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Guest Blog: Angela Madsen



Living Life Large and chasing our dreams can take on many different forms. For some, it is accomplishing an epic feat of physical endurance, and for others it is living a life full of joy and meaning despite a string of tragic events. For some, it is both. Meet **Angela Madsen**, our guest blogger this week. Angela has many titles;

- Marine
- Athlete
- Paraplegic
- Cancer Survivor
- Teacher
- Coach
- Olympian

After sustaining a serious back injury years earlier, she went into the hospital for what was supposed to be a routine 4 hour surgery to reduce her symptoms and protect her against paralysis. Instead her life changed forever. The surgery was a complete failure and 11 hours later, she was left paralyzed. At one point a physician told her "My physical condition was a waste of human life." Most people would give up at that point. And though she was angry, depressed and in pain, she refused to give in. Her story teaches us that no matter the challenges we face, the spirit lives in us all to persevere and never give up. Today she lives life to the fullest, and as she puts it, "**I have many more blessings now to count than I will ever suffer losses.**" I encourage you to [learn more about Angela's story](#) and the good work she is doing to [honor and raise awareness for Military and Veteran servicemen and servicewomen](#).

-Diana



It was second night of the "World's Toughest Rowing Race" and we had over 2,550 nautical miles of Atlantic Ocean left to row. I was surrounded by miles of ink-black ocean, engulfed by pitch-black darkness. The winds increased and the sea exploded, sending wave after wave, invisible in the darkness, crashing down upon me. Being that low to the water with the waves thundering over the boat, there is always a risk of being knocked overboard or even of the whole boat capsizing. I wore my life jacket with the built-in harness, which was attached to the safety cable that ran the length of the boat. Nearing exhaustion after having rowed all day and half way through the night, I knew I was going to have to stop rowing and rest. But with no one being on the oar, the risk of capsizing in the unpredictable waves increases.

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The conditions were so bad and I was so cold that I decided to put on my one-piece survival suit. Sitting on my rowing seat I struggled as the boat was violently tossed around. I managed to get both legs in and then it became necessary to remove my lifeline leaving myself unsecured. Immediately, I was struck by a big wave and was knocked up to and over the bow of the boat. The strap on my survival suit got hooked on the spare oar stanchion long enough for me to get a hand hold on the

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only half-way on. This was my worst night of the trip but certainly not the worst night of my life. My life did not slowly flash before my eyes. Thinking about all that had transpired in my life leading up to this challenge was all I could do while huddled up on the bow of the boat not knowing if I would see another sunrise. From my adventure memoir Rowing Against The Wind.



I completed my row across the Atlantic with my french rowing partner, Franck Festor who spoke no English and me not understanding a word of French.



It took **66 days 23 hours and 13 minutes**. From there I continued participating on the National Adaptive rowing team and found myself rowing in the 2008 Paralympic games where my boat missed the medal round by 7 hundredths of a second. BTW I am a paraplegic, a very accomplished one at that. In 2009 I was asked to Skipper a crew of 8 rowing across the Indian ocean. I find it amazing that I am seen for my abilities and my disability is not even a factor when these young men want to be the fastest to row across an ocean and set world records for speed and distance. In 58 days I became the first woman to row across the Indian Ocean in 2009. In 2010 a crew of women asked me to make a non stop circumnavigation of Great Britain. This row took 51 days and earned me the nickname **Kraken**. Every time the crew needed more power, could not get the anchor up or were in some other dangerous situation they would request me by saying release the Kraken.



I became a rowing sea beast that my crew counted on. The next opportunity and accomplishment would take me back across the Atlantic as skipper of a crew of 16 in the worlds first ocean rowing catamaran. I have racked up more than **230 days at sea** and **6 Guinness world records** for rowing across oceans. I took 2012 off rowing to participate at the 2012 Paralympic games where I won a **Bronze Medal for Shot put** and now I am returning to ocean rowing to complete my first ocean rowing solo crossing of the Mid Pacific Ocean...2,300 miles from Santa Cruz to Waikiki.



I begin on June 8 2013, [World Oceans Day](#). There is no support boat and all food and supplies have to be carried on my little solar powered row boat. I will have a satellite transponder beacon so people can follow online and I will be blogging and podcasting. My Website with more biographical information as well as pictures and video is [RowOfLife.com](#) and my dedicated Face book page for the row is [Military & Veteran Tribute Row](#)

 ~ **Angela Madsen**

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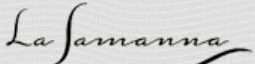
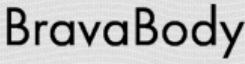
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