

ZACH

RECIPIENT OF: BONE AND SKIN ALLOGRAFT



WAR HERO HEALED BY SKIN AND BONE TRANSPLANTS, INSPIRED TO WORK IN TRANSPLANT INDUSTRY

Following 9/11, Zach felt like many other Americans, *“I was tired of watching everything that was happening on TV and thought there had to be a way I could do more to help.”* This inspired him to take his EMT experience and passion for medicine and become a combat medic in the army.

After all the necessary training, Zach was sent overseas to the Korengal Valley, in the Kunar Province in Afghanistan. Bordering Pakistan and China, in 2007 the Kunar Province was a mix of terrorist cells, including Al-Qaida, all vying for control. This made it site of some of the heaviest fighting in the Afghan War. Twelve months into his deployment and only a few weeks from his return home, Zach was on patrol when his platoon came under fire from enemy insurgents.

During the attack, one of Zach’s friends had his leg blown off by a rocket propelled grenade and Zach crawled out into an unprotected area, while being fired upon, to bring his friend to safety. While pulling the wounded soldier back behind cover, unbeknownst to him, Zach was shot. He called for a military evacuation helicopter, while stopping the bleeding with a tourniquet and starting an IV on his wounded comrade. Another soldier pointed out blood on Zach’s pant leg and asked him if it was his. Zach said, *“I didn’t feel anything until then. But as soon as I saw it, I felt the pain and it was excruciating.”* He called the medical evacuation helicopter again and told them to bring a replacement medic. About ten minutes later, the

helicopter arrived and both he and his friend were taken for further medical treatment.

Zach had been shot in the upper hamstring of his left leg. The bullet had ricocheted off the ground, entered his leg and broke off a fragment of his femur. The entry wound was about the size of a nickel and the exit wound was the size of an apple. Had he been hit with the full bullet, which was a 7.62 from either an AK-47 or a Dragunov sniper rifle, his entire femur would have been shattered.



Zach was moved to a military hospital in Frankfurt, Germany. While there, he received a bone allograft to fill the void left in his femur and a skin graft to cover the exit wound (the entrance wound was stitched shut), as well as donated blood.

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After five months in Frankfort, Zach returned to Fort Hood (where he was initially trained) and was honorably discharged. *“I felt sad about the discharge because I wasn’t ready, and I like to finish things I start...I was mostly concerned for my men,”* Zach said.

Today his leg has not affected his active lifestyle in Colorado where he enjoys skiing, hiking and photography. In fact, the only problem Zach has with his leg is soreness when it is cold. Inspired by his experience with life-saving, donated human tissue, after returning home Zach first got a job with the Rocky Mountain Lion’s Eye Bank, recovering eyes from deceased

donors. Now he works for AlloSource, a non-profit tissue bank, where he processes the gift of life from deceased tissue donors – the same type of tissue that saved his leg years ago. He is also studying radiology and looks forward to continuing to impact lives in a positive way.
