

# Wounded Warriors in Action

## Camp Hackett November 2010

My name is Lonnie Young. I am a former Sergeant of the United States Marine Corps based out of Norfolk, VA with Marine Forces Atlantic. Our unit was a non-deployable unit: so that means if any of us deployed, it was by ourselves and we would join other units. I was the type of Marine that if any deployments came up, I was raising my hand to volunteer. I loved to travel the world, and this was my way of doing it. Another deployment came available in late December of 2003 to Baghdad, Iraq. Being me, I raised my hand and was chosen for this mission. Once on the ground in Iraq, I was given two choices. One was to sit behind a desk and the other was to be out on the road fighting the enemy. I chose to be Gung-ho and go fight the bad guys. I soon found myself on the front lines.

On April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2004, I was wounded in combat while serving in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. My team was at the Spanish CPA in An Najaf, Iraq when it came under attack. The base was attacked by an approximate force of 700-800 enemy militants of the Al-Mahdi Army. This militia was led by Muqtada al-Sadr. While trying to defend the base, I was shot in my left shoulder and hit by a piece of shrapnel from another bullet in my left cheek. The bullet tore across my back and stopped just short of my spine.

At that time, I was a Corporal and in my third year as a Marine. This wasn't my first fire fight, but was by far the largest. The battle in An Najaf lasted almost 2 weeks, but I was air lifted out on the first day. After being injured, I began my long road of recovery. I was sent home for 30 days to rest and recover. After the 30 days, I was shipped back to Iraq to finish out my tour. I truly began to feel the effects of war when I stepped foot back on Iraqi soil. The mental anguish was enough to bring any man down. I stood strong, held my head high, and finished out my tour without sustaining any more injuries. Once my tour was complete, I returned back to my unit in Norfolk, VA. A few short months later, my contract ended in late December of 2004.

Today, after many trips to the Veterans Administration for physical and mental therapy, I am back in college studying to become a pharmacist. I have now moved back to my home town of Dry Ridge, KY. It wasn't an easy move: things are so different from when I lived here before I joined the Marines. Maybe it's because I see things differently now. Not only has the town changed, but the people have changed as well. A few of my friends that I went to school with have passed away, a few hooked on drugs, and others are now married with their own families. It was a very hard adjustment coming back home.

While taking a college course on public speaking, I had to choose a non-profit organization to give a speech about. This is when I came across Wounded Warriors in



Action. I have a passion about helping other veterans, and this was right up my alley. After doing my college work, I filled out an application on their website. Time went on, and I had forgotten about filling out that application until one day I get a phone call. On the other end of the phone was John McDaniel, founder of Wounded Warriors in Action. He explained to me that I had been selected to go on one of the hunts that they offer. It was a chance to go on an all expense paid hunting trip. I felt like I had just won the lottery! I had dreamed since I was a kid about going out west to hunt. After a few days of hard thought, I chose to go to Camp Hackett in Wisconsin to do a combo hunt for whitetail deer, roughed grouse, and fishing for muskie.

Day #1 November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2010

I have spent the last four days getting my gear together and double checking that I have everything. From the looks of my bags, it looks like I am moving instead of going hunting! I am up out of bed at 4:00 am. I hardly slept at all last night. I am like a kid the night before opening day of deer season; too excited to sleep! I arrived at the Cincinnati airport at 5:45am. I was going to check in all 3 bags, but one was small enough to use as a carry on. I just happened to forget about having my knife and a couple rifle rounds in my hunting pouch from the previous year's hunting season. Well, I had my hunting pouch inside my carryon bag. As my bag passed through the x-ray machine, I was asked to step aside by security. I lost my knife and 2 .243 rounds to TSA Security and was questioned thoroughly about why I had them. It was quite an embarrassing and awkward moment. I am finally on the plane and in the air. I left Cincinnati and had a layover in Minnesota. The lay over was 3 grueling hours long. I arrived in Rhinelander, WI at 12:30.

