

**Guest: Tammy Duckworth & Bryan Bowsbey
2005**

DOEBELE: So how long have you two been married?

BRIAN BOWLSBEY: Twelve years.

DOEBELE: Where did you meet?

BOWLSBEY: Georgetown Army ROTC.

TAMMY DUCKWORTH: We were both cadets. He made a comment that I felt was derogatory about the role of women in the Army but he came over and apologized very nicely and then helped me clean my M-16.

DOEBELE: I'm not going to touch one. How long –so you dated here in Washington?

DUCKWORTH: Yes, we did. And then I moved to Illinois and Brian came with me. And then I was sent to flight school. And we've been married ever since.

DOEBELE: So you're a major?

DUCKWORTH: I am a major.

DOEBELE: And you're captain.

BOWLSBEY: Yes, ma'am.

DOEBELE: Now, when did you go to Iraq?

DUCKWORTH: I arrived in Iraq on March 1, right after midnight on March 1, 2004.

DOEBELE: And what was your job there?

DUCKWORTH: I was a battle captain in an aviation battalion and a helicopter pilot. Basically my job was to help run the tactical operations center, coordinate all of our missions, work with other units in the battle space and assign missions down to each of our three – each of our companies. And then, twice a week I also flew missions.

DOEBELE: And what were you doing at that time?

BOWLSBEY: Home working for Army ROTC in DeKalb, Illinois at Northern Illinois University. So taking care of the dog and working with the cadets and that was about it.

DOEBELE: Why did you join the Army?

DUCKWORTH: My parents have always taught us that you need to give something back for all of the great stuff we get for being Americans. I know that sounds rally corny. But I grew up overseas. My father worked in the United Nations refugee program. So I was exposed to a lot of refugees and developing countries. And he worked for a short time in Indonesia with the housing estate for ex-patriots. But I grew up in Asia and in a lot of countries that had authoritarian regimes and/or were fighting the

communists, Vietnam and Cambodian and all of those kinds of places. So being an American was, not only, something that was important to me, but it was actually vital to being – to the quality of life that I had.

And when I came back and we moved back to the states to live it was very clear to us that – the difference in standards of living, and what you could do here that you couldn't have done overseas. And I joined the Army fairly late, actually. I was all ready a graduate student when I decided to join ROTC.

DOEBELE: Early 20s?

DUCKWORTH: Early 20s, 22, 23. And I had – I was doing my Masters at George Washington University and noticed that all of my friends were either current military members of the military or people who had been in and had retired, and those were the value systems I was attracted to. So they encouraged me to try ROTC, just to see if I would like it or not and I did, and I really enjoyed it. And it was sort of like this calling that was out there, that I didn't realize I wanted to fulfill and so that's how I got in.

DOEBELE: When did the helicopter part come in?

DUCKWORTH: In the Army, there are only two branches of the Army that is specialty jobs that accept women in combat they're combat arms branches, aero-defense artillery and aviation. When I was deciding what job I wanted to do in the Army, all of the cadets had to put down a listing of one through 10, your top choices, whether you wanted to be a finance officer or a lawyer or a helicopter pilot or a tanker or an infantry man.

But the men – the guys had to, out of their top five, three of them had to be combat branches, infantry, armor, that sort of thing. And I felt it was really kind of unfair that I didn't have to do that as a female. So I decided that I would go for the one that had the best chance of going into combat, which was aviation. So that's why I chose aviation, and I was lucky enough to get it.

DOEBELE: Did you want to go to combat?

DUCKWORTH: It's not that I wanted to go to combat, I just didn't want to take fewer risks than my fellow classmates who were male. So that was – nobody wants to go to combat but I just felt that I wasn't going to try to hide away from anything that they would have to face just because I was female. So I wanted to take an equal risk, and that's why I chose aviation. And I've loved flying. It's become such a part of my identity now.

DOEBELE: Will you ever fly again?

