iraqi Freedom



The year 2006 was a horrific time for those living in Iraq. The war had been raging for three years. The American soldiers stationed in Iraq were there for a noble cause, to ensure and protect the freedoms and ideals of Iraqi citizens.

As the new year dawned in January of 2006, more than 2,000 American soldiers had lost their lives since the war had begun. Suicide bombings and roadside explosions had already taken the lives of approximately 30,000 Iraqi citizens during the year 2005. As the war continued in its third year, terrible violence fueled by religious conflict continued to plague Iraq.

Specialist Josh Evans was born to a military family at the Jacksonville naval base in Florida. Because of his love for his country, in May of 2005 he enlisted into the United States Army as an infantry soldier. He attended One Station Unit Training at Fort Benning, Georgia - training in which the soldier's advanced individual training occurs directly following his Basic Combat Training.

Evans loved Basic Training, describing his experience as "an extreme camping trip". He enjoyed the challenges, particularly the 25-mile road march and 5-mile run. After completing OSUT, he was stationed at Fort Drum for 10 months. There, he took part in sniper school and pre-ranger school. Following that, his unit was sent to Iraq.



This was where he found himself in 2006. In his words, "We were out on patrol about 3 [kilometers] south from the base... we were going through a little village.... We were walking up a dirt road, and the dirt road itself had a ditch in the middle, and another dirt road [to the west] and what my lieutenant decided was, we were going up [to the paved road], make a quick U-turn, and come back down. I was part of Bravo Team at that point; and Alpha Team had gotten up there, and they were standing horizontal with the road on the edge of it, our squad leader being in the middle, and I was a little bit behind him, motioning for Bravo Team to catch up. And then, the blast just went off.

"It was a 450-pound shaped charge. It was about two and a half meters away from us... it left about a 15-foot deep hole in the ground, probably about a meter and a half wide. What mostly happened was the force of the concussion wave knocked out my squad leader, and threw me back down the hill. I remember hearing just this 'pop' sound... and crawling out of the ditch, coming back up, and running back up the hill toward my squad leader, because he was lying on the ground. We pulled him off the road, out of sight, trying to get back down into cover.

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"My head was ringing, and everything was shaking. I couldn't hear out of my right ear, and my back was hurting. At the time I ignored it, because we were wearing about 60 pounds of gear.... I didn't know at that point that I

had blood pouring out of my ear... after we had airlifted my sergeant out, I was walking back [to the base].... I got back to the camp and got checked, and I [found out] I had blown out my right eardrum.” Specialist Evans, upon returning home, discovered he had injured his spine.



Following his injuries, Specialist Evans was sent to WTU, the Warrior Transition Unit, a military organization set up to ensure that wounded soldiers, upon leaving the treatment facility, would be able to either return to military or civilian life. Specialist Evans was required to accept temporary disability retirement on August 2, 2011. He retired permanently in June 2014, not withstanding his ardent desire to remain on active duty. He currently has 2 metal rods and 6 screws in his back, as a result of the multiple surgeries he has undergone for his injuries.

That traumatic event resulting in his injuries was not the only harrowing experience Specialist Evans witnessed in Iraq. He and his comrades were exposed to frequent danger. While on a patrol just outside his base, the Humvee Josh was riding in hit a tripwire, and the front of the vehicle was blown off. Yet another time, the vehicle behind Josh’s was heavily damaged by enemy fire.

Prior to going to Iraq, he had met a young woman from Orange County, New York, Danielle Shenkman. Talking to his future fiancée on the telephone was Josh’s favorite pastime and is his favorite memory of his time in Iraq. He proposed to Miss Shenkman in November 2007. The two were wed on December 10, 2007, in Watertown, located near Fort Drum.

“Basic taught me how to fight, but it didn’t teach me about guerilla warfare. The service is a good place, a good job, but [the public should] read a little less into what the news says.” The news media do not accurately portray what it is like being in the warzone. Only the brave soldiers like Josh Evans who risk their lives every day for us back home can tell us what it is truly like to fight for the ideals of America.



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