

“There was a big flash and a fireball right about my knee level. And I said to the other pilot, ‘hey, I think we’ve been hit.’ I tried to move the rudder pedals and the aircraft didn’t respond . . . actually what happened was the rudders were gone. The pedals were gone and so were the bottom part of my legs and I didn’t know that at the time.”—MAJ Tammy Duckworth, 2005

On November 12, 2004, CPT Ladda “Tammy” Duckworth (ILARNG, 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation) was piloting a Blackhawk helicopter near Balad, Iraq when a rocket-propelled grenade struck her aircraft.

“We landed in some really tall grass, about five or six feet tall,” CPT Duckworth relayed in a 2005 interview with Portland’s KATU. “I was looking at it thinking ‘wow, that’s really green grass, that’s really bright green,’ and then I remember trying to reach up to turn off the engines, and just as I tried to lift my hand, that’s when I passed out.”

While at Walter Reed, MAJ Duckworth asked her husband, ARNG CPT Bryan Bowsbey, to pin the Soldier’s Creed for inspiration next to her bed and on her door.

“She is a person of unusual strength and unusual courage,” said LTG Schultz during the promotion ceremony. Just being around her gives you a sense of appreciation for the people who make our Army the organization that it is.”

“This is not so bad,” said MAJ Duckworth of her wounds in an interview with National Guard Bureau Public Affairs. “There is always somebody worse off than you are. I’m just glad it was me and not one of my guys out there.”

MAJ Duckworth, 37, was born in Thailand and raised in Southeast Asia. The Duckworth family came to Hawaii in the mid-80s. After obtaining a bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of Hawaii, MAJ Duckworth joined ROTC while obtaining her master’s degree in International Affairs from

established community service projects in East Timor and Afghanistan and worked to send wheelchairs to areas of Iraq. By the winter of 2004, MAJ Duckworth herself was in a wheelchair.

Yet, instead of collapsing in defeat, MAJ Duckworth challenged our own definitions of strength as she shrugged off her injuries and declared her continued dedication to service and her determination to fly again. MAJ Duckworth’s time at Walter Reed proved merely to be the nesting phase for perhaps her life’s greatest ambitions. MAJ Duckworth would emerge as a nationally recognized symbol of strength and patriotic service.

And as MAJ Duckworth recovered, the Illinois Army National Guard showed us loyalty of Soldiers—the strong family bond that binds them together on the battlefield and even on the home front. Soldiers of 1st Battalion, 106th Aviation, along with Rotary International employees and members of the

# LIVING THE CREED

## MAJ Ladda “Tammy” Duckworth

By Keith Kawasaki

Co-pilot CWO Dan Milberg of the Missouri Army National Guard carried CPT Duckworth to the Medevac crew that raced down, just feet from the Blackhawk. Initially she was transported to the Combat Surgical Hospital in Baghdad. CPT Duckworth regained consciousness briefly to demand that the medical staff tend to her crew instead of herself. Within hours CPT Duckworth was in Landstuhl Military Hospital in Germany. After a few days, she arrived at Walter Reed Medical Center in Bethesda, MD. CPT Duckworth had lost half of the blood in her body. She lost her right leg from the hip down. Her left leg was gone below the knee, and her right arm was broken in three places.

On Dec. 21, 2004, CPT Duckworth became MAJ Duckworth when LTG Roger Schultz, then director of the Army National Guard, along with several other top officials, promoted the Soldier at Walter Reed.

MAJ Duckworth credits CWO Milberg as the “real hero” of the day. CWO Milberg received the Distinguished Flying Cross for his actions. She also is quick to credit her recovery to the fine medical staff at the Military hospitals; however, many feel it is her remarkable spirit that has lifted her from a disabling catastrophe to her rise as a beacon of optimism and accomplishment.

George Washington University in Washington, D.C. By enlisting into the ROTC program, MAJ Duckworth made her first marks in her family’s long line of military service, dating as far back as the Revolutionary War.

**Being in the Military is an honor. So many have come before me who gave in their own way. What’s important is that each one of us gives something back for all the gifts we have for being Americans.**

Initially joining the Army Reserve in 1992, MAJ Duckworth switched gears to seek a combat role. She became a helicopter pilot with the Illinois Army National Guard in 1996. By the age of 32, MAJ Duckworth was named commander of an assault helicopter company.

Prior to her deployment in the spring of 2004, MAJ Duckworth worked as a staff supervisor at the worldwide headquarters of Rotary International, in Evanston, IL. She

community, teamed together to make MAJ Duckworth’s home wheelchair-accessible.

By spring of 2005, MAJ Duckworth had enough of idle time and hit the road.

In March MAJ Duckworth went before

Congress on behalf of wounded Military Veterans. Our seriously injured Soldiers are legitimately concerned that, when they transition out of high-end facilities like Walter Reed Medical Center, they will not, in most cases, receive that same level of care in their hometowns. MAJ Duckworth feels that funding for

maintaining the pinnacle of care for service members would keep more Soldiers in uniform and increase morale across the board.

The following month, the USO of Metropolitan Washington recognized MAJ Duckworth at their annual awards dinner. Renowned country artist Wynonna Judd was also honored at the ceremony. In a GX interview, Judd relayed that meeting MAJ Duckworth rendered her speechless—a feat

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that the singer says is not easily done. Judd declared that MAJ Duckworth is “not just a woman surviving; she is thriving.”

