

**Howard Heard, Sr.
Veteran**

**Mike Russert and Wayne Clark
Interviewers**

**Interview on August 23, 2006 at 10:00
Buffalo New York**

Q: What is your full name, date of birth and birth place?

HH: My full name is Howard Heard, Sr. I was born in buffalo NY, and my birthday is 12/05/66

Q: What was your educational background prior to entering the service?

HH: High school

Q: What high school did you go to?

HH: Grover Cleveland high school.

Q: What branch of service did you serve in?

HH: U.S Army

Q: Are you enlisted?

HH: Yes.

Q: Why did you decide to enlist?

HH: My mother told me it was time straight out of high school, and it was something I wanted to do.

Q: Why did you pick the army?

HH: It was more skillful, more challenges, I didn't want to be in the navy.

Q: When did you enter the service?

HH: July 2, 1984

Q: Where did you enter? Buffalo?

HH: Buffalo yes

Q: Where did you go for you basic?

HH: Fordland wood Missouri

Q: How did you like basic?

HH: Loved it, loved it, loved being a combat engineer, loved explosives, that's my job ballistics expert.

Q: How long was your basic training at Lennard void?

HH: It had to be 14 months

Q: You must have gone for additional training somewhere else, your demolition training

HH: No all of it was there

Q: What was your numerical designation was that?

HH: It was just an upgrade, it just makes sure you know what you're doing with your explosions and stuff. Made sure that you could do what you had to do, like throw grenades.

Q: Was there an MOS number for that?

HH: It used to be 1212B10, that is my combat number.

Q: Why did you like working with the explosions so much?

HH: I didn't want to be a clerk, I didn't want to be a medic that was a treat I passed, and demolition was the highest on pay so I took that. I wanted to be off with the troops. I liked that kind of direction.

Q: What kind of explosives did you work with?

HH: TNT, dynamite, claymore mines, booby traps, just all kinds of explosives. Some things that we don't use any more, like claymore mines we don't use anymore.

Q: What about Bangalore torpedoes?

HH: Bangalore, yeah we use Bangalore's, so many explosives out there. We still use the Bangalore.

Q: After you left Leonard Wood where you assigned to a unit?

HH: Yes, inken (?) infantry outlook, yeah that was with the First Army Division. That was the 130th unit out of Germany. 130th engineers.

Q: When did you go to Germany?

HH: 1992

Q: Where about in Germany

HH: Frankford, I still remember the 10th Mountain in Fort Drum that usually what I went down.

Q: So are you still with them?

HH: right, yes.

Q: Are you out of the Connecticut stride or anything?

HH: Right, I didn't go to Iraq with mountain resign, I ended up being with the brick red one in 2004.

Q: How long where you there for?

HH: 18 mouths

Q: Can you talk about you time there?

HH: Yeah sure, it was an experiment. I was not the person who stayed inside the wire. I was the person who went outside that wire with the bag guys. We fell into brick red one, general Batista had just retired. He was my big boss at the time. It was an experiment, I

wasn't shocked when I got the email saying that I was activated. I knew ever since the gulf war time have changed, thirty of use there thirty of use back. That was a main goal and we did that. We almost lost easily 15 guys including myself, but we just lucky. A couple of road side bombs went off and I've see worse and worse RPGs, you just don't know what you enemy has. It was an experience. Only one road side bomb didn't go off when we went by that we found. That was a big experience.

Q: What kind of weapons did you carry?

HH: I was issued a brand new m4 right out of the box the 10th Mountain gave me right before I went to Iraq. Some of use good newer weapons which was nice. Very nice. M4 that what I had

Q: Did you have to clean it a lot with the sand?

HH: Yeah, a sergeant pull me aside and said that your weapon looks better than mine. I said your weapon is only as good as you clean it. I wanted it to be clean. I remember sitting on an IOD in a sand storm, couldn't see anything in front of you for 2 hours. Waiting for DOD to disarm a bomb, that another thing you know. It had good points and bad point. We had to remodify that whole fob after we took over for the fourth id. That's where we would leave. It was different.

Q: In what ways?

HH: You hear so many stories and you watch the T.V. and it's like when you get there it happening. It's totally different when your there, you can see a central front row seat. When you walk around you hear explosions but you know where there coming from. Are you was to patrol around our camp. You know we patrolled back and forth. We even had a suicide bomber one time try to run into the compound. We shot him up and killed him, he was on his way to Bagdad but we were like 40miles away from Bagdad.

Q: You were a sergeant E5?

HH: Yes

Q: Did you ever get acclimated to the heat?

HH: I wasn't bothered by the heat, it got to 160. They give use a big bottles of water and Gatorade packets.

Q: Did you use those camel backs?

HH: Some guys did but that was just more weight to carry, you had the big bullet proof vest that you had to carry.

Q: Did you wear the vest all the time?

HH: Yes that was standard Big Red One was very strict. Other places like you go to [unclear], they had no hats on, no vests. But everyone knew you were from the big red one because you had your helmet on you had your vest on. And that was big red ones standard you had to wear them all the time. They didn't let you get away with that, it's like getting caught with your pants down. I told my guys that you got two weeks off don't slack off just keep it going. We got one guy out there who didn't have his stuff one and got killed by an explosive. I told my guys that it can always happen, you just never know.

You had to do what you had to do to get home, at that point. Told my guys that you got two weeks left, let's keep it going. Matter of fact a man who was one day from going home got mortared and he got killed and he did have any of his things on. That I told the guys you see what happens, you just never know. You just can't let you guard down. You just have to stay focused. That was there focus.

Q: What were your mission most of the time?