DUCKWORTH: Yes. I know I can fly again in the civilian sector, there's no problems with that. But one of my goals right now is to get back on flight status with the Army. So I'm going to do everything I can to learn – to convince the Army that I can still serve as a helicopter pilot.

DOEBELE: Were you ever called up for service?

BOWLSBEY: No. I never have been. Seventeen years in the Army, never deployed. My wife has deployed to Guyana, to Egypt, all over the place, and for whatever reason it's just never happened to me.

DOEBELE: And is that just the luck of the draw?

BOWLSBEY: The luck of the draw and the nature of the jobs that I've held. I've been an air defense officer, and there was no call for air defense officers to deploy. And now I'm a signal officer. And although we may actually deploy in November with my company it's pure speculation on my part, but there's a little more call for signal officer than there is of an air defense officer in Iraq right now.

DOEBELE: Would they deploy you to Iraq with – in your – with your current health situation?

BOWLSBEY: I assume so, yes.

DOEBELE: Really?

BOWLSBEY: Yes.

DUCKWORTH: I wouldn't dream of asking him to not go. He's the company commander. They're his men. You can't just leave your people and let them go. You just can't do that. And he wouldn't want to.

DOEBELE: Tell about how you got hurt?

DUCKWORTH: It was actually the end of the day. We had been flying missions in Baghdad, mostly just transportation of troops and equipment across the battlefield. And at the end of the day, we had a great lunch. I had bought some Christmas ornaments, this was the middle of November. I bought some Christmas ornaments at the big post exchange that's there in Baghdad. I had milkshakes for the first time in a long time because they have a really good cafeteria, chow hall down there.

And we're 10 minutes from getting back to our home base when we happen to fly over a group of insurgents and they got lucky. They just shot everything they had up to the air, small arms fire, as well as rocket propelled grenades. And one of the rocket propelled grenades just total fluke, came up, hit the – it's called the chin bubble in a Black Hawk. What it is is basically a plexiglass window underneath the pilot's feet. And you have that because you need to be able to see the ground when you're doing maneuvers such as hovering. And it came right up through chin bubble exploded – the initial charge exploded between my knees. I remember seeing a giant fireball. And a secondary charge went up through the green house, and, I think, knicked one of the blades but didn't destroy the blade.

DOEBELE: So how were you able to land the helicopter?

DUCKWORTH: There are two pilots in a Black Hawk and there are redundant flight control systems. I have a set and also the pilot on the left hand seat has the set. At the time, I was actually navigating and talking to air traffic. And the other pilot, the pilot in command was actually flying the aircraft. When I felt the small arms fire, I turned to look out and, of course, I cursed, and said, bleep, bleep, bleep, I think, we've been hit. And he didn't answer me. And immediately as soon as I said there's a big fireball in front of my and he didn't answer me, and neither the two crew chief door gunners in the back answered me.

So what I didn't realize at the time is we had lost electronic communication. So each one of us didn't know how badly hurt the other person was. I got on the aircraft controls because I could feel us starting to descend and I thought we had lost an engine. I looked at my control panel and there was no indication whatsoever. Well, we had lost our control panels as well.

So we couldn't tell if there was RPMs or anything like that. I looked for the TGT which is the temperature of the engines and that's not there. So I immediately attempted to land on the aircraft. I tried to push on the footprints and the aircraft didn't respond. At the time I didn't realize that I had actually lost the foot pedals and my feet at the same time.

But I saw out of the corner of my eye the other pilot, and his hands and legs were moving, so I thought, OK, good, he's moving, hopefully, he's on the controls as well. So I tried to land the aircraft. I was holding on to a cyclic which later on they said was gone by the time they went back to look at the aircraft. It must have fallen out at some point.

BOWLSBEY: Cyclic being the stick ...

