

**Meet Recipient #37:
Marine & Army Veteran, Sergeant First Class Earl Beaudry, Jr.
of Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin**

Earl Beaudry, Jr. was born and raised in Milwaukee, WI, with parents that struggled on welfare and eventually divorced. Living with a single mother, Earl learned early on how to work hard to help pay the bills. Interested in work, he took law enforcement courses in high school; and believing he'd benefit from marksmanship and discipline, Earl joined the Marine Corps after graduation. He had no inkling then that the military would, instead, become his life career and passion. At a time of peace, a young Earl couldn't imagine 24 years focused solely on combat filled with hundreds of trainings, multiple deployments and five different combat tours. And as a tough 18 year-old State wrestler, nor did the future Purple Heart Recipient envision himself injured, disabled in his later years and compromised by physical pain, PTSD and a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

Earl left for boot camp in October, 1990 and immediately connected with all the Marines stood for and offered. He chose Infantry for the hands-on training and action and became a Heavy Machine Gunner. He moved into Security Forces, transferred to different bases and spent time in Japan. Along the way he married and had two daughters. Although he loved his time in the Marines, he had another dream to pursue; and after separating in 1995, Earl set his sights on the D.E.A. Unfortunately, without a degree he was ineligible; and without interest in pursuing one, he sought work in the public sector where he struggled to reconnect, interact and find work. Needing to provide for his family, he tried rejoining the Marine Corps; but military cuts at the time curbed reenlistment. Longing to return to service, he followed his then-wife's suggestion he join the Army. In 1996, six months after separating from the Marines, Earl was an Infantryman with the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, KY with a plan to retire from the military. That dedication that would span across the next 19 years and end his marriage two years later, fracture his relationships with his two daughters and destroy two more marriages while still in service.

Earl was an Infantryman to the core and all he did, and all he rose to, centered on combat readiness and assault tactics. In between deployments and tours, he'd be on a base training, drilling and strategizing for combat. And in between all that, he'd be eating, talking, sleeping and breathing combat...whether it was stateside, in a far away country, or in the dangerous midst of conflict and war. It was his life for 24 years and it ingrained a mentality few can understand and a mark few can bear. Even eight years after separation, military lingo still rolls off his tongue, crowds cause concern and emotion is hard to share. With that in mind, we move you through his years to imagine the immersement, pressure and strain deeply imbedded within.

Conflict Deployment #1: 9/1997-12/1997 Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

Earl eventually moved into the 187th Airborne Infantry Regiment (Rakkasans) focused on Air Assault. He deployed to Saudi Arabia, an area of imminent danger at the time, to provide U.S. force protection in the wake of terrorist activity and unrest. Working security detail, Earl conducted patrols and guarded Patriot Missiles. In 1999 Earl deployed to Korea's DMZ where he spent a year in joint combat training and war simulation with South Korea in anticipation of the real, hostile actions of the North. Back at Fort Campbell he took additional combatives training and Ranger leadership initiatives to advance his rank and pay. And then, just like that, 9/11 changed our world and put our nation on a direct path to war...and it was all Earl could focus on.

Combat Deployment #2: 1/2002-4/2002 Shah-i-Kot Valley, Afghanistan

Earl's Regiment deployed to Afghanistan in January, 2002 to prepare for the war's first phase: topple Al-Qaeda and Taliban forces embedded in the snowy, mountainous caves and tunnels. In the early morning hours of March 2, 2002 Operation Anaconda troops were flown in on Chinooks and dropped off at the

Valley's elevation of 8500 feet to provide route blocking positions for enemies fleeing the mountain hideouts after planned airstrikes. Enemy forces were greatly underestimated and teams quickly came under severe and continual firefight and mortar attack. On March 3 Earl directed team members to a different location and assumed the vacated position where, roughly 30 minutes later, a mortar hit just feet from him. The impact littered his shoulders, back and legs with shrapnel and left him unconscious. Later awake and bleeding, he laid in a solar blanket for eight hours amidst firefight and explosive attacks before a helicopter could retrieve him. He was flown to Oman where he underwent surgery to remove and repair what they could; and remained hospitalized there for one month as the quarter sized entry hole in his buttock healed and the TBI he incurred settled. He still has a piece of shrapnel six inches deep in his buttock, lying near his sciatic nerve, and one in his shoulder they could not remove. The explosive force was so strong it blew his front chest plate out of his vest—a commemorative piece he's kept to mark his Purple Heart injury date; and, his helmet was so riddled, it now sits in the Smithsonian Museum on display. None of it, however, was strong enough to prevent Earl from returning to duty.

Combat Deployment #3 3/2003–2/2004, Kuwait through Iraq

Back at Fort Campbell, Earl resumed duties without hesitation and pushed the memories and pain far away because he enjoyed the thrill and action of combat...and he knew another war was coming. In March, 2003 Earl deployed first to Kuwait then progressively invaded Iraq for the next year. Helicopters would drop his Company into new cities where they would enter with force and clear buildings, round up people, engage in firefight, and gather intel. The threat of insurgents and violence was ever pervasive: nothing and nobody could be trusted and death followed in their wake. Once one city was cleared, they'd be resupplied and dropped into another unsecured city with nothing but what they could carry in their rucksack. Resources were sparse and accommodations were minimal, if existent at all. They made their way north, invading cities for others to secure and hold, until they reached Camp Sinjar on the Syrian border where the 101st Airborne had taken an abandoned Iraqi base to set up combat operations. At the time the base was desolate and void of everything but walls, and Earl and his Company then worked to build toilets, showers and burn pits for operational use. And then, one day a year later he was sent back to Fort Campbell where he drilled further for combat. Without time to process what he had been through, he again pushed the memories away to do his job.