2:30pm, now in the truck with John and on the road to Camp Hackett. We made a quick pit stop at Maynard's Lumber and picked up 3 more ladder stands. Back on the road again... The drive took about 45 minutes till we made it to camp. Along the way there, John and I talked and I watch intently out the window at the passing forests and noticed the lack of houses. It seemed like the houses were spread out five to ten miles apart! I was traveling into heaven! I couldn't help but day dream about the next few days.

Once at camp, I met the guys, made small talk, and broke out my bow. I'm no stranger to shooting my bow at a target range. I shoot 3-D archery competition in the summer and hunt the rest of the year. John requires that all hunters qualify with their bow before they hit the stands. The qualification score was two out of three shots at each preset yardage must be in the kill zone. There were four deer targets set up, one at 15 yards, 20 yards, 30 yards, and 40 yards. You must pass each yardage to move up to the further distance target. If you failed at one yardage, you had to start back over at the 15 yard target and move back up. I made it to the 40 yard target on my first go and passed the qualification tests with flying colors.

Night seemed to fall upon us very quickly. We all loaded up and went back to town. We drove to a small town called Phillips, WI. We made a quick stop at Ross's Sporting goods and got all of our hunting permits. It is amazing to me that I have yet to break out my wallet for anything. I am living the life of a king at this moment! We left the store and made a short walk up the street to Meisters sports pub. The owner, Steve Koch, served us our dinner. I had a smothered sirloin sandwich and fries. My meal was complemented with the freshest Makers Mark and Coke I had ever had. I had to have a taste of Kentucky while I was there. Ha!



We loaded up in the trucks and headed back to camp. On the trip back, we saw a countless number of deer in the fields by the road. Every place the headlights shown, there were glowing eyes. Before settling in for the night, we heard some motivational speeches from John and sorted out the sleeping arrangements. During the middle of the night, I was abruptly awoken from the make shift bed falling in the middle. After catching my senses, I went outside for a smoke in the darkness of the night and I heard the wolves howling! It was enough to make my hair stand on end... Their howls were absolutely beautiful though. That was the first time I had ever heard them. I am use to the short yips and screeching howls of the coyotes back in Kentucky.

Day #2 November 5<sup>th</sup>, 2010

Reveille was at 0500. That's 5:00am in civilian time. We are all military men here. There is a special bond we have for each other, an unspoken vow to each of us that we are brothers even though we just met. That is one thing that the military does to a person. Each person to your left and right are your brothers and sisters. I wouldn't hesitate one second to lay down my life still for these men, as I am sure they would do the same for me. We all

share a similar background and have fought in foreign wars. All of us here are Purple Heart Veterans except for John.

John fixed up some fresh coffee and cream of wheat. This was my first taste of cream of wheat. It was a little bland, but I spiced it up with some grape jelly and crammed it down my throat. I wasn't in it for the taste, but more for fueling today's hunt! We loaded up the Bad Boy Buggie and set out at 0605. I am the first to be dropped off at their stand. The stand I was hunting this morning was called Ranger Stand. I got settled into my stand and waited on daylight.

It's cold! I can now see why it is called Ranger stand. I'm setting in this behemoth of a stand on top of a small ridge line, overlooking the end of a slight draw, and I can see forever. If any deer moves in these woods, I will definitely see them. The wind is cutting through my clothes! The sun has finally popped up over the horizon. There were a few clouds so it took a little extra time to get some direct sunlight on me. It showed its self at 0807.

0815, I'm freezing my ass off! The wind has picked up. The north wind is a force not to be reckoned with. The animals don't seem to be very active. I have so far seen a crow and a grouse.

It's now 1000 hours. I'm still cold, but not near as bad. I've seen five squirrels, but no deer yet. 1045 hours: the guys come by and pick me up. Only Jake saw a yearling doe come. He claimed that she came running through the woods like she was being chased. This was a good sign. Maybe the bucks are starting the rut and chasing does. After the morning hunt, we set out for some grouse. It wasn't long and I found myself in a thicket of trees that only a snake could get through! To the natives, it's called a papule stand. These trees only grow about ten feet tall, but they are just as wide as they are tall.

As they grow, their branches interlock with the tree next to it, making it almost impossible to get through. As we trudged through, I saw one deer bed after another. If I was a deer, I would definitely sleep here. Nothing can get to you very quickly, and and wouldn't have the slightest chance of doing it quietly. We hunted for a couple hours and jumped one bird. I missed...