DUCKWORTH: The stick that you control. And then the collective is the power on the (INAUDIBLE). So I got on there. When I woke up in the emergency room this hand was fairly – I mean this arm was fairly badly damaged. But I also had bruising on my hand and things from gripping on the cyclic. And so I stayed awake and we got on the ground. We landed the aircraft, and I'm sure the other pilot did most of the work. I probably hindering him but I didn't know whether he was alive or not. And I saw grass coming through the chin bubble. We happened to land where the grass was about six feet tall. And I thought – thinking, wow, that's really beautiful green grass and then I passed out and woke up here about nine days later.

DOEBELE: It's interesting the detail that you remember, versus some other people that we've talked to who don't remember anything from the day before. You just remember everything.

DUCKWORTH: I don't remember that week. I don't remember anything that day except for from about lunch time onwards. I remember the whole act of landing the aircraft because for me at that time, that was the most important thing to. It was as if my life depended on it, which it did. But I just remember that thinking we've been hit. I didn't know that I was badly hurt. I had no idea. And I just remember thinking you have to land this aircraft. We have to get this thing on the ground. And that to me was just all I could think about. I just had tunnel vision in that aircraft at that point. It was like – the only things I saw were instrumental panel blank. Landing area, get it under control. And so it was as if every instructor pilot who had every trained me was sitting behind me smacking me on the head saying keep flying, land it. Keep flying, land it.

DOEBELE: Tell me the extent of your injuries.

DUCKWORTH: I've lost my right leg, up fairly high. I only have about five inches of bone left on that side. My left leg is a below the knee amputation about halfway down my shin bone. The shrapnel and blast that happened right here took out the entire back of my arm. So I lost the flesh, the muscle tissue, everything down to the bone. The bones were crushed and broken, both in the upper arm and the lower arm. And this actually is my stomach. The doctors here able to graft tissue from my stomach on to my arm. So they rebuilt my arm with metal pins and screws. And they reattached my triceps muscle which is up here. Instead of attaching it back in its normal position, they reattached it below the elbow so that I would have muscle tissue down there.

And then, they cut a rectangular piece of flesh off of my chest wall and so they created this flap. And then they sewed my arm on to there and left me with my arm sewed to my side for three weeks while the flap established blood supply. And then, they went back in and sliced the last slide of the rectangle off and sewed my arm back together. So it's just the most amazing thing every time I look at my arm to think that I almost lost this arm.

DOEBELE: Is this new technology?

DUCKWORTH: This is extremely new technology. The metal plates and screws in my arm – this is the first time that they've used them with me and other patients who came in at the same time that t did. And so this is state of the art, the things that they were able to do and then saved this arm.

And so I have feeling. I can move my fingers. So I'll be able to fly again because I need – this is what I need. I just need strength. I can't turn my palm up but I don't really need ...

BOWLSBEY: You can't turn your palm up, yet.

DUCKWORTH: Turn my palm up, yet. But, you know, what I need to fly is this, and I have that.

DOEBELE: How does the Army notify next of kin that something like this has happened?

BOWLSBEY: The Department of Army Casualty Affairs, DA Casualty. I'm not quite sure how the acronym is expanded, called. They didn't get me because my cell phone was off at the time, I was at a wedding. But they reached my father-in-law in Hawaii and he continued to call my cell phone until they got me and he gave me a number. And they had pretty accurate information when I gave them a call. So they – it was actually by phone. And I was completely away from my home.

DOEBELE: When they called, and you knew who called, you knew something happened?

BOWLSBEY: My father-in-law gave me a pretty good run down of the extent of her wounds, probably a worst case scenario. They thought at that point that she might lose the arm. So he said, two legs and one arm. And – but that was – if you're inventorying body parts that means that she's still alive. So I had a pretty good idea before I talked to DA Casualty.

And then as soon as I had been informed, I'm an army officer, so I have an Army Knowledge Online account. I went up on AKO and I e-mailed her commander and said, sir, I've been informed, what can you tell me without compromising op sec (operations security) and that kind of thing. And her battalion commander immediately responded to me. And he had been to see her in Baghdad at the Cash Hospital (ph) and filled me in on some more details, a little more accurate details.

