

## Thom Tran

Wounded Retired Combat Veteran and Stand-Up Comedian

A first-generation American immigrant turned American soldier, combat veteran, and professional stand-up comedian, Thom Tran turned a literal lifetime of war and tragedy into a successful career as a stand-up comic after a combat injury ended his career as a soldier.

In 1980, Thom's family escaped from Communist Vietnam and fled to the United States. Thom's father, a South Vietnamese Air Force pilot was a Prisoner of War (POW) in Vietnam after Saigon fell in 1976. The elder Tran escaped, and took his family of four, soon to be five, to a refugee camp in Thailand, and later to the United States.

Growing up a first-generation American, Thom grew up wanting to be Eddie Van Halen, but instead Thom enlisted in the United States Army at 18 years old before he even finished high school. After joining the Army, Thom spent his entire career as a Communications Sergeant as well as a Civil Affairs Sergeant within the United States Army's Special Operations Community. In 2003, Thom deployed with his unit to Iraq during the first rotation of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Four days after crossing the border into Iraq on April 3, 2013, Thom was wounded during a firefight when a sniper's bullet found its way to the back of his skull. He bandaged himself up, continued the mission, and finished his 12-month tour in Iraq. Shortly before his unit redeployed to the United States, his friend and fellow soldier, SPC Charles E. Bush, was killed in by Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in Balas, Iraq in December 2003. And that is when Thom's life took a turn for the worse.

After redeploying to the United States, Thom was medically released from the Army in 2005, but he continued to fight the war even after he returned to America. Following a near heart attack at the age of 26, Thom turned to stand-up comedy as the only real release after a life of war that started in Vietnam and continued to Iraq. After touring the United States as a road comic, Thom moved to Los Angeles in 2008 and two years later created, the GIs of Comedy Tour, a comedic Troupe of Troops that has toured all over the United States and to 18 different countries performing for both military and civilian audiences, bringing the healing power of laughter to those who need it the most. The group has raised nearly \$20,000 for the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, a charity that raises college scholarship funds for the children of fallen US Special Operations personnel.

Thom has also found a way to use his experiences as a soldier in Hollywood, working as a military consultant and writer on Hollywood films and television projects to help make the portrayal of the military more accurate and real. He also starred in a series of training videos produced for the US Air Force. When he's not touring, Thom also works as a producer and actor appearing on *CSI: NY*, *Deadliest Warrior*, and *Coming Home*. He recently launched a new podcast series called, "Battle Scars," where he interviews veterans from the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

The relief and therapy that Thom found in comedy is what he brings to those still in the combat zone. Even as a civilian, he continues to help our servicemen and women, performing at benefits to raise money for the Bob Hope USO at LAX which provides comforts for our troops deploying overseas, and twice was named the USO's funniest service member. In 2008, Thom even traveled to Iraq to perform for our troops, playing over two dozen bases and combat outposts throughout Iraq.