For the evening hunt, I am in the stand called the lodge. I thought the stand I was in this morning was big, but this guy was huge! It's nestled in between two large pine trees. It overlooks a small food plot. The food plot is nothing but grass now. The dry weather didn't allow the other plants there to grow like they should have. I drew the doe tag for tonight. John strictly follows quality deer management here at Camp Hackett. I'm hoping to lay some meat on the ground tonight! After setting in the stand all evening, I saw nothing but a little squirrel and a grouse. The wind today must have the deer bedded down.



Back at camp, Bob brought his famous chili for us. Not sure who it was famous to, but that's what it was called. After the main course of chili, our dessert, pumpkin cake, was overwhelmingly delicious. We spent the night telling stories of hunting and fishing over a couple ice cold beers. We have a small camp fire going. While standing by the fire, I looked at the sky to see more stars than I have ever seen before. You can actually see the smudged lights of what I presume to be the Milky Way. The North Star dominates the sky. It is definitely an astronomer's paradise. The stars appear to be so close that it seems like I could climb a tree and grab one! It is by far a breath taking sight. Well, it's getting late and I'm still stuffed from dinner, my stomach feels like it's ready to pop. I am going to be like an old hound dog now that I have my belly full. I am going to go crawl up in a ball and sleep the night away.

#### Day#3

Last night, I wound up falling asleep on the couch around 2030 hours. At about 2130 hours, the guys woke me up and helped me assemble my rack; which during the day is the kitchen table. I slept pretty good last night. This morning, I am headed back to "The

Lodge". John claims that this is where most of the bucks have been captured on the trail cam. Up at 0500 hours (no alarm clock needed again), ate chow, hit the head, and we're off again. John and Josh are off to the far end of the property for a day long hunt. To get there, it entails about a 15 minute ride on the Bad Boy Buggie, then don the chest waders, wade the Jump River, and another 10 minute hike after catching the waders. They have a lunch packed, climber tree stands, Garmin GPS's, and safety gear. This is definitely a "real man's hunt". Hopefully today someone will harvest one of these North



### Woods Whitetails!

Ok, I'm in my stand: it's 0645 and the sun is just now starting to lighten up the horizon. This morning, the wind is calm and it's said to be 28 degrees. I can already hear deer rustling in the leaves. Today, I am trying out "The Heater Body Suit." It looks like a giant pair of coveralls with no arm holes. Or I guess you could call it a sleeping bag with leggings. I waited until I started to chill and then I put it on. Fifteen minutes in the suit and I'm nice and toasty. The suit goes over everything, including your boots. My feet are warm as ever now. 45 minutes have gone by, it is daylight now and I am taking off my jacket. I was starting to sweat! The greatest advantage that I have noticed about this suit is when I need to make a shot; I can drop it off my shoulders and make a shot without having to worry about the bow string hitting my sleeves. Tom Schneider, you have definitely made an excellent piece of gear that every

hunter should take to the woods with them. It not only keeps you warm, but it could also be used in an emergency in cold weather. It is absolutely amazing how fast it warms you up. By the way, there are no batteries required. It strictly works off your own body heat. There are extra booties that I put on as well. I had to take them back off. My feet were on fire! Maybe I should have taken my boots off?? I would have killed to have this suit yesterday! Do I really have to give it back? This is one piece of gear that I am going to invest in when I get back home.

End of the morning hunt, once again no deer. I stayed nice and toasty though! I'm wondering if the weather has made the deer go nocturnal. We are all back at camp to gear up and go out again. One Warrior had to leave due to his wife being sick. After all the hard work and planning, I couldn't help but feel disappointed for him. You never know when that trophy of a lifetime is going to walk by and a trip like this isn't something that you happen upon every day...

I am in the stand again. This time, I am at the very back of the property. It's a small lock on stand that's very uncomfortable, but looks to be in a great location. Jake has captured a nice 12 pointer on the trail cam twice in the past week. Hopefully, he comes through tonight! After a couple hours, I had to get down. Between having to hold on to the stand being rocked from the wind and my back aching from the tree not allowing a straight posture, I was wore out. About an hour before dark, I got back up in the stand.

