

Operation Mend Sends Veteran to NYC for Veterans Day Parade



Submitted by [Beth Ridgeway](#)

Friday, November 11th, 2011, 11:10am



Captain James "Jae" Barclay is in New York City to be one of the grand marshals of the Big Apple's Veterans Day Parade with Operation Mend's new Camaro.

Captain Barclay stopped by WAFF before he headed to New York City to share his story.

While serving as an infantry platoon leader for the 10th Mountain Division, Captain Barclay was wounded in Afghanistan by a roadside bomb on August 19, 2006. It just so happens that was the same day as his one year anniversary with his wife.

Three soldiers died that day and Captain Barclay and his driver were the only soldiers who survived. He remembers being thrown out of his vehicle and putting out the fire that was on him. While his unit was attacked he was trying to get into other vehicles while only in his white t-shirt and pants because everything else was burned. He said he didn't realize the extent of his injuries because his adrenaline was pumping. From there, he remembers being flown out on a helicopter and then waking up in a hospital room in San Antonio, Texas.

Captain Barclay had almost 50% of his body burned and 35% were third-degree burns. Most of the burns were on his upper body and his face and hands were severely scarred. There were several close calls, but Captain Barclay said that a higher power was pulling him through. Due to the extent of his injuries, medical officials had to induce Barclay into a coma while he was overseas in the hospital.

His wife was 9 months pregnant at the time of the IED explosion. She gave birth to their first child only days after finding out about the injuries of her husband. She was unable to travel to see her husband until he was in Brooke Army Medical Center in Texas. Captain Barclay said one of the first things that helped his to feel better was his family and seeing his little baby girl for the first time.

In 2008 he was approached by Operation Mend, a group that helps treat U.S. military personnel severely wounded during service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Operation Mend was started by Ronald A. Katz who wanted to help to bring the extraordinary medical surgery skills to military who need it.

[Click here to learn more about Operation Mend](#)

Captain Barclay and his family first flew out to UCLA to meet with the team and talk with his sponsor family in 2008. Since then, Captain Barclay said that he has had more than 20 surgeries with Dr. Timonhy Miller which have restored much of his mobility and function and reduced the scarring tremendously.

While he still has more surgeries left, he is appreciative that Operation Mend has helped him and given him opportunities like heading to New York City for their Veterans Day Parade.

Captain Barclay will be one of the soldiers to ride in the parade as a grand marshal in a 2011 Camaro that was "tricked out" by West Coast Customs.

[You can read more about the car here.](#)

Captain Barclay usually spends his Veterans Day in Huntsville with his three children and wife watching the parade. He said that is why he moved back to Huntsville. He has family here, and it's a great military community. He said it was a great way to keep in touch with what's going on.

Veterans Day has always been special in his family. His father is still a general in the Army, his brother flies black hawks and even his sister's husband was in the Army.

Before he was injured, he said he didn't think about anything relating to veterans. He said when your young, going going going and focused you don't think about that kind of thing. After his injury he joined the VFW and Purple Heart organizations.

Veterans say is a time to come together and tell a story and learn from other veterans. For him, it's a time for reflection to look back and share stories. He's excited to visit the Big Apple again and can't wait to see some of his Operation Mend buddies.



Captain Barclay, his wife and President Bush



Captain Barclay receives the purple heart from his father



The 2011 "tricked out" car



Far left: Captain Barclay while deployed



Captain Barclay while deployed in Afghanistan



Captain Barclay, his father and brother



Captain Barclay, his daughter, father and brother