HH: Mostly to make sure that everyone was quite at camp, you have convoys going up and down the road. You might just pick up some dinner, go get some chow for the guys. You get to go up the road and that come back. That was mostly it. But we did do a couple raids, that was scary I will admit that. You just never know where there coming from, those domes are huge. So that was a little shaky

Q: What about the civilian population, how did they respond to you?

HH: Some of them are nice and some would like to see you under dirt. But you catch on, the play role play, I've caught a couple playing roll play at night time. So we take them away. Some of them are very nice people, and some you just can't trust. the Shiites and Sunnis don't get along, we see that. That's a firm battle, they don't get along with each other.

Q: Do you think the over all of the rogue population wanted you guys over there?

HH: I feel like a lot of people wanted us there, I had a couple of people say that they were going to hate when we leave. I would say that it's fifty-fifty at the most.

Q: Did you get any injuries of wounds?

HH: Yes, in April, 2004 we got run off the road by the bad guys. They thought my leg was broken.

Q: What do you mean that you got run off the road?

HH: my driver had night vision goggles, and coming back there was one car that ram use off the road. They pulled me out of the turret, it was laying out the side. My knee when slamming into the door, and they thought my leg was broken. I was in the hospital for a couple of weeks and then when back to the line again.

Q: Did you receive a purple heart?

HH: No, I think you had to get scrap metal. My understanding was scrap metal.

Q: Did you have to do any modifications to your vehicles?

HH: Yes.

Q: What did you have to do to your vehicles?

HH: We armored them early in the morning, going into Kuwait. We put heavy armor on the doors. We had to do that, we were the second wave going in.

Q: How about your vest, do you think that they were sufficient?

HH: I think they were, I had an extra-large one on. The bigger they are the more bullets they can stop. I think that they worked, they were pretty good vests.

Q: Was they a lot of closeness in your unit?

HH: We'll there were times when morel was down, but then they were times that it was good. But overall we stuck together here as a family, some guys would go off the wire for whatever reason. But 15 of use did over one hundred missions. We were constantly gone all the time. My first mission with the big red one I went off the wire with another sergeant. We used to get little earthquakes at around two o'clock in the morning.

Q: Did you ever where night vision?

HH: Yes, we had night vision goggles on.

Q: What was your officers like for the most part?

HH: my officer was good, he never when off the wire. He was mostly in a tock, so he told use where we were going. Tank commander when off the wire, general when off the wire, but overall they were good.

Q: Did you have to rely on you compass for travel or did you know where you were going?

HH: We had a blue sports tracker, it's like a computer on the Humvee. It tells you every place that you are at. So we didn't need a compass.

Q: Most of the missions you when out in a vehicle?

HH: Yes, we would roll up with at least four or more, with a least four guys in a vehicle, sometimes five. Usually we had the gunner, the T.C, the driver and one guy sitting in the back. We would change our days up. We would work days one week than nights another. We would flip flop to keep them off balance.

The bad guys can tell if you a new bunch. But if you knew your stuff than they didn't mess with you. They would pick you out if you didn't know what you were doing.

Q: If you were in a vehicle did you keep a distance between each of them?

HH: 15 meters to 100 meters is standard in a row. If a bomb when off you don't want the whole fleet to get affected.

Q: Was the road side bomb the thing you feared the most?

HH: Yes, well at first they were putting on the side, than they started to put them in the middle. They got a little smarter as time when on.

Q: What about snipers?

HH: They had snipers there, but we had our own snipers there. I remember when we invaded Felisha, we were stressed then. We had one guy who was shot in the armpit and died. We lost 3 guys they said we were going to lose thirty. Three guys is too many but three is not bad.

Q: What about time off.

HH: Time off, I wasn't a phone person, I didn't call my mother once a week. Some guys called every single day calling their girlfriends. I told my girlfriend ill call when I get a chance to call. When someone got killed they shut the phones off and the computers.

Some guys didn't like it, but it was respect for the man who died. Down time was good mostly slept.

Q: Was there an R&R for you guys?

HH: Yes I got two, little after I got hurt I when to a place called Lake Docon. I was the first wave to ever go there. It was a retreat with a swimming pool. We had a four day pass it was a nice time. I got both, four day pass and R&R. I got a chance to go home. I when through Atlanta.

Q: How was it there?

HH: You knew that you had ten days so I kept my head in the ball game so I can do my time and then go home. But it was ok. There was a unit I think it was the 86 airborne the four of July they were in the sky and they had to turn the plane around and go back. I felt bad for those guys. It happen to my friend.

Q: Couldn't be good for moral.

HH: No, but they gave them an extra 1000 dollars a year, but it's not all about the money.

Q: How dangerous was it for civilian employers? Where they any more dangerous than military employees?

HH: If you were on a military base like [unclear], they held of 20,000 civilians on that base. It depends where you work. It varies, couple got their heads chopped off. But like I said it where you are. Don't wonder off.

Q: How do you think being over there had effected your life?

HH: Well it took me 19 and a half to go to war. I look at my son now and he is about to turn 19. I tell you that I am blessed, I look at one way here I should have been here right now. I look another way, I probably could have lost a limb. But I came back will all of my limbs. You're coming back, there's only two ways that you're coming back. You can come back in a box, you can come back missing limbs, or you can come back with everything you brought.

Q: So you're still in the guard now?

HH: Yes, but I'm disabled now. I finally had surgery, and when thought therapy yesterday. Now have surgery scheduled for June 23 this year. When home and did therapy for a whole year and it didn't work.

Q: Was this from the accident?

HH: Yes, I had no blood flow in the right side of my left knee. Only had blood going to the right. I got lucky that I didn't lose my leg, the doctor told me that it going to take an hour and forty minutes.

Q: Well alright thank you so much for your interview.