I could hear deer running all over back in the tag swamp. I heard antlers crash, snorts, and hooves stomping all over. My adrenalin was pumping! I watched diligently until I heard the unmistakable sound of a deer walking towards me. I grabbed my bow and watched. It was a massive doe. I could see her walking through the papule stands. She finally made her way to the edge of the 4-wheeler path. I drew back my bow and grunted to stop her. She stood frozen like a statue. "30 yards exactly", I thought to myself. I settled my 30 yard pin right in the kill zone. My heart was pounding, my arms were shaking, and all that stood in my way of harvesting a nice mature Wisconsin doe was the trigger on my Scott release. I released the arrow... What seemed to be in slow motion, I watched the arrow fly through the air and then disappear into the doe's side. I heard the all too familiar "thud" and she whirled around. She made a sound that resembled having the wind knocked out of her.



I seen blood trickling down her side and I had a bad feeling come over me. I knew then that I had hit her high. I sat quietly in my stand for about 20 minutes. It was starting to get dark, so I climbed down out of my stand. I searched and searched for my arrow to no avail. I went back to camp and got some help. John and Jake joined me in the search, but we never found the first drop of blood or my arrow. I was quite disappointed, but that happens. From previous research and experience, I knew that a deer that is hit high will not drop blood for a while and most of the time, they will live. Oh well, back to camp...

We all decided to go into town and grab some chow. We went back to Meisters. I was ready to try the Monster Meister burger! This thing is enormous! We talked to a few of the locals there and nobody was seeing any deer. After stuffing our guts, we headed back to camp to catch some shut eye. Once again, on our way back, the fields were full of deer. There are not too many fields around, but where there is cultivated land, there were deer grazing.

#### Day #4

We all slept in this morning. The time went back an hour last night, so we slept in 2 hours later than the day before. It was some much needed sleep. Well, we are up for breakfast and then headed out for a day of fishing. We stopped and ate breakfast at a little diner in the town of Bruce, Wisconsin. The people were very friendly and our waitress was outstanding. For a moment, it seemed like we had traveled 3 states south to get some "southern hospitality", well, until I walked back outside in the crisp air....

Now it's off to the Chippewa River. We dropped the trucks in one location, then went about six miles up river. The boats we were in kind of resembled a canoe, but bigger. The driver of the boat I was in was fishing guide Tim Fischer. He sat in the center of the boat, manning two large oars. At the front and back of the boat were two platforms that braced our legs as we stood up. Our target for the day was Muskie. Our tackle was fly rods. If I hadn't seen the pictures of these guys catching Muskie on fly rods, I would have been very skeptical!

Jake caught the first fish. It was a small northern pike measuring about 32" long. It was small for a Muskie, but a trophy in my eyes! No other action was seen till lunch. We made a stop half way of our trip and the guides had fried potatoes, onion rings, walleye, and northern pike. It was an astounding meal! Tim, my guide, broke out a new fly rod and was making a couple practice casts with it when he hooked into a huge fish. He handed the rod to me and I was in for a

fight! I worked the fish back to the boat. It was a 40" Muskie! I am an avid fisherman back home, but this was by far the largest fish of the year for me. My heart was pounding and I had a smile from ear to ear.



After lunch we all piled back into the boats and casted off again. Before we got back on our way, Jake made a cast and hooked a hog of a fish. Enduring about a 5 minute fight, the Muskie was netted. Tom, Jake's guide lifted up a 46" Muskie from the tea colored water of the Chippewa River. It was a sight! Wow, what a fish! We floated on down the river and just past a set of rapids; I hooked a Muskie right at the boat. It scared the crap out of me! This fish nailed my lure right on top of the water five feet away. I fought him for a short time before Tim was able to grab him. This Muskie was about 32". Not a full grown Muskie, but a trophy that will be in my memory the rest of my life. We finished out our float; no other fish were caught. Back at the boat ramp, we loaded up, went and got the other trucks, and now we're off to Tom's bar to grab a couple drinks. The Chippewa River will forever be a fond memory for me! I can only hope that I can do it again someday...

