

SSG Shilo A Harris

Cavalry Scout, 19D30

**Awards: 1x Purple Heart, 2x ArCoM, 1x AGCM, 1x NDSM,
2x NOPDR, 1x ASR, 1x OSR, 1x GWTEM, 1x GWTSM, 1xCAB, 1x JMUA, 1x VUA**



I grew up in a small town called McCamey, Texas. About middle school time frame, my family and I moved to Coleman, TX. I was usually working when not in school; my family and I owned a bait & tackle shop. We also ran a car detail, and tire service station. Unfortunately, I did not have a lot of time for sports, but I did compete in UIL, I was a peer counselor, and my free time went to fishing and working on my truck. I guess you could say I was good with my head and hands. Prior to military service I worked as an apprentice land surveyor.

After the attack on the twin towers and Pentagon I felt it would be better if I was in the military to contribute in the freedom of my family, so I joined the US Cavalry, I wanted to go to combat. I was 27 years old and not making the kind of living I wanted to. I enjoyed my job, but it was contract labor with no benefits. I also wanted to pursue an education while in the military. I received most of my information from my grandfather (retired SFC), my father (Vietnam Veteran), and my Uncle (retired SFC). I had always wanted to be a soldier so it was easy for me to accept the challenges military living came with.

My first deployment to Iraq was a true eye opener. I had a hard time believing that was how a third world country really was. I was dismount/gunner/driver on a Bradley Fighting Vehicle. I was with 1ST ID, 1-4 Cavalry out of Schweinfurt, Germany. We worked around Tikrit, Samarra, Ad har, and Baquaba. We traveled a lot. I learned a lot, because I knew I would be back.

My second deployment was with 10TH Mountain Division, 1-89TH Cavalry from Fort Drum, New York. We worked around Southern Baghdad, Yusifiyah, and the farming community in the area. I had never seen it that bad. There were IED holes the size of Volkswagen bugs every 20 to 50 meters on many roads. Every soldier I worked with feared for his/her life every day, but pushed forward every mission. Most of the missions we conducted were route clearance, cache sweeps, and dismounted OP's. On a route most commonly known as Metallica, my platoon was conducting a route clearance when my truck was struck by an IED. The blast killed three of my friends/soldiers, wounded my driver, and destroyed my truck.

It was nothing short of a nightmare. I was in a coma for 48 days. I do not remember much of the visitations, surgeries, or hospital care in general until I got over to the burn unit on 4E in the Brooke Army Medical Center, which is now San Antonio Medical Center. The showers were cold, the towels were rough, and I was in airplane splints most of the time.

When I was able to go outpatient my wife and children had to do everything for me, because I was unable to use my arms and hands. I felt degraded from such a capable man to what I had become, at that time. My wife had to unwrap my bandages to shower me then wrap me back up; a process that usually took anywhere from 4-7 hours. I will never forget how miserable I was.

I currently have most of my independence back. I am able to conduct most days on my own, but I do have days that I get sick and request my wife to help me or to drive me for safety of others and myself. I do not like to have my family see so un-capable. I want them all to be proud of me and my ability.

I will have permanent damage in my lower back, neck, knees, and shoulders. Therapy has helped dramatically in my quality of life, but I still cannot walk for long distances. Standing is also limited, but sitting on my butt is not what I want. The impact of walking or running causes pain to my lower back and knees that really makes my nights long. All my injuries are as follows: 35% 3rd degree burns, full thickness--face, left and right arms, left flank and thigh, missing--ears, tip of nose, left index and pinkie fingers, right pinkie finger, fractures-left collar bone, the C-7 vertebrae; close to my tailbone is lodged into my back putting pressure on my spine/nerves; my knees ache/ my shoulders ache; constant migraines, and I have some pulmonary irregularities.



My wife, Kathreyn, has given me strength in the wake of weakness. My wife has been a rock. I have to remind her sometimes to give a little up so I can lighten her load. I am so thankful to have a wife as wonderful as her. Kathreyn and I have been married for 8 years, March 3. I also have 4 wonderfully bright children Elizabeth-6, Albert-8, Nicolas-9, and Joshua-17, they are the center of my motivation. Also, my wife is pregnant, due in September.

I thank the Good Lord and my family, my father, mother, step father, sister, aunts, uncles, and in laws, and many more that have taken time out of their busy lives to assist in my recovery. They have stood by me strong and bold making sure my recovery has and will be a success.