

SGT. SLAUGHTER

Inducted by Davey O'Hannon

Listen up, maggots! The Sarge was once beautiful, and that attracted enemy fire. In 1974, "Beautiful" Bobby Remus was preening around a ring in Vancouver, British Columbia, when he heard fans laughing. "I looked behind me and there was Bob Ramstead behind me blowing me kisses," Remus said. That night, Slaughter told his wife that "Beautiful" Bobby was getting a dishonorable discharge. He cut his hair, returned it to its normal dark brown, and wrestled as "Bruiser" Bob Remus, one step in the transformation to the jut-jawed, gravel-voiced Marine Sgt. Slaughter, the first celebrity to become a G.I. Joe doll.

In 1984, after Remus flipped from a decade as a heel to an American hero, Hasbro inked him as part of its G.I. Joe product line. Remus voiced his own character in the animated G.I. Joe TV series, had his own action figures, and worked as a spokesman for Hasbro.

As befits a future soldier, Remus got hooked on wrestling through clandestine ops. Born in August 1948 in Meeker County, Minnesota, and raised west of Minneapolis, Remus was four or five years old, sleeping on a pullout couch, when he heard what sounded like people being killed in an adjacent room. "Here was my father and bunch of his friends and my uncles yelling at the TV screen, watching professional wrestling," he said. "I started to fake like I was sleeping on Saturdays and I'd crawl out there and watch the show without them even knowing it."

After he graduated from high school, served in the Marines, and joined his dad's roofing company, Remus trained with Verne Gagne. In December 1973, Remus debuted and his early days were spent as "Beautiful" and "Bruiser" in the Pacific Northwest and the AWA. The change in name and rank came from watching *The DI*, a 1957 movie starring Jack Webb about a Parris Island, South Carolina, drill instructor. After time in Central States as Bob Slaughter, he returned to Minneapolis as the masked Super Destroyer Mark II. Starting in 1980, he became one of the WWF's top meanies, offering \$5,000 to anyone who could break his cobra clutch. His April 1981 alley fight with Pat Patterson at Madison Square Garden remains the standard for early hardcore matches.

In the Mid-Atlantic in 1981, Slaughter cracked the whip on a pair of underling privates, Don Kernodle and Boris Zhukov (Jim Nelson). He got a Cadillac and covered it in camouflage. With Kernodle, Slaughter had a red-hot tag team feud with Ricky Steamboat and Jay Youngblood. Slaughter returned to the WWE in 1983, and feuded with the Iron Sheik as a hero. It culminated in a boot camp match in Madison Square Garden, and fans lapped it up when Slaughter led the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance. “I drive around in a camouflage car and the fans used to tear it up because they hated me,” he said at the time. “Now they tear it up for souvenirs.” By December, though, he was out of the federation and back in the AWA after fighting with Vincent K. McMahon about licensing and endorsement rights.

His return to the WWE in 1990 culminated in controversy, when Slaughter allied himself with Iraq at the time of the Desert Storm as the buildup to an exploitative “Superstars and Stripes Forever” main event against Hulk Hogan at WrestleMania VII.

In recent years, Sarge has been an ambassador for WWE, attending charity events and representing the company in public.

— Steven Johnson