

# Operation Mend: To reconstruct soldiers and marines wounded in war

Patt Morrison



## Courtesy of Operation Mend

Army specialist Joey Paulk before, during and after his reconstructive surgery.

On July 5, 2007, Army Specialist Joey Paulk's vehicle was hit by three mines in Afghanistan. The vehicle flipped and the fuel tank ignited. Paulk's team leader lost his life, and Paulk sustained burns to 40 percent of his body and face. The smoke he inhaled paralyzed his vocal chords and he lost all 10 of his fingers. Since then, he has had to relearn how to walk, talk, swallow and maneuver through life without fingers.

None of that would have been possible without the help of Operation Mend, a partnership between the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas and the VA of Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. Together, and with the help of philanthropist Ron Katz, "Operation Mend" offers free reconstructive surgery to U.S. military personnel severely wounded during service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Patt talks with their lead surgeon and his patient, Joey.

## Guests:

**Dr. Timothy Miller**, chief of the Division of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery at UCLA; he leads Operation Mend's surgery team and is himself a military veteran

**Joey Paulk**, army specialist; he's undergone five surgeries through Operation Mend since sustaining burns to 40 percent of his body and face while serving in Afghanistan

*Elsewhere on the Web*

- Operation Mend's website | [operationmend.ucla.edu](http://operationmend.ucla.edu)
- See more photos of Operation Mend here | [operationmend.ucla.edu](http://operationmend.ucla.edu)