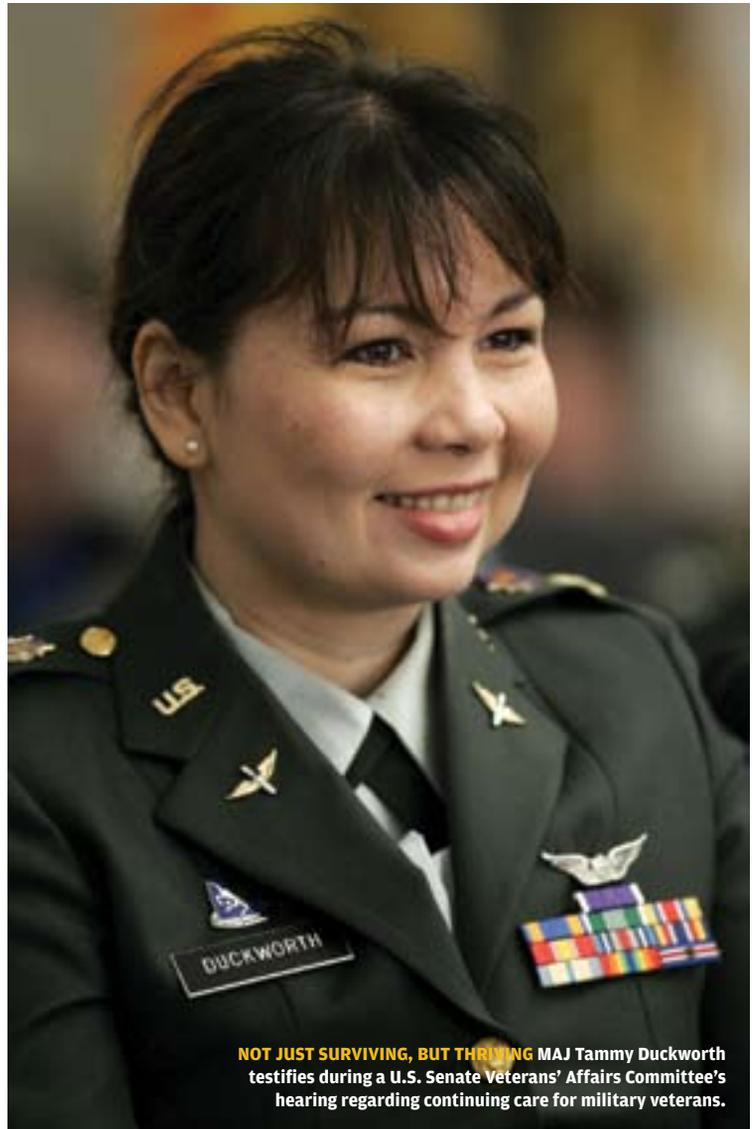
On June 8, 2005, the state of Illinois declared the day Tammy Duckworth Day. “I was just there doing my job,” humbly spoke MAJ Duckworth, according to ABC 7 Chicago.

With all this recognition and fame though, never once has MAJ Duckworth lost sight of her ultimate goal: to fly again. She still attends drill, and through the use of flight simulators, MAJ Duckworth is making her long journey back to the cockpit. She understands the time it will take to get used to flying with prosthetics; however, as always, MAJ Duckworth is undaunted.

And in her “free” time, she is continually busy. MAJ Duckworth returned to Hawaii in September when she was asked to speak at the 2nd Annual International Women’s Leadership Conference in Waikiki.

Governor Linda Lingle, also at the event, relayed to the Honolulu Advertiser: “[T]o have someone like MAJ Duckworth here, who never expected these would be the cards she’d have to play, she had to make a decision . . . and she’s chosen a way that’s going to inspire thousands of people all over the world.”

“Frankly, getting blown up wasn’t a lot of fun and wasn’t my choice,” joked MAJ Duckworth during her speech. Yet, she quickly can turn back to the purpose—jokes aside—sacrifice



**NOT JUST SURVIVING, BUT THRIVING** MAJ Tammy Duckworth testifies during a U.S. Senate Veterans’ Affairs Committee’s hearing regarding continuing care for military veterans.



## NOMINATE A GX HERO

We receive many incredible stories of folks doing fantastic work at home and abroad, but every now and then we receive a story of service that really knocks our socks off. If you know somebody who goes above and beyond in their dedication to your community, our country, or our freedom, please nominate this person to become a featured GX Hero.

A GX Hero can be a Soldier or a civilian. A GX Hero can be any age. The criteria is based on inspiration.

- ★ Do the efforts of your nominee stir a grand tide of patriotism in others?
- ★ Have their efforts changed people’s lives for the better?
- ★ Does their story need to be told?

Our goal is to create the GX Hall of Heroes—a collection of proud and proactive Americans, serving to inspire us all.

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**Please put “GX Hero” in the subject line.**

comes with job. “I am an American Soldier. I serve the people of the United States, and this was a sacrifice that I was willing to make for my organization.”

“In my opinion,” said MG Robert G. F. Lee (HIARNG) to the Honolulu Advertiser, “it’s not a matter of if she’ll be medically qualified [to fly], but when.”

This past November, MAJ Duckworth was onstage again. This time, she was speaking for a Veterans Day ceremony honoring Women in Military Service. And again, MAJ Duckworth’s words, spoken with her matter-of-fact patriotism, renews our own resolve.

“Being in the Military is an honor . . . So many have come before me who gave in their own way . . . What’s important is that each one of us gives something back for all the gifts we have for being Americans,” MAJ Duckworth said to an overflowing audience gathered in Arlington, VA. “I, along with the rest of the Soldiers at Walter Reed, would strap on our new limbs, pick up our weapons and go right back, if we could.”

On December 18, 2005, MAJ Tammy Duckworth announced her candidacy for the Sixth Illinois District of the U.S. Congress. MAJ Duckworth is still retaining her Guard status and says if she is elected and her unit gets the call, she’s going with them. **GX**