DOEBELE: Having been in, as you said, your father in the United Nations, it's interesting to look at the technology even for something as simple as e-mail and see how that has changed the lives of military people just in the last 15 years (INAUDIBLE). You might not have known that information for some time?

BOWLSBEY: I wouldn't have known accurate information. I wouldn't have been able to converse with her commander. So I would have been reliant on DA Casualty. And if I weren't an army officer, didn't have that AKO account.

DOEBELE: What is an AKO account?

BOWLSBEY: It's an e-mail account. It's secured minimally and I think he probably responded because he had known me, also. I think they shut down every one else's e-mail account except for the commander, the battalion commander, when she was hit. They didn't want the information to get out to the family by any other than official channels. They didn't want it to get to the news. And, you know, you find out on the news that your loved one's been hit. So it's just basically an e-mail account secured with a password.

DOEBELE: And does every soldier in Iraq have an e-mail account?

DUCKWORTH: Every soldier in the United States Army has access to an AKO account. Whether they use it or not is personal preference. But we use ours all of the time.

DOEBELE: So how long was it between the time that the you left Iraq and the time that you arrived here at Walter Reed?

DUCKWORTH: I was hit on November 12 in the afternoon in Iraq.

DOEBELE: Was it 2003?

DUCKWORTH: 2004.

DOEBELE: Four.

DUCKWORTH: And I was here November 14 in the evening.

BOWLSBEY: Sunday night (INAUDIBLE).

DUCKWORTH: So I was hit Friday afternoon – you know, I was hit there on Friday afternoon and Iraq is ahead of the States by, I think, nine hours, something like that. So less than three days and I was back here.

DOEBELE: What does the Army – well, even if you weren't in the Army, what would they do for a military spouse, who's spouse happens – if something like this has happened in terms of getting you two together?

BOWLSBEY: They put you on invitation and travel orders. And had I not been here, I was in the vicinity of the hospital for a wedding, but had I not been here, they would have flown me here from wherever I was. They brought her mom and me here. I believe they'll bring up to three family members to see to the immediate care. And there's a per diem that they pay the family members and they got us a room and that kind of thing. So we were able to stay right here, although we didn't use the room very much while she was in ICU. We were pretty much, we were right by her bedside. But they took care of us quite well.

DOEBELE: And how does that change over time as you go through your therapy?

BOWLSBEY: When most of the patients are released to outpatient status, and I think there's been kind of a sea change in the way people are treated. It used to be everyone stayed inpatient. And now, as soon as they can, they get you into outpatient status so you're living in – we live in something called the Fisher House. It's kind of a Ronald McDonald House. So she lives in a home type atmosphere. She has to negotiate the bathroom like a home bathroom. Negotiate the kitchen, cook and that kind of thing.

And as soon as they send you to outpatient status, typically, I think, the Army stops paying you per diem. But there's been so many groups of the American people that pay for our stay at Fisher House that it's free. So we have a place to say.

DOEBELE: Private organizations.

BOWLSBEY: Private organizations. Fisher House Foundations is a private organization that works in close conjunction with Walter Reed and other army hospitals and military hospitals, Bethesda and others. And they have just been there and really taking care of us.

DOEBELE: What kind of access did you have to your wife as she was in the first couple of days?

BOWLSBEY: Pretty much immediate access. When I showed up here, the plane landed, I believe, about 10 p.m., 2200 hours. And they prepped her. They took her to the ward, the ICU. And they cleaned her up a little bit. And within an hour they had me right there and really never forced me to leave.

DOEBELE: That would be true if you were in the – in your situation or if it was a civilian?

BOWLSBEY: Yes, ma'am. If it would have just been a family member.

DUCKWORTH: My mom was here.

BOWLSBEY: Yes. And then within a day or two, they flew in Mrs. Duckworth, Tammy's mom from Hawaii. So for the first couple of days we were here – I was here by myself. And after that, they had the entire family. So that would hold true for the civilian family members and the soldier also.

