

## **Introducing our First Recipient of 2023, #32: Chief Warrant Officer-4 Tim Bahr, Marine Veteran of Crandon, WI**

Tim Bahr had an atypical childhood in northern Wisconsin but through adversity, jail time as an eighth grader, and parents who cared, Tim mustered the drive to turn his life around and excel in high school. He always knew he'd enlist: it was a matter of which branch. So when the Marine Recruiter told him he'd never make it and descriptively suggested he leave, Tim was hooked. In 1972 he signed up, graduated high school, was sworn into the Marine Corps with 79 other recruits at Milwaukee County Stadium, and left for bootcamp by the end of May. From there, Tim was meritoriously promoted and sent to the Naval Air Station in Memphis, TN while the rest of his "Brewer Platoon" went to Vietnam...each now memorialized on The Wall.

Tim's next 20 years of active duty read like a military playbook filled with advancement, honors, training and missions that we can't adequately convey here. In 1977 he became the youngest Warrant Officer in the history of the Marine Corps and, just ten years later, was commissioned a Chief Warrant Officer-4 who took the Oath of Office. He'd been attached to over 18 military bases. Officially, and unofficially, he's been on roughly 200 deployments to parts of this world few know. Tim acquired numerous specialty trainings and has taught everything from Water Safety & Survival to Crash, Fire & Rescue to Weapons & Tactics and Aerial Reconnaissance...and all the experiential extras not covered in books. Outside of the classroom he, in return, provided direct leadership to forces on land, in the air and on the sea. He engaged in far more conflict through his years than his documented combat duty in Grenada and Beirut. He more than knows his weaponry, has parachuted and dove, flew both a plane and a helicopter in service and had the mechanical experience to attend to both. In 1992, after 20 years of active duty, a life that kept him away from home 75% of the time, and a stagnant advancement future, Tim chose to retire and was placed on the retired list. And with that, he immediately and deeply buried all he'd seen and done, felt, heard, smelled and tasted.

Tim spent his next few years touring the nation and readjusting to civilian life. He returned to Wisconsin in 1994, settled in Crandon and started a handyman business that he ran for 10 years until he physically couldn't continue. Along the way he found love again and married Cindy, his wife of 26 years, and settled into domestication. Cindy had never seen Tim's military persona; and after seven years of guiding his transition to civilian life, in 2002 it took 30 seconds into one phone call to see her husband transform into the military expert he was.

Unbeknownst to the retired 48-year old, once commissioned and sworn in, he still served at the direct order of The President and can be called upon anytime to report for duty or face court martial. With Post 9/11 plans rapidly forming our Country needed his expert leadership. Within 24 hours Tim packed, bought an updated uniform, and quickly reviewed procedures with his bewildered wife while he waited for orders. Although the plan was delayed, advanced mobilization orders came through again in 2004; and in May, 2005, at age 51, nine years after permanently retiring, Chief Warrant Officer-4 Tim Bahr was driving to Camp Lejeune, ultimately headed for war in Iraq.

He spent three months planning and training his team for combat. Once in Iraq, he was stationed in Al Anbar at Forward Operating Base Habbaniyah for seven months with Team 2, Detachment 2 of the 6th Civil Affairs Group as their Team Commander. With an interpreter and team of six, whose role was to protect him, Tim moved through desolate, insurgent-laden areas to assess damage, interact with village leadership and help the Iraqi people to help themselves. He traveled "outside the wire" over 100 times, had his own vehicle hit by seven different IEDs, and saw more firefight, destruction and death than in his 20 years before. In May, 2006, almost as quickly as he went in, Tim found himself back at Camp LeJeune, just two days after a firefight, and once again "retired".

He returned home to Crandon and although physically back from Iraq, psychologically he was still there. He struggled to interact and communicate. Flashbacks and nightmares affected his mind and activity, and he began to self-isolate. He was short, anxious and angry; and yet, he thought he was fine, “invincible” even. It wasn’t until 2007, when his wife gave him the ultimatum to get help or divorce that he acknowledged the need for help. He connected with a psychiatrist and attended a Veterans retreat that provided him deep insight, perspective and actions that moved him forward. Enthralled with the learning and self-discovery, Tim sought more training and used his experiences to both help himself and support others. Along the way he became a 32nd Degree Free and Accepted Mason, and works within his community to “make good men better”, including himself. He worked four years as a V.A. Peer Support Specialist; and in 2014, wanting more interactions with Veterans in need, Tim resigned and branched out on his own. Volunteering his own time and resources, Tim now provides free, supportive counsel and education for struggling Veterans, and their spouses, to help them move along the rough road he knows all too well.

Yes, this may all read like a movie script; but assuredly this impressive life and list is real...and it has carried a burden that Tim still personally fights every single night, played out in multiple nightmares that result in a daily brain fog. Up until a year ago, his trained service dog comforted him and woke him from nightmares. With her passing, Tim has struggled more and looks forward to training her replacement. His 69 year-old body, although physically fit, is wracked with pain around the clock and Tim depends on non-narcotic medications and weekly acupuncture and massage treatments for relief. The cumulative toll of the concussive hits in Iraq required both hips be replaced in 2013; and although it provided him with much needed relief, it left him believing he would never ride again.

Tim’s passion for riding started as a child who attached lawn mower motors to his pedal bikes. He got serious about riding in the 70’s with the gas crisis and then, riding every day he could, realized what wind therapy did for him. He’d return from a mission and look first for his bike to ride solo; and while living off base, learned to enjoy riding’s camaraderie with squadron members. After retiring the first time, Tim rode across the country for two years, taking in sights, filling his lungs and clearing his mind. He settled back in Crandon, and thinking he’d take a break from riding, gave his bike to his youngest son then borrowed bikes whenever he got the itch. After retiring the second time, increasing pain made riding impossible and he believed new hips required he hang up his riding togs.

In 2021, after eight years of new hip living, Tim finally realized he could sit on a motorcycle again and safely ride it. He bought a 40 year old Gold Wing and quickly felt the thrill come rushing back. As he regained the miles, he felt the burdens he carries for himself, and those he helps, let loose in the wind. Tim’s heart and soul soared, but his artificial hips and age limited key movements, affecting his balance, and he began dropping his bike. And “while neither a rich man nor a poor man”, he was not a man who could afford a trike to stay on the road. Hogs For Heroes believed continued wind therapy in this Veteran’s life would not only make his rough road a little smoother, it would support those he helps along the way; and we decided to put him on a trike. We took Tim shopping for his first Harley at Doc’s Harley-Davidson in Bonduel, WI where they had two awesome Tri Glides to choose from; and when he heard the pipes on the beautiful 2017 Superior Blue ride, he grabbed his heart and smiled. This was the first bike we bought from Docs, and they more than generously shared their enthusiasm with us! Join us for Tim’s **Presentation of Keys Ceremony on Saturday, May 6, 2023 at 12:00 at Doc’s Harley-Davidson in Bonduel, WI.**