



## Marine Veteran Finds New Leash on Life



A US **Marine veteran** can sometimes struggle to adjust to normal life when he returns home from deployment. For **Carlos D. Aguirre** it's dogs that changed his life and given him purpose again ...as the owner of "**Wolf's Lair Professional k-9 Services**," that is. He has literally found a new leash on life.

But let's start at the beginning of his journey:

### The Marine Adventure Begins

In an interview on November 15, Carlos expressed that he wanted to be part of the Marines from a young age. As soon as he graduated from high school, he joined up. He did his recruit training at Parris Island in Beaufort, South Carolina. It was there that he learned problem solving, a skill he would need later in life.

Carlos served in the **United States Marine Corps Infantry** from 2003- 2009. He stated that he loved the Infantry, that the friends he gained in the Corps were "more than friends, they are a brotherhood." He also mentioned that "we all go in knowing the dangers, and the possibility of losing close friends." Knowing that doesn't make losing them any easier. As you will soon see.

One of his stations after **Parris Island** was **Japan**. He fondly remembered a time when he and his buddies climbed **Mt. Fuji**. They were all "tired" from the training, but took time to make the 4 hour trek up the mountain.

"It only took us 2 hours to come down because we were running down the slippery volcanic ash, rolling and sliding." He reflected that it was great fun, and a treat to be able to travel and experience different places. His adventure was far from over.

## Iraq

Carlos was the recipient of a **purple heart** for wounds received in Iraq. It stemmed from a Humvee "**cordon and search**" situation that drew enemy fire. Shrapnel from a bullet struck him in the shoulder – he says he felt lucky that it wasn't worse.

Marine Corps life wasn't all battles. He said that his barracks roommates were always playing jokes on one another – like switching the padlocks on their lockers, or dumping itching powder in their uniforms. They used humor and practical jokes to make the time pass, and it made their brotherhood stronger.

That Brotherhood is a part of Carlos' heart and soul. During a battle in Iraq, one of the Captains that helped "shape" his life, **Captain John J. McKenna**, laid down his life for one of his men, **Michel B. Glover**. Glover was wounded, and the Captain bolted out to pick him up, knowing full well that he could not make it. The loss of them both struck Carlos' heart. "I had survivor's guilt for a long time after that," Carlos remarked. "Here were two older men with families and they died. I was just a young guy with no one. I didn't understand."

Carlos transitioned to normal life in 2009. Now a **Marine veteran**, he said that he fell into alcohol, drinking to numb the memories. He thought back to the Marines and remembered the military dogs he encountered during his service.

"I wondered how they could get them to do that. And then I thought maybe I could do it too." Carlos then enrolled in a dog training course in St Louis at the Tom Rose School for Dog Trainers. In 2010, he was awarded his Master Trainer and Certified Decoy Titles.

Since then his skills and those of his wife Elizabeth (Elly) have grown exponentially. They are proud owners of a Belgian Malinois named "Beulah." The two of them together have skills and the heart for rescue groups, therapy dogs, search and rescue dogs, military/police K9 divisions, canines in AKC competitions, hunting dogs, Schutzhund, Mondioring, French Ring, the Protection Sports Association, and service dogs for individuals with disabilities.

He describes Elly as a "strong person" who helped him find a calling that has brought him new purpose in life. Wolf's Lair K9 has been in business for a year now.

Though Carlos lives with memories that are difficult, he has understanding now that he did not have before. "Why am I alive" is no longer a question he has to ask himself. He has a new "leash" on life.

