So, this is Somalia, Afghanistan, this is a peacekeeping medal, this is for the tour in Rwanda, this is for my tour in Bosnia in 2000, and this is an Article 5, it's was the tour from the ship tour - the NATO tour in 2007, and this is my Canadian decoration it's a for being a good boy for 12 years I guess you'd say.

My name is William Frederick John Wilson I go by Bill. I was born in Sarnia, Ontario then moved here, to Southern Ontario, Essex County. I joined the military in 1988.

When I got to the recruiting center I said I wanted to wear blue and I wanted to help people. As a medic you can go almost anywhere in the Canadian Armed Forces, so I was able to serve on an Air Force Base, and in a clinic, in a hospital, on a ward, as well as you know, go to the field, be with the infantry.

There's a lot of media reports around what was happening in Somalia, people were dying, people were starving. There wasn't much of a government, more of a tribal government. They had what they called, like I guess it would be like little militias all over the country who were causing havoc. The Americans got involved and asked if we would get involved, and so they sent the Canadian Airborne Regiment which I was augmented to over there.

I guess the mandate was we were supposed to help get food out to the Somalis as best as we could. I wasn't really involved in that much, that aspect. My main role was in the hospital and there were times when I patrolled with the Airborne Regiment when they required a medic, if the company medic was not available, if he was on R and R then I would go out with the patrol. Obviously, the camp needed to be guarded and so we spent a lot of times off-duty, well on-duty, sitting in guard towers or guarding ammo

dumps and you know. But I guess at the end of the day we are all soldiers, we all went through basic training before we became medics and or other trades. So, you know the rule of thumb was you just roll up your brassard, your Red Cross, and you just do what needs to be done.

My involvement in the Somalia Affair was I was one of the medics along with Private François Cameron we were both on duty. Two individuals brought in the beaten body of Shidane Arone, who was beaten by Master Corporal Clayton Matchee and Corporal - I think he was a Private at the time - Kyle Brown. It was clear after a while, well we had a dead body and our hands, dropped off by two Canadians, and you know our first impression, I'm trying to figure this whole thing out because they provided no information they just dropped a body on us. I was there after Clayton Matchee had attempted suicide and I cared for him with Dr. Brown who was one of

our anesthetists until he could be transported back to Canada.

There are a lot of things that came out of that, a lot of media reports, a lot of people were sending information back home of what was happening. They sent some pathologists over to examine some other incidents that had happened that they were, they weren't sure, you know, exactly the cause of death. So, you know, friends of mine had to dig up some corpses. It was very tense; the last part of the deployment was very tense. The plan originally, was that we were going to spend nine months in

Somalia, but I think that because of all that that was happening the mission was cut short. Nobody really talked about Somalia. After all the media reports and what had happened there with you know Shidane Arone and Matchee and the beating and leadership issues no one no one really talked about it. A few of us that were there ended up going back a year and a half later to a Rwanda. So, I think we were more than grateful to be going back on to another tour where, hopefully, it wasn't going to be another problem tour I guess.

PTSD started to you know rear its head in the military at that time and I don't think it was a thing anybody really wanted to talk to. You talk to your close friends that when you're on deployment about stuff like that and I don't think a lot of people honestly didn't know that they had PTSD back then. I think they just felt like I went on a deployment where they expected to change, and they did change. But I think a lot of

people didn't understand what was happening to them. And I don't know if the military was prepared to help deal with those kinds of things.

On the 6th of April 1994, the President's [of Rwanda] plane was shot down along with the President of Burundi along with other members of the government and that was pretty much the start of the [Rwandan] genocide. That lasted 100 days.

I wasn't on General [Roméo] Dallaire's tour, I was there after that. I was there assisting, I guess, the rebuild. I went with the Signals Regiment out of Kingston. Their main role was to get the communications going in the country as well as we brought air-traffic controllers with us to get the airport going. I was attached to the Unit Medical Station, as I was kind of in Somalia, and our job was to set up and medically support the unit that I was with as well as UN Headquarters staff. We were stationed out of the stadium, we had a Unit Medical Station there. I had heard when I got on the ground that there were a lot of dead bodies in the stadium and they had done a lot of cleanup. I know that that was where General Dallaire had had his headquarters and he had tried to house from what I read after the fact 12,000 Tutsis in there.

