**FUNDRAISING RECAP**

**FOR**

**BRIAN YAROLEM**

“Life is either a daring adventure or it is nothing.” Those words were originally expressed by Helen Keller. Some of us demonstrate unimaginable courage and valor... because we have to... because were forced to... because we are inspired to test the limits of our human capabilities. We do it in memory of struggle and plight and we do it as a tribute to the power of brotherhood, unity, and mutual support. This year, we faced and conquered the mountain. We did it as a team, and through the incomparable support of each other, our family members, friends, supporters, and sponsors, we were able to live by, and honor the phrase, “All it takes is all you got.”

The mountain is there.... it exists to test our drive and challenge our skills. It baits us and encourages us to go beyond the limits we perceive for ourselves. This year, in early June, Mount Baker presented itself to us as our metaphor and our master. Standing at 10,782 feet, our work was clear. Fortunately, our team is strong, proud, inspired, and eager to press beyond limits to achieve our common goal, and no matter what, we were going to conquer that peak. The challenge was made that much more special... Todd Love, our comrade and brother, was with us. Todd, a triple amputee, was carried up the mountain by all of the participants on this mission. His courage and strength act as our guide and demonstrates to us that we are limited only by our considerations. He reminds us to look inside and know that “all we got” goes deeper than we might believe.

To the Force Reconnaissance Foundation and President Alan F. Sniadecki, thank you for the support and encouragement expressed in your faith in our group of Recon Marines. While we have faced life or death challenges in the past, this year’s mission has acted to bring awareness to the group and to inspire everyone to push beyond limits.

Our team consists of Damien Descant, Andrew Dyer, our guide, Jake Edmondson, Rope Team Leader, Dave Jarvis, Darren Korthuis, Todd Love, Sam Shin, Jimmy Stare, Kyle Thompson, and myself. (**Do you want a little humor? If so, you can say**)... an “A” team if ever there was one.... if only one of us had the time to go to cooking school.... there’s always next year! To all of the sponsors and individuals who supported the mission with generous and much appreciated donations, thank you! To all of our friends and followers, knowing you were watching and witnessing our progress gave us the courage to continue. Each step we took was with the greatest of intention to complete our mission because we gave our word... to **YOU**. We really felt the encouragement and energy that transcended space, altitude, and traditional limitations.

As we progressed up the Easton Glacier Trailhead, from pre-Base Camp to Base Camp and beyond, we worked as a unit.... we trained... honed our skills... in rope team movement, ice axe training, crevasse rescue, equipment management... and each step brought us closer to our intended goal... **SURVIVAL**!!! With unflagging determination, constant awareness, and the spirit of camaraderie, we were **READY**... or so we thought... but sometimes the mountain has other plans. We were eager to proceed but sensible enough to defer to the weather we faced. High winds, fog, sleet, and blowing snow acted to place us in our own world... literally... and while we had very limited visibility and developed symptoms to cause us to err on the side of caution, we did just that... and proceeded, aware, proactive, and united. By day five, our mission was accomplished. Todd Love... and all of us, Bravo Company 2nd Platoon... made it to the summit of Mount Baker. Mission accomplished.

This expedition was so much more than any of us had expected. It has taught everyone a lot about each other. Our level of trust, cohesion, and teamwork were intensified through learning to understand each team member’s capabilities. While this was an extremely difficult climb, we came together, once again as a unit, embracing adversity and harsh weather conditions in an austere environment. This mutual journey doesn’t end here. We will take those circumstances that originally brought us together, honor them, and use that strength and determination to focus our attention to next year’s challenge/reunion while cherishing these memories for years to come.

Ernest Hemingway said, “The world breaks everyone, and afterward, some are strong at the broken places.” Thank you all for allowing us the opportunity to push past limits and affirm the magnificence of human spirit.

Brian Yarolem