Combat Deployment #4 11/2005–11/2006 Baghdad, Iraq

Under the demands of two wars, soldiers were redeploying and strained; but Earl looked forward to another tour. He knew combat and he was good at it. In November, 2005 he deployed back to Iraq for another year and stationed in Baghdad where, as an E7, the Operations Sergeant managed personnel and the paperwork that came with them. Not a fan of paperwork, Earl transferred two months later to FOB Loyalty and, as a Section Leader, joined a personal security detachment for the Brigade Commander. On battlefield circulation they drove through war-torn routes and towns assessing damage, growth and security. The turbulent areas were laden with hidden IEDs, snipers and grenade-throwing insurgents who did their best to inflict damage and injury upon them more than once. Base life proved more comfortable here than any he had before and in his free time Earl lifted weights and worked out to relieve stress. There was little else he could do in the fray of combat and the mortar attacks surrounding him.

Combat Deployment #5 3/2008–3/2009 Logar Province, Afghanistan

After another year at Fort Campbell, our Country required a Battle NCO at FOB Shank in Afghanistan's Logar Province, and Earl answered the call. The base was one of the most heavily rocketed in Afghanistan, and the deployment was perhaps his hardest...only because it required he be indoors, every day, for 12 hour shifts, on operations oversight. In this surveillance and leadership role he monitored videos and cameras, area movements and communications to both assure and direct U.S. forces in the area. Somewhat the "eye in the sky", it was his job to retrieve and relay activity and communicate with those

outside the wire...and Earl wanted nothing more than to be out there with them, embedded in the action and danger. They slept in huts, he again worked out to relieve stress and, lucky enough to have a personal DVD player, he'd watch movies while biding his time in the midst of war raging all around him.

After returning home, Earl transferred to Fort Stewart, GA with the 1st Army where, for the next six years, he trained and mentored Army National Guard soldiers for combat. He flew to various bases teaching combat techniques, sharing personal experiences and drilling scenarios for war. He loved this job in particular because combat was second-nature to him; in fact, it was all he knew...for the last 24 years. Facing minimal advancement options, the physical strains in his damaged shoulders and knees, and the degenerative pains in his neck and back, Earl chose to retire in 2015. He separated with a full VA assessment, ratings and an allowance to help him manage his next life chapters and settled in Georgia, just outside his base, to figure out how to live as a civilian.

Seemingly overnight Earl lost his structure, his way of life, purpose and his family. He rambled through jobs frustrated with inefficiencies and interactions, and with a communication style that didn't translate well, nor a skill set that was easily transferable. Civilian life was foreign and harder than imagined and both his PTSD and TBI affected his ability to process these strange, new situations. He struggled to find purpose; and as he found himself farther removed from service, his PTSD demons began finding him. Nightmares and memories began seeping in, as did anxieties and depression. Rather than further aggravate his mental health with the stress of civilian employment, Earl embraced the stability his military benefits provided and now lives on his fixed income. For the last 24 years Earl had lived in the face of death and developed a myopic view of life and its precarious, fleeting nature. Unsure he'd be around, he'd spent excessively to live in the moment and incurred debt. While he's sought counseling, takes medications and has a service dog to support him through the tough years of reacclimating, it was his Harley that breathed oxygen into his soul and helped him transition best.

Earl's love for riding started at age 10 when his mother saved to buy him the Evel Knievel Ramp Jumper; and he knew then he'd have a bike someday. He'd tried saving but family obligations and deployments made it a hard goal to achieve. Earl finally got his first Harley in 2010 and quickly grasped its therapeutic benefits and found purpose in riding to help others. In 2021, his father became severely ill and Earl decided to return to Wisconsin to put down roots and care for his dad. In order to finance the move and manage his debt, he sold his beloved Harley to come home and hasn't been in a position to afford another bike since. Hogs For Heroes fully believes riding moves a soul; and we believed we could help Earl move further down his healing road by returning wind therapy to his life.

We met Earl for dinner and surprised the stoic, emotionally controlled man with our news. He's a chill guy whose kindness should not be mistaken for weakness and a man of few words. Earl's last bike was a Road King; and while he loved that bike, he was ready for an Infotainment System to help him more comfortably explore his new territory. We sent him home to search dealership options; and the very next day he chose a beautiful red 2021 Street Glide from Bull Falls Harley-Davidson in Rothschild, WI. With only 6,500 miles and a few extras on her, the bike immediately fueled his heart and mind. This was our first time buying a bike from BFHD; and thrilled for the chance to partner with us, they knocked the bike's price below our budget and left some fuel in our tank for the next Bike & Veteran pairing. Unique to Earl's bike, it has been fully sponsored by our friends at Wisconsin's International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 139 whose 2022 fundraising efforts made this bike, #37, possible (as well as #35 this year!). We will be moving that bike down for Earl's **Presentation of Keys Ceremony following the 2023 IUOE Poker Run on June 24, at 5:00 p.m.** at Reel Brothers Harley-Davidson in Mauston, WI. **All are welcome to join the ride and help raise funds for us!**