We spent a lot of time going out, around the country, and we went to a lot of refugee camps. We did some work with the Australians. I went on an exchange for a week with the Australians. I wanted to get a different experience, see what they were seeing that they were right in the center of Kigali and we were more on the outskirts. There was a couple [of people], they asked if I wanted to be involved in a trauma team. So, it's about five or six members who stay in the hospital after hours and respond to any trauma that comes in. The first one was, we were sitting down to eat supper, about five or six o'clock. We heard a gunshot and then, not maybe 15 minutes later, they brought in a soldier from the Rwandan, I think it's Patriotic Army, to us. He had a gunshot wound in his chest, so we responded to him in our little trauma bay. Interestingly, we had IVs started, he had some oxygen. We went to the OR [operating room] right from there. We went right down to the OR and I went; the whole team went into the OR and they started to put the patient under. They had the chest opened up to see if they could find the bullet. There was, unfortunately, the power went out, so now there's a guy on the table you could see the battery-operated machines, the life support stuff, and all of a sudden then everyone's yelling "Torch! Torch! Torch!". All of a sudden you see all these flashlights come out on the body. So, the surgeon is continuing to work and I'm still on the side of this patient and in the dark for about ten minutes now. The surgeon is still trying to find the path of this bullet and trying to get out and repair anything that going on in there. And then when the power came on and unfortunately that gentleman died two weeks later. He died of an infection.

The immunization was an interesting task. It was an Australian, British, and Canadian task where we were sent to go into different refugee camps and there was a report of a meningitis outbreak and so our task was to immunize kids between the ages of 6 months and 15 years. We would get up at 5:00 and we'd start drawing up all our needles, getting ready, and then we once we had several hundred we would move into the camps. You know, pretty rough terrain and then half of us would continue to draw up needles while the other half would give the needles. And for the babies, sometimes there wasn't enough fat on their arms, so we had to use their thighs and obviously the bigger kids we can give them in their arms. But it was crying, crying, crying. But after that we were told we did over twenty thousand immunizations in a two-week period, so it was one of those feel-good experiences I guess. And you know, getting together with medics from different countries is always an interesting experience.

Towards the end of the deployment when we were relocating the people back to, from the camps to their homes. A couple days previous to when we were there the Indians from India they had a contingent there and they were doing the same things that we were doing. However, a couple days previous to when we were out, I guess, the Hutus were-- the Tutsis were going into the camps looking for Hutus involved in the genocide. And I guess we were told to be on the lookout because they were they were taking people off of the, they grabbed a couple guys off the back of a truck and pulled him off and shot him right there. We were not we were told you know as far as our rules of engagement we were not to get involved with things like that. And then I had to you know go home and... My first son was born a month after I

got home from Somalia and my second son was born while I was in Rwanda I got home a week after his birth. So, you have to kind of put the tour on the back burner - the memory of the tour on the back burner then on the back then and have to be a parent.

During 9/11, at the time, I was posted to 1 Combat Engineering Regiment in Edmonton. I was the senior medic, I was a Sergeant at the time in charge of the Unit Medical Section [UMS]. I remember I was I walked out of the UMS, I headed towards the duty station I was wondering why everyone was corralled around the TV watching the events that unfolded. My Major Dan Vouriot, who was at that time was the OC [Officer Commanding] of Med Company and 1 Field Ambulance and was deploying. He called me and said, "I need you to be in Afghanistan and I need you there in ten days, and we don't know if it's going to be for six or nine months and can you, can you go?" I couldn't turn him down.

The main reason we were there was to kill or destroy Taliban or al-Qaeda. The night of April 17th we were doing a night fire exercise. It took us about 45 minutes to drive 14 kilometers to where the - just because of the state of the roads - to get the company out to Tarnak Farms, which used to be an old al-Qaeda training area that we were now using to do some of our training. I was sitting in the front of the ambulance next to the OC Signalman Corporal Krahn, my two junior medics were behind the ambulance just kind of standing there. And then all sudden there was just this loud almost like a loud "whoosh" and I jumped out of the front of the ambulance and it was big, believe it or not, it's still one o'clock in the morning, but there is this, the biggest black cloud I'd ever seen and understanding that something bad has happened. I guess in that instant I left my weapon, I left my flak vest and I was sitting in the front of the ambulance and I grabbed my med bag. And Vic Speirs, one of my junior medics, I said, “Let's go" and so Vic led the way. We ran, unfortunately, there were bodies that we were running past that we didn't see. We didn't see Lorne Ford when we ran past him, well I didn't anyways, and Vic didn't. The realization, as a Sergeant now, that I had other responsibilities besides just running in and treating the wounded, I had to more or less triage what was happening and so I had to, I guess, confirm who was dead and who wasn't dead, and who we could save and who we couldn't save. But the three of us we had to try to save as many as we could. So, I guess the first person I came across was Sergeant Marc Léger and he had some unfortunately some mortal wounds. He had no vital signs and I could tell he was dead right off. Vic ran past me and he got to René Paquette and he started to work on him. He was on the ground, he had his injuries: he had a pulmonary contusion and his eardrums had been blown out from the wound. I think he might have had some burns, I'm not too sure. From there, I saw Master Corporal Hollister. He had some burns on him and I tried to triage him. Meanwhile I'm looking around and...

