

## CHRIS CLAUDE , USMC

Chris knew from childhood that he wanted to be in the military. He would visit his grandmother in Maryland and go to the nearby Army/Navy store to buy supplies so he could play in her backyard and pretend he was a Marine. He enlisted in the Marine Corps straight out of high school in 1998. His first duty station was with Headquarters Battery, 11<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment, Counter Battery Radar Platoon in Camp Pendleton, California. During this time he served as a Radar Team Leader until selection for recruiting in 2002. He then served as a canvassing recruiter in Visalia, California while attached to Recruiting Station Sacramento. During this secondary assignment he was promoted to Staff Sergeant meritoriously. Upon successful completion of recruiting duty in 2005, he was reassigned to 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 11<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment as the Assistant Battalion Operations Chief. He was then selected among his peers to be a Military Advisor to Iraq Army Battalion 0841, in Karbala, Iraq. After the accident, he was promoted to Gunnery Sergeant and then retired from active service in 2007.





Chris was injured on February 20, 2006 when the vehicle he and his team were traveling in was blown up by an IED. He was supposed to be driving, but switched spots with his buddy, Jay Collado at the last minute. Jay was killed on impact. Chris was rear gunner and as the vehicle careened off the road and flipped over into a ditch filled with dirty sewage water, he was caught up in his gear and the rest of his MITT team had to pull him out of the wreckage. He was conscious the entire time. Once the doc pulled him out, he lay on the ground for about an hour and half until being flown out to Baghdad Hospital. The doc held his femoral artery closed with clamps, so Chris wouldn't bleed out. He took in tons of shrapnel (which is still in his body to this day, that surfaces and either he or I have to pick out with tweezers. His hand was also burned and he had to undergo surgeries and now he is missing his left thumb tip and his ring finger is deformed and "hooks". He also has a TBI and has a bad migraine at least once a month.) He was then transported from Baghdad to Germany where he went through 67 units of blood, died on the table one time and was brought back via defibrillator. At that point, his right leg was amputated above the knee. Once stabilized, he was then flown to Bethesda Naval Hospital where he was a few months and then underwent rehabilitation at Brooke Army Medical Center.



Chris was awarded the Purple Heart, Navy & Marine Corps Commendation Medal with Valor, (2) Navy & Marine Corps Achievement Medals, Iraqi Campaign Medal, (2) Marines Corps Good Conduct Medals, Global Warfare on Terrorism Service Medal, National Defense Medal, Combat Action Ribbon, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon, Navy Unit Commendation, Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation, Marine Corps Recruiting Service Ribbon



From that point on, his first marriage declined. His ex-wife was unfaithful and Chris pushed for a divorce. He literally went through the financial and emotional wringer. His ex-wife had never worked and all of the bills, the house and the cars were his responsibility. This whole ordeal left him in financial ruin. His ex-wife was awarded \$1900 alimony and over \$3000 in child support per month. He lost his home in California, due to foreclosure and was left to pay off her vehicle and credit card debt.







He and I reconnected shortly thereafter as we were childhood friends. We dated and then married in 2011. We now have an 18 month old baby, Genevieve, who is just amazing, (Talk about things happening for a reason. Genevieve was born 8 years and 1 day after his “Alive Day”).