DOEBELE: Who visits here, besides your family members?

DUCKWORTH: Who visits me, you mean? It's been amazing. There's actually somebody here right now. Since my unit has gotten back from Iraq, they've only been back about three weeks. I've had a bunch of my friends and fellow soldiers travel here from Illinois just to come see me. And it's just been

the most amazing thing that they've taken the time to come say hello and see how I'm doing with their own arms.

DOEBELE: Are there politicians who come to see you?

DUCKWORTH: Oh sure. There are lots of politicians. There are lots of people with the USO. Then there are people who are private individuals who volunteer their time. Some of them are the spouses of famous people that sort of thing. They come and they really are concerned with the soldiers. The peer volunteers are incredible.

DOEBELE: What's that?

DUCKWORTH: A peer volunteer is a person who has gone through similar injuries, not necessarily exactly the same who are trained to come and visit this other soldiers who are hurt. So a lot of the peer volunteers are Korean and Vietnam War veterans who have – who are amputees also. And it's been – it was just incredible from, you know, when I first opened my eyes, they were all ready there standing next to my bed showing me that life goes on. Here's a gentlemen 76-years-old from the Korean War, lost both his legs below the knee from a landmine and he's living a normal life. He comes in here and he talks to us and challenges us.

BOWLSBEY: Walked in.

DUCKWORTH: Walked in here. Talked to us for a while before he revealed to us that he was an amputee and this whole time you couldn't tell. It was just the most amazing thing. And you think, well, if he can do it, and if he could do it with just wooden legs with the technology from the Korean War, then I certainly can do it with multi-thousand-dollar legs, the most advanced technology we can have.

DOEBELE: Have you guys ever talked about the possibility of something like this happening?

BOWLSBEY: We hadn't so much. Because I was a soldier when I met Tammy and I had made the decision that I could do and I could die, but that was a decision that I made when I was about 20 for myself and that was something I was willing to accept. And then, when she deployed without me, it was kind of like oh, wait a minute, I met a woman with similar values, there's a lot to like about that, fell in love with her, married her, and never realized fully, I guess, that she could deploy and I might stay here. We kind of were thinking the Cold War scenario, the balloon will go up and everybody is going. So we'll both be so busy that we won't have to worry about it because both of us will be deployed. There won't be time to worry and that kind of thing. So this was a little new.

DUCKWORTH: I think when we talk about it, it wasn't the idea that I would be injured. The idea was that I would die. So, I think, we were prepared for whoever was deployed, me, actually be killed. But, I don't think, we had every really considered that you could be seriously injured but still be alive and be back.

One of the things we always talk about and our friends know this is we both travel a lot with the military where we do things, and a lot of times you can't call home. So we always have the hey no news is good news. If you don't hear from me, it means I'm still alive and I'm OK. The army only calls you up and contacts you when something has gone wrong and that was true in this case. I don't think we ever talked about me surviving or either one of us surviving a battle. We were prepared for the other person being killed.

DOEBELE: Walk through a little bit about that between now and when you go home to Illinois, what do you have to do to prepare for this?

BOWLSBEY: Well, we have a group of friends in Illinois who are currently rebuilding our house. And they have – they basically told us you can give us the keys or we're breaking in and we're going to fix it?

So they've actually widened the hallways. Kind of worst case it thinking that she'll be in a wheelchair for a lot of the time. And, I think, that's not going to be the case. I think most of the time she'll be walking on her prosthetics. But it's nice to have things set up so if she wanted to be in the wheelchair, she could be.

So they've widened the hallways. They've – we've talked to her civilian job and they are – will be overjoyed to have her back. And it really – the injuries will not in any way interfere with her civilian job. So our main concern right now is to get to the medical boards. Tammy's indicated that she'd like to remain in and stay a soldier. So we have a series of medical boards that we'll have to go through. The first one will determine if she can stay in and we're preparing for that basically through a lot of physical therapy and that kind of thing and gathering paperwork.

