

A Wounded Warrior Returns to Work

A brain injury in Afghanistan left him with memory loss and post-traumatic stress disorder. But other wounded veterans helped him land a job. **AS TOLD TO JOHN MILEY**

WHY DID YOU ENLIST IN THE ARMY? I wanted the educational opportunities the military offers. I've watched my parents serve entire careers in the military and go through college in the process. I saw life can be much easier with an education.

WHEN DID YOUR AFGHAN TOUR START? I got a week and a half's notice to pack and leave on a plane the day after Thanksgiving 2008.

WHAT DID YOU DO THERE? Our mission was to travel the roads, find IEDs and blow them up. I was a mile and a half from the Pakistan border—at that time, the hottest region of Afghanistan.

HOW WERE YOU INJURED? A rocket landed 10 feet from where I was standing, blew me off my feet and knocked me out. After that, people noticed a rapid decline in my job performance. I was forgetting things and having trouble concentrating.

WHAT WAS IT LIKE BEING HOME AFTER YOUR MEDICAL DISCHARGE? I hated it. All I wanted to do was go back to Afghanistan. I wasn't being proactive. I was angry. I was injured. I couldn't articulate my thoughts, and I had no sense of control over anything.

HOW DID THINGS CHANGE? I was introduced to the Wounded Warrior Project, for severely wounded veterans. I didn't reach out to them at first because of my pride. They got in touch with me for a fishing trip. I went and felt better afterward. That motivated me to do more. If it were not for the Project, I can't say that I would be alive today.

HOW DID YOUR JOB AT HEWLETT-PACKARD COME ABOUT? I was laid off from another job because of missing too much time for hospital appointments. I contacted the Project and was hooked up with Warriors to Work, a division of WWP. Within two weeks, I landed a job at HP doing network evaluations. Now I'm a senior network engineer.

WHAT'S THE JOB LIKE? Internet-technology work can be cut-throat, but there's none of that at HP. We work together to meet the common goal of serving the customer. I have the camaraderie here that I had in Afghanistan. HP has provided training and given me time to attend my VA appointments, and the opportunities to grow are awesome. ■



■ ERIC WOLFE, 29, GRADUATED FROM LIBERTY UNIVERSITY IN 2008 AND IS NOW EARNING HIS MASTER'S DEGREE THERE IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY. THE GI BILL HAS HELPED PAY FOR HIS EDUCATION.