



# STEVE BOHN

## Wounded Warrior Project Gave Me My Life Back

Specialist Steve Bohn smiles and says, “I grew up surrounded by witches.”

He’s talking specifically of Salem, Massachusetts – calling it “the Halloween capital of the world.” Steve says it was a fun place to grow up, but sometimes feels he had to mature too soon.

“I had to leave Salem High School my senior year with only three credits left to graduate,” Steve recalls. “I got a full time job to help with bills – working as a cook for Whole Foods Market.”

Cooking was Steve’s first love. He especially enjoyed jambalaya, gumbo, and other Cajun cuisine. And he dreamed of one day opening his own restaurant, jokingly calling it “Chef Boyar-Steve’s.”

However, fate had a different idea for Steve.

“I was in ninth grade when 9/11 happened,” he explains. “It triggered an emotion of patriotism in me that I can’t explain. And in 2006, a local soldier was killed in Iraq, and I went to his funeral. I realized then that I wanted to serve; I wanted to be a part of something bigger than myself.”

Steve joined the Army in June 2007 and was assigned to the 101st Airborne Division, 1/506th Infantry Regiment.

“I was deployed to Afghanistan in March 2008, and it was like visiting another planet. You see the mud huts and the people living without electricity. We helped build schools for them and gave them access to clean water. It makes you appreciate everything you have back home.”

Especially when you consider the enemy mortared Steve’s outpost almost every day. And on Nov. 6, 2008, Steve got a wake-up call ... literally.

“I had just finished eight hours of guard duty. I went back to the outpost to get some sleep, and about 10 minutes later I woke up with the roof on my head.”

It was a suicide bomber in a dump truck packed with 2,000 pounds of explosives. Steve suffered severe spinal injuries as well as other internal injuries. He fought to recover in the hospital for

more than six months, endured two major surgeries that included resection of his small intestine and bladder reconstruction, and was diagnosed with traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Even with all these injuries, Steve says his greatest challenge was dealing with his sense of failure.

“My unit was still over there, and the guilt was burdening me. Getting on that medevac was the hardest thing I’ve ever done. But ever since Wounded Warrior Project™ (WWP) contacted me, they gave me my life back.”

One of the things Steve says he did, which he wants to help others avoid, is bottling up emotions inside. He admits now he was depressed for a long time and lived with physical and emotional pain.

“WWP gave me the chance to talk with other warriors who have been through the same thing. If I’m ever having a bad day – mind, body, or spirit – they are there for me.”

That’s why, in May 2011, Steve was eager to testify to the U.S. Senate Committee on Veteran’s Affairs about meeting the unique needs of service members transitioning to civilian life. His testimony increased awareness of the difficulties Wounded Warriors face as they navigate the bureaucracy of getting the benefits they deserve.

“I wanted to turn a negative into a positive. Every day I thank God I’m alive. Life can be hard, but there are people who care. It’s my life’s passion to give hope to warriors who need a friend.”

Steve has also recently begun pursuing his college education through WWP’s TRACK™ program – the first education center in the nation designed specifically for Wounded Warriors – in Jacksonville, Florida.

“The TRACK program has given me the opportunity and motivation to get back into school and pursue a degree,” Steve says. “Wounded Warrior Project has been with me step by step and I could never repay them for what they have done for me. My passion in life is to help other veterans get the help they need and deserve. We have to stick together and tackle all obstacles as a team.”