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Random Clavin, Nokomis, IL

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Random Clavin

Age: 35

Branch of Military:
U.S. Army

Rank: Sergeant E-5

Dates of Service:
December 2005-
October 2010

Deployments:

South Korea, June 2006-June 2007; Iraq,
August 2008-August 2009



Random Clavin

Nokomis, IL



“I went into the Army because of what the terrorists did on 9/11. After seeing firsthand what they did in New York City, I decided that it was my turn to go over there and do something.”



Clavin, right, and his friend, Josh England, at Ground Zero during the days after the 9/11 attack in New York City.

“On September 11th, 2001, my buddy called me right after the first plane hit the Trade Center... Then the second one hit, and a guy on the radio was looking for volunteers to go over there. I called him. We went straight to Ground Zero and was there for four days. We looked for survivors, which we didn’t find any personally.”

After that experience, Clavin said he knew he wanted to join the military. *“It took me a couple years to get motivated. When the U.S. invaded Iraq, I remember getting really upset that I wasn’t there.”*



“My tattoo says ‘U.S. Army Infantry,’ and it’s got the cross rifles. A lot of the guys will get what corresponded with their jobs. My job was infantry, by choice. I knew that right from the start. I like to run, shoot and dig holes. I’m good at camping. It fit me. I didn’t want to just go and come back and say, ‘Well I worked on trucks or I did this’; I wanted to be right where the action was.”



“There’s a real competitiveness in the military between jobs. With infantry, you’re the one doing the fighting, so basically we look at it as everybody else is support, which they are. I mean, you don’t go over there and win with cooks or tanks. You can win with tanks, but you still got to have guys on the ground to do the dirty work.”

“In Iraq there was always a feeling of danger. I was luckily in areas that weren’t real bad. We had vehicles get hit with IEDs and stuff, but I was never directly in it. We mostly had eardrums get popped from the bombs going off, but luckily we didn’t have anybody get killed. But you do, you worry about it. I mean, I’m not scared of a guy standing over there pointing a gun at me. I just gotta be quicker and faster, and shoot better. But what’s behind that door that you can’t see is a bomb. I could fight a guy, but I can’t fight a bomb.”



“In Iraq, you know, they kidnapped. They’d want to catch you so they can torture you on TV. I told my guys, I said, ‘If you see anybody trying to drag me into a car, if you can’t save me, shoot me. Blow that car up, kill them, kill me. Don’t let me be on the Internet being cut in a thousand pieces.’ And I said, ‘I’ll do the same for you.’”

“I loved it. I really did. But then I had a son and that kind of changed the way I thought about it. When I was over there before he was born, I didn’t care what happened. You know, I didn’t care if I got shot. I didn’t care if I got blew up, you just go and go and do it. And then I came home on leave when he was born, and that’s the first time in my life I’ve been homesick. I remember it made me sick, leaving. Then I started thinking twice, like, ‘Wait a minute. What is that?’ Before you wouldn’t even think; you’d just go.”

“But it was the best thing I ever did. I’d do it over again tomorrow. If I wasn’t getting older, I’d probably do it again anyway.”



Clavin served with the 2/8 Infantry, 4th Infantry Division, Bravo Fort Carson, CO, from where he deployed to Iraq. *“Our first location was called Diwanayah in a place called FOB Echo. My job was mortarman. It was infantry; I just carried a tube. They had us training the Iraqi army how to use the mortars. And then we went to Basra. We had an element of our platoon out 24 hours a day, and there’s only 30 of us.”*



The Ziggurat of Ur in Iraq.

Clavin completed basic training and AIT at Fort Benning, GA. *“Sand Hill is what they call it. It goes from boot camp to worse than boot camp. But it was fun. I loved boot camp. It was the best time I’ve ever had.”*

“My first duty station, out of the 250 people in our graduating class, I was one of two that went overseas to Camp Casey, South Korea. We trained for mountain and jungle warfare. It was just the complete opposite of what I thought. You know, the war is in Iraq and I’m over here doing this. But it was good; it was fun. I hated it while I was there but it was the best time of my life. I didn’t realize how much fun I had until I left.”



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Suzanne M. Day

“They took us out and dropped us off in the desert in a little Iraqi camp, and we’d run patrols out of it, basically out in the middle of nowhere. It’s pretty neat, though. We got to see the (Ziggurat) of Ur, Abraham’s home in the Bible. I’ve been to the Garden of Eden, where the Tigris and Euphrates meet. I stood there and looked at it. The Tree of Life is still alive. There’s a leaf on it.”