And then after that, there will be – after she proves that she can – she still brings something to the table and she should be allowed to stay in. There will be a flight evaluation board and they'll decide if she can still be an army aviator.

By that point, we will have civilian licenses and she'll be flying in the civilian world, so it's a matter of "Hey, I'm flying." Now it's just a matter of you saying that I can fly for the Army again. So that's on to the next.

DOEBELE: Why do you want to stay?

DUCKWORTH: The explosion didn't change who I am. I want to continue to serve. It's just part of me and I've – it's been a privilege and an honor to serve in the guard. Not a lot of people get that opportunity. And so it really is a privilege to me. I have a bond with my fellow soldiers that it's very hard to explain. And it's just how I choose to serve. I think – I sincerely believe that we should all give something back to our communities. Not everybody has to become a soldier.

You know, you can volunteer at your church, or at the school or at your local hospital, but I feel very strongly that for everything that we have in this country, you should give a little something back of yourself. And I just choose to serve as being a soldier.

DOEBELE: What is your civilian job?

DUCKWORTH: I work for Rotary International, the Rotary Clubs. And it's a non-profit human services organization. The goal of Rotary Clubs around the world is to do community service and to improve the lives of the people in their local community. Their motto is service above self. Their big campaign right now is to eradicate polio globally by 2005. And this is their 100-year anniversary. So it's been wonderful to work for an organization to support individuals who's main goal for being a Rotarian is community service.

So I'm very lucky there.

DOEBELE: You know, we have been able to look at a prosthetic leg from below the knee. But we haven't had really a chance to look at one higher than that. Can you just give us an idea – do you know how it works? Did they teach you?

DUCKWORTH: Sure. Yes, they do. And it's actually funny because when I was still laying in bed and not even able to sit up and move my arms or legs, a lieutenant colonel from the Air Force who is an above the knee amputee back on flight status and flying active duty for the air force showed up to, again, peer visitor to talk to me and give me hope. And he walked in and he talked about flying. And then after he talked to me for a while he showed me that he actually was an amputee.

This is what's called a C-leg or a computer leg. And it actually has a computer chip in the knee that makes 50 calculations per second. And what it does, it performs an algorithm measuring the movement of the leg at various points such as the ankle or the knee or up higher. So you program into the leg parameters, like I

don't want the knee to bend more than a certain number of degrees. And it constantly does this 50 times a second so that it allows me to walk. And as I walk with this leg and I step back, I actually put pressure on the toe and by doing so I activate the computer chip and it swings the leg, it bends the leg and swings it forward, so that it creates a normal smooth walking motion so that I don't have to limp.

So with this leg, I should be able to walk and look perfectly normal and you would not be able to tell that I actually have an artificial leg on that side. It's basically a computer knee.

DOEBELE: How long have you had it?

DUCKWORTH: I've had it a little over a month now. And I walk in it every day with both legs. I've had progress from just standing up on a tail table that they strapped me to to learn to support my own body weight again, to walking on a set of parallel – between a set of parallel bars. To now I've been walking with a walker and so I can support my own body weight and balance myself and I can walk perfectly fine.

And the leg is amazing. The good thing about this C-leg is it takes different programs. So one of the things that the air force colonel showed me was that he actually has two programs in his leg a walking program and a flying program. He can actually activate the leg so that it – when he puts it in a flying program it will bend into a certain angle so that he can then use the leg to push the rudder pedals on an aircraft. So he's going to show me his computer program and I'll use something similar to fly a helicopter.

DOEBELE: And how long will it take for you to become accustomed to that?

DUCKWORTH: It doesn't take long at all. I mean it's almost an immediate thing. My left leg, for example, feels like a normal leg to me. Now, it just feels like my leg is number from the knee down. But I can walk with it and it feels perfectly great. And I actually prefer – I don't actually need to wear it all of the time, but I prefer to put it on because to me it just feels like my body is back to normal in that way that I have an appendage down there.

