



Profiles of Courage

Capt. Ferris Butler

On March 4, I witnessed U.S. Army Captain Ferris Butler climb the steep pitches of Sherrill Street. You won't find that climb on the route maps of Le Tour and it is of significance only to the riders who spin in and out of Washington, D.C.'s Rock Creek Park.

Capt. Butler made that climb on his bike just 30 days after his war-damaged left leg was amputated. He fought to save it, enduring 50 surgeries before it was replaced with a carbon-fiber surrogate. He also lost half of his right foot.

Capt. Butler is just starting down the difficult road. He calls his prosthetic his "first leg" because it is the first of what will be a long series of refittings necessitated by the difficulty of matching flesh-and-bone with plastic, carbon-fiber and titanium.

But riding a bike is a great start. Right now, he's using a wheelchair to get around because walking is much more difficult for him than riding a bike. In time, he'll be able to do both.

SPC. Justin Clark

Justin was injured in 2004, when he came under fire from a mortar attack. He was hit on the arm and back of his neck. He got back into action quickly, when was working on a generator in Iraq and was electrocuted, then fell 20-some feet on his head. He has TBI from his fall, and chronic back pain. Justin also has PTSD, ringing in the ears, severe headaches, and problems with balance.

Justin walks with a cane to help with the balance issues. He has a severe stutter, which they believe was from his fall. He is undergoing therapy at Walter Reed and heard about the Road 2 Recovery program from Capt. Butler. He really wants to do the bike ride and will be joined by his fiancée Audrey during the May event.

LTC Patty Collins

Patty has done 2 tours in Iraq and 1 tour in Bosnia. She lost her leg in an accident at Ft. Bragg. After almost one year of continuous pain, and the offer of a complete ankle fusion by doctors, she decided she wanted something that would allow her to return to her previous levels of activity. Patty made the decision for a below the knee amputation.

On 9 May 2007, her leg was amputated and she was riding a bike by the 4th of July. It wasn't fast or long, but she was there. Patty has some significant goals ahead, and if this injury has taught her anything it is patience.

She is currently the Squadron Operations Officer and Executive Officer at Fort Bragg, NC.

Her rehab has gone well enough to allow her to return to military parachuting status.

Major Bruce Gannaway

In addition to ripping off Maj. Gannaway's left foot, an improvised explosive device in Iraq shattered several fingers, broke his left forearm and pelted his right leg with shrapnel. He has been recovering with his wife and young daughter at Walter Reed.

Major Gannaway and his wife recently testified before the House Military Personnel Subcommittee Hearing on Mental Health. He is involved in the cycling rehab program and believes that it shows great promise in helping those returning from Iraq and Afghanistan be able to deal with both the physical and mental issues they face.

Capt. Kent Solheim

Member of US Army Special Forces was injured in Iraq leaving him with a paralyzed right calf from the knee down. He was shot 4 times in a firefight near Karbala while conducting an operation. During the operation Kent and Co. killed more than 30 insurgents. He was awarded the Silver Star for valor. Cycling has been a huge part of his recovery both mentally and physically. He uses a special crank adapter to compensate for the atrophy in his right calf. Kent would like to race and possibly compete in Paralympics in the future. Kent is currently assigned to Ft. Bragg 3rd Special Forces group.

SFC. Mike McNaughton

McNaughton was a U.S. Army Staff Sergeant who lost his leg when a land mine exploded during his tour of duty in Afghanistan. He currently works for the VA in Louisiana. He remains active through running and cycling and provides mentoring services to vets across the country.

In spring 2004, he took the president up on his offer and ran a mile with him. "I want you to know," Bush said afterward, "just how proud I am of you." McNaughton was floored. *The commander in chief is proud of me? Me?* McNaughton then trained for a marathon. It wasn't easy. He fell. He got hurt. On Jan. 9, 2005 -- two years to the day he lost his leg -- he ran the Walt Disney World Half Marathon. In March 2005, he ran the 26.2-mile Bataan Memorial Death March Marathon event in New Mexico. McNaughton says, "We're changing a lot of perceptions these days."

SSGT McNaughton is the Vice President of the Road 2 Recovery Cycling Club and works for the VA

Major Jason Bryan

Major Bryan deployed to Iraq from Ft. Campbell, Kentucky in June 2006 as a member of the 101st Airborne Division. To combat the stress and mental toll of daily life in Iraq, Major Bryan would ride the 18.5 km perimeter of the base—often multiple times—every day. During those solitary moments, he began to realize that his bicycle was more than a physical vehicle...

"My bike rides provided the emotional release necessary to help me cope with the stresses of living in a hostile environment and separation from my family. Cycling sustained my sanity during a very difficult period of my life. During my 12-month deployment, I rode more than 4500 miles.

I was fortunate enough to share some of my cycling experiences by writing a journal for VeloNews.com. As a result, I have had the opportunity to meet some amazing people affiliated with the cycling world. I have found that cyclists at all levels are pretty much the same... except most are a heck of a lot faster than I am.

Now, I am thrilled to continue my cycling experience by helping with the Road 2 Recovery program. I believe sharing the benefits of cycling is vital to the recovery of our wounded warriors—the true heroes."

Major Bryan is the President of the Road 2 Recovery Cycling Club and will soon relocate to DC as a Congressional liaison.

Sr. Airman Diane Lopes

Diane entered the Air Force in 2003. She had prior service in the Army. She was in Iraq when she came under fire from a mortar attack near Kirkuk. She sustained severe leg and right arm injuries from shrapnel. She was airlifted to Germany in Sept. 2007 and is now undergoing her rehab at Walter Reed. She loves the feeling of riding a bike with fellow patients and is looking forward to improving her mobility.

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