

MISSOURI STATE SOCIETY DAUGHTERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

Proudly Honors



RILEY W. SMALLWOOD
UNITED STATES ARMY
SERGEANT FIRST CLASS (E-7)
SEPTEMBER 1997 – AUGUST 2014

as

**PURPLE HEART PATRIOT
NOVEMBER 2024**

Honoring my friends Service and Sacrifice

Written by Shauna McCuaig with special recognition to Madalyn Shreve for arranging the meeting with Mr. Smallwood and helping me tell his story.

Sponsored by: Cornelia Greene Chapter, NSDAR



Riley W. Smallwood enlisted in the Army in September 1997. He was twenty years old, just shy of his twenty-first birthday. His dates of service were September 1997 to August 2014, a career of almost seventeen years. He retired as a Sergeant First Class (E-7).

He spent his Boot Camp and Basic Training at Fort Benning, Georgia, known as the "Home of the Infantry". Part of the mission of Fort Benning was to "provide the nation with the world's best trained Infantry Soldiers and adaptive leaders imbued with the 'Warrior Ethos' and to act as a power projection platform capable of deploying and redeploying Soldiers to anywhere in the world on short notice." To be an infantryman, Mr. Smallwood not only needed to be physically strong but also psychologically strong.

Mr. Smallwood served in Iraq three times; 2004-2005, 2006-2008, and 2009-2010. In 2007, during his deployment in Iraq, he was injured by 150 pounds of homemade explosives while serving in the 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment in Taji, Iraq, at the Incheon Joint Security Station (JSS). He was handling security and distributing clothes and supplies to the kids where a boy's and girl's school was being constructed. He got a tip that some bad activity was happening on the road from the school. He went up the road and under a canal where he found an improvised explosive device (IED). He called Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) to dispose of the IED. Then he ran over to the road where there was a big field with some irrigation and found another improvised

explosive device (IED) under the bridge. He stood up to turn around and leave and in doing so, the IED blew up. He was about three feet away from the explosives.



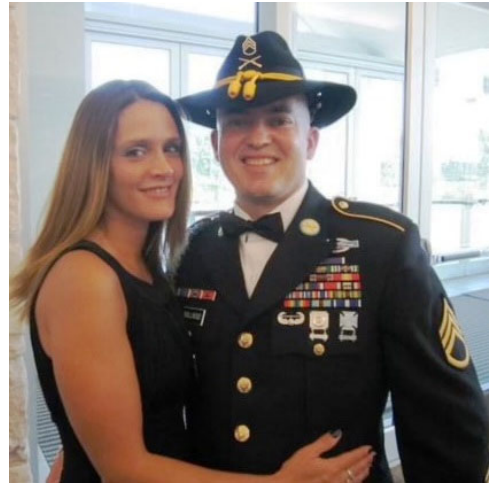
(Photo by Sgt. Cheryl Cox, 1-1 Cav. Public Affairs)

Staff Sgt. Riley Smallwood, a native of Griffen, Ga., and member of Company B, 2nd Battalion, 8th Cavalry Regiment and a native of Griffen, Ga., plays with young children Jan. 15 outside the newest girls and boys school in Mushahidah, Iraq.

After the IED blew up, he remembered trying to get up and run and he fell. He thought his legs had been blown up. He crawled to a building shack to use it for cover in case he had to fight back. At the shack, he checked himself out and did not see any blood on him but when he looked at his buddy, he found shrapnel in his buddy's face. The medevac came to help Mr. Smallwood. But Mr. Smallwood was in charge and still had soldiers in the field. He was Staff Sergeant at that time and was responsible for his men so as soon as the medevac stopped, Mr. Smallwood got out and went back to his men. He was willing to make whatever sacrifices he needed to make sure his men were taken care of.

The Quick Reaction Force (QRF) came to help Mr. Smallwood to secure the area. They took Mr. Smallwood back to JSS to evaluate him. It was determined he had a Traumatic Brain Injury and other bodily injuries. In Taji, Iraq, he was assessed and told to go back to his barracks. There he calmed down, took a shower, and passed out. He came to, and one of his soldiers found him wandering around disoriented. The soldier took him back to the medical station to have him assessed. Mr. Smallwood was taken to the Combat Support Hospital (CSH) for all evacuees and was evaluated again. He recovered from his injuries in Iraq and remained on deployment there. At the end of his regular rotation, he went home to Fort Hood, Texas.

Mr. Smallwood received the Purple Heart Medal on November 19, 2007, in Taji Iraq. During the award ceremony, the soldiers stood in formation at attention to orders. A statement was read and the Purple Heart Medal was pinned on his chest. He was awarded the Purple Heart Medal together with three of his men who also were injured, and likewise, received Purple Heart Medals. While talking with Mr. Smallwood, his humbleness shined through. He just wanted to take care of his men and did so with great sacrifice.



Riley Smallwood served our great nation selflessly. From the bottom of my heart, thank you Riley Smallwood for your service and your sacrifice.

