

## *“Thoughts from an Injured Green Beret”*

*By: Levi Rodgers*

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My name is CW2 Levi Rodgers; I was wounded in Afghanistan while serving as the Commander of a Special Forces Operational Detachment-Alpha. I am a husband of 10 years to my beautiful wife Erika and a father of two boys: Calob 8, and Owen 2. My family and their well being is everything to me.

On 15 September 09, I was severely injured in an IED attack in Western Afghanistan. My vehicle was attacked by one of the enemies of The United States of America, The Taliban. In addition to my injuries, three US Special Forces Soldiers lost their lives, as well as one Afghan National Interpreter.

The injuries I received put me in the hospital for approximately two months, one of which was spent while in a coma. I was severely burned on numerous parts of my body to include 100 percent of my face and internal burns as well; furthermore I broke numerous bones, lost major amounts of blood, broke my back in three places, and lost my spleen. Due to my head injuries and the coma, I had even forgotten who my family was, through pictures, presence, and persistence I have regained my memory of them and most of our memories together back. Due to all of these injuries I will be recovering at Brooke Army Medical Center, San Antonio, Texas for approximately one year. The current expectations of the doctors are for me to be finished with rehabilitation in December of 2010. I have received numerous surgeries thus far and will continue to have more surgeries throughout the rest of my time here in San Antonio, TX. My doctors are currently recommending approximately five more surgeries which will span over the course of the next year. The surgeries will include: Laser reconstructive surgery to my face, eyelid reconstruction, two knee surgeries, and possibly a tailbone and hip realignment.

While in the hospital, numerous people and organizations came to the side of my family to help us during this significant event in our lives. Some friends of ours gave my eight year old son a birthday party that he would otherwise have missed, friends and colleagues flew from all over the country to visit and help my wife and kids, gifts poured in from strangers, and the list goes on and on. It wasn't until a friend and ex colleague of mine, Pete, came to me one day and said: "Levi, I've got some great news for you". Pete went on to tell me about an organization that was going to give myself and my family a place to live while I recovered. I thought to myself, alright someone went and did all of the leg work for us and all I have to do is move in and buy some furniture etc... Then my friend Pete went on to explain to me that the apartment was already fully furnished and American Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant; and that I wouldn't have to pay for a thing. I was overwhelmed; I had no clue that there were ordinary Americans out there that cared so much. I mean, I saw things like Disney World trips on the news before, but wow....this is actually happening to me now. I am very thankful for the help that Mr. Samuel A. Raia, along with all of the other great Americans out there that have come to the aid of my family during this time of need.

The assistance given to me goes way beyond just helping my family and me. It does wonders not only to the injured service member and their family members to receive this kind of aid, but news of this assistance from ordinary Americans makes it out to throughout the entire Special Forces community, and news spreads fast! What this does is it eases the minds of the soldiers and family members whom are fighting the war to know that there are so many people out there willing to help a fallen soldier and his/her family. It's absolutely amazing! Having served six tours in support of the Global War on Terrorism, I know firsthand what it feels like to be the guy up front and close to the enemy. The thoughts that run through a soldier on the front lines mind are sometimes that of strategy, tactics, entertainment, fear...but most of all... the most thought about topic on a soldier in harm's way mind is "What Happens?" What happens when I die, what happens when I get blown up....the list goes on. Well, now there are a group of soldiers out there that know the answer to one of those questions and it is because Homes Fit for Heroes has given my family and me the answer to share with others. The answer is that no matter what happens to a soldier on the battlefield, there are Great Americans out there that truly care about you; and that these Great Americans will do anything to ensure that soldiers injured on the battlefield or families who have lost a loved one due to war are taken care of. I know this first hand.

It would have been extremely tough for a guy like me in my condition to run two households. I need my wife to take care of me, the children, drive me places as well as do all of the household chores. She is not able to get a job in order to pick up the slack of income with the need of running two households.

Today's soldiers don't live in the barracks and visit their families on the weekends, they own homes, rent homes, have children, have dogs and cats...the list goes on. Bottom line is that IED's don't just blow up and injure the service member; they injure the entire family, both physically and emotionally. It is not easy for a family to have three guys in Army dress uniforms knock on your door and tell them that their husband and father had just been severely injured and might not make it, and that you should probably move immediately to Texas to be by his side.

The Raia Family and the folks supporting Homes Fit for Heroes continue to be the "Great Americans" that I spoke of numerous times throughout this paper. They have come to the aid of my family during a time of true need and words cannot explain the deep gratitude that I will forever have for them and for their loved ones. As the tears roll down my face while writing this, I want anyone that reads this to know that Mr. Samuel A. Raia and the Raia Family should be looked at as Americans that need to be written about, Americans that are not ordinary, "Great Americans". I will forever thank them for the kind hand that they have extended towards my family as well as the numerous other Special Operations families that they have assisted. You are all true heroes. On behalf of Operational Detachment -Alpha 7311, I extend my offer of thanks and gratitude for coming to the aid of a Green Beret that's temporarily down. You all are a true part of my recovery; you have contributed to the security of this great nation by helping me get better! Thank you so much and if there is anything that you or your loved ones need from an injured Green Beret, you let me know...I will be there!