There was another casualty that was on the ground and he was… basically, a lot of his insides were not on his inside anymore and I can see his skull and he was he was definitely gone. That was Private [Nathan Lloyd] Smith. And then I got to Ainsworth Dyer and he was, he had lost a part of his leg and he had been, unfortunately, a big part of his head was gone – he was decapitated. He took a couple unfortunately deep breaths and we out something on the wounds on his head and that was pretty much… he was pretty much gone. During all this, I looked behind me and Jean finally had brought the ambulance up to the scene and he was on the ground and he was working on Lorne Ford, who had a big wound in the back of his knee and there was blood running out. We'd put as many dressings as we could. I had my flashlight I looked up towards Lorne's face and noticed that there was some blood coming from one of his eye sockets and he would eventually lose one of his eyes. I had a hard time getting the bleeding to stop so we, Jean asked about a tourniquet and I said, "Go ahead." So, he put the tourniquet on the leg to stop the bleeding and I could hear Lorne screaming, in pain. Unfortunately, you know, when you look back, hindsight, you know if we had had blankets I would have just covered up the dead guys because then we're getting calls to come look at somebody when we had already triaged them. We knew that they were already dead.

All told we had four dead and we had eight wounded guys. First because it was a wadi that we ran down so, which is a big ditch, and the bomb landed on the side and basically had kind of blown this way. Unfortunately, Private [Richard] Green took the

brunt of the bomb blast and all we found of him was basically his pelvic bone. That's the only thing we found of him. And then unfortunately, as young medics, we do get some training and preparing bodies after death earlier on in our careers. So, now we have the horrible job of putting the bodies in body bags and then turning the crosses in,

because it's no longer being used as an ambulance, and then we loaded up the bodies into the ambulance and we drove back to base.

The two, my two bosses, my two physician bosses, Dan Vouriot, Major Dan Vouriot and Captain Roger King are waiting for me when I get back. And lucky me, I get the job of opening the body bags back up and identifying the dead.

I'm sure there were guys that were ready to go home at that time. The CO [commanding officer] had come out and given a big speech and said this is not what stops us from doing our job and this is a part of this war. And so, three days later we got ready to launch on our next mission to kind of just take our minds off [of it] and get our heads back in the game.

Tora Bora was a mission that we were going to go to the - it was on the border of Afghanistan and Pakistan. There were rumors that there were some caves that the Taliban and al-Qaeda were working out of. We had heard that the Americans had done some carpet bombing where they just put a whole bunch of bombs in the area. So, our job there was to go into these caves and find these caves and to destroy them and destroy any Taliban or al-Qaeda. We did find 16 to 18 bunkers that they were able to fight from. So, we blew all those up. As well, there had been some deaths, some Taliban deaths there. We brought some I guess you call them… they were American investigators, non-military guys who were looking for the body of Osama bin Laden. During that trip we had dug up from what I found out later we dug up somewhere between 20 and 25 bodies and they had taken hair samples or fingers for fingerprinting. So that was some of the ghastly stuff that we were involved in.

A lot of people didn't like it a lot of people didn't see the see the means for it but I clearly saw that it was needed so we left for Guam and we spent five days in Guam. We first flew to Diego Garcia. Handed over our weapons, handed over our flak vests. You almost feel like something's been lifted. They had some integration sessions about integrating with your family back home and you know. So, it was a nice it was a nice to get out of theater and before you get home to kind of just relax and not think about the deployment and get prepared to go home and get prepared to be back in Canada to be you know back, you know, back with your family and out of operational mindset.

We landed - it was amazing – actually, we landed in Edmonton we got on buses there were people that were lining the streets when we got home with signs and yellow ribbons it was amazing I was just yeah, I was amazed.

This is the three of us in Afghanistan and Jean was the best man at my wedding I was the best man at Vic's first wedding. Jean was the best man at Vic's second wedding.