This leg is a little bit harder to get used to because it is – it does, as you can see, comes all the way up on my hip. This, again, is new technology. Because my leg is so short on the right side there was talk of actually amputating the rest of that bone and then having me wear what's called a bucket socket, where this piece is just like a bucket that straps on to the side and I would walk simply by throwing my hip. Very awkward and much more challenging in terms of wanting to run again or fly again. The prosthesis who built this for me was amazing. I tell everybody that one night in the middle of the night he gave me hope because when everybody said that that they were going to have to amputate my little limb, he came up in my room and at 10:00 at night, you know, promised me that he would try whatever he could to build me a socket that would work.

The difficulty is – it's almost as if I am trying to control a broom by holding on to the last two inches of the broom handle. And if you think of my leg as the broom and if you just try to think of just using your hand and the muscles in your hand on just the last two inches on the end and you're trying to walk with that, that's what the difficulty is I'm trying to use what muscles I have left and control this whole leg with just the much of the lever.

And he built this is – I'm the first one that he's built one of these for, this leg socket. I think he said he built one for his father, and then, I'm the first one that he's tried this on, this double layer system. He handcrafted and made it for me, specifically for me so that I could walk again.

DOEBELE: The two of you – how old are you Tammy?

DUCKWORTH: I'm 36.

DOEBELE: And how old are you?

BOWLSBEY: I'm 37.

DOEBELE: Big difference between 36 and 37 and some of the 20, 21, 22, 23-year-olds here at Walter Reed. Do you experience that difference in age?

DUCKWORTH: Not when we're working out. The difference in age, it's kind of interesting. It was pointed out to me by some of the healthcare providers, I've had some of the nurses and doctors tell me that they haven't had somebody my age with injuries as severe as mine who survived. And they have said that – or survived as well. And they have said that, you know, I must have been in outstanding shape when I was hit. I don't think I was in outstanding shape, but I had recently lost a lot of weight and I was pretty fit. I was fit as I had been in 10 years, so, I think, that really helped in terms of the difference in age.

When you're in the physical therapy room or in here, there's not a lot of difference between each other because you're all amputees. But I see them and they're 19-year-old guys and they say and do all of the silly things that you do when you're 19 and 20 and those that are married have younger children and the kids are there, and they're wheeling around in the wheelchair holding their babies in their arms. And it's just – it's nice. You see the American Soldier, they're still who they are. They're the young guys that you got used to seeing in Iraq and they're the same people here, just without their legs or arms.

DOEBELE: You went to the State of the Union?

DUCKWORTH: I did.

DOEBELE: How did you get to the State of the Union address?

DUCKWORTH: I was very fortunate to go as a guest of Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois. He invited all of the state of Illinois wounded soldiers that were here. He was very kind and his staff was just wonderful. They gave us a tour and found us a spot and even got Brian in so that he could sit next to me in case I felt bad or couldn't handle the whole experience.

BOWLSBEY: At that point, she was having a hard time sitting up for four or five hours straight. And given the traffic and that kind of thing it was a move it along night even though, I think, it was about five or six hours. So they wanted – Senator Durbin made sure that I was very close there. At first, they thought that I'd have to kind of watch the State of the Union from their offices, but he personally went down and made sure that I was in close proximity to her. So that was great.

DOEBELE: Are you guys angry at anybody, anything?

DUCKWORTH: No, nothing. I'm alive. Why would I be angry at anybody for that? I could be dead and I'm not. So I think this is great, you know. I mean I'd rather – you know, between losing my leg and keeping them I'd rather have them but they're gone now. I can't bring them back. So it's better to just move on.

DOEBELE: Thank you both.

BOWLSBEY: Everyone has been wonderful to us. There's nothing to be upset with. Thank you, ma'am.

DOEBELE: Thank you.

END