On the road, we seen a couple really nice bucks in the fields. I was green with envy! We are at Old Bogies Bar. I tried two different kinds of beer, one was called the Angry Minnow and the other was Leinenkugel's Honey Leight. I played a round of pool with John. I'm not very good at pool anymore, so John whooped up on me pretty bad. It felt good to sit down and relax; and what better company to

have than fellow veterans of the US Military. There were three main topics of discussion: fishing, hunting, and war stories. What else is there to talk about? Ha! We all had a couple too many drinks and loaded up for the hour long drive back to camp. Well, the drivers, Jake and John drank modestly due to having to drive. Back at camp, it became quiet very quickly as we all mounted up in our racks and slipped off into dream world.

## Day #5

It is the last day in camp. I'm up once more at the crack of dawn. Sometimes I really hate my biological alarm clock! I'm packing up and dreading leaving camp. I originally thought that my flight left at 2:00pm, but after double checking my flight itinerary, I fly out at 1:00pm. This brought even more sorrow to my weary mind. I am still a little hung over, but a Mountain Dew and a couple smokes straightened me right up. I sat outside reminiscing about my time at Camp Hackett. If only I had a few more days...

It doesn't take long and everyone else comes crawling out of their racks. That's one thing about military men and women; we never really get out of the habit of being the first ones up and the last to bed. We work hard and we play even harder. My time here has also reminded me of the comradery that we shared in the military. That is one thing that I miss. I knew the day that I arrived in camp that each one of these guys standing to my left and right were my brothers. It's a feeling that is hard to explain, but no doubt the feeling is there. Over these past few days, I have come to know each and every man here. These guys will definitely never be forgotten. We spent the morning cleaning up camp and reminiscing of

other hunts. John had to run into town, so Jake, Josh, and I passed time by shooting a couple rounds and talking like old friends. I played with the dogs, Grizzly and Garby for almost an hour. They are two awesome bird dogs that live to play fetch and hunt birds.



I am on the road again, this time to the airport. Jake is driving me to Rhinelander, WI to catch my flight out. Once again TSA Security got me! I had a bottle of liquid Scent Away soap in my carry on bag. They took it... AHH!!! That makes me mad. But, oh well, my fault. They are just doing their job in trying to keep us safe. Anyways, I am on the plane and headed to Minneapolis for a connector flight.

I tried to read a book during my flight, but at that point I realized how tired I was. I dozed off not long after takeoff. I got a much needed power nap. After we landed, I had to run to catch my next flight. I had ten minutes. I made it just in time. I am back in the air again: I was wide awake on this trip. It went by kind of slow, but I entertained the guy next to me with a couple war stories and of course about my weekend at Camp Hackett. I believe the pilot of our plane was fresh out of the military. He put the plane down like he would a fighter jet on an aircraft carrier. It was a pretty rough landing, but we made it. It was a short taxi and we were off to luggage claim. The walk to the front of the airport seemed never ending. I think it was a little over a mile. Well, I have my stuff and now for the last trip. The drive to my house...

When I walked into my home, I was attacked by my dog with obsessive licking and tail lashes. He was overwhelmingly happy that I was home! I can't help but set here in deep thought: not only about my recent experiences, but what's coming next. I wonder if I will be lucky enough to do it again next year. I don't mean to sound selfish, but I would not turn down the opportunity to go back to Camp Hackett. Even though I did not kill a deer or see much action with the grouse, it was a blast! There was a lot more to this trip than just hunting. It was a chance not only for me, but for everybody else to escape the real world for a few days. It was a chance to be around other veterans that had gone through some of the same things that I have. We stayed busy enough in relaxing activities that we were all afforded the opportunity to let down our guard and just relax. A million thanks go out to the Wounded Warriors in Action program and its founder John McDaniel for having me out on a very special trip! You will never be forgotten John!

"Hardships are quickly forgotten. Intense heat, bitter cold, rain and snow, fatigue, and luckless hunting fade quickly into memories of great fellowship, thoughts of beautiful country, pleasant camps, and happy campfires."

Fred Bear 1902-1988