

# Sacrifice Is Not Faceless

☒ Newspaper hold. Check. Stop mail delivery. Check. Wrap last minute gifts. Check. Start packing. Check.

One thing not on the “to do” list is “go on Facebook.”

It's not necessary to add that to my list because I don't need to be reminded that Jeremy will be home in just a few hours. SSG Jeremy Davidson is married to my Goddaughter, Jeannine Davidson, and she and her two children are now patiently awaiting his return from Afghanistan for some r & r. For the past seven months, because of FB, I've had the opportunity to be a part of their lives on a very close and personal level.

Over the years, I've tried to honor our brave servicemen and women who keep me and my family and friends safe. I've prayed for, respected and have been proud of their achievements, but not since the Vietnam War have I personally known anyone serving in the military. The military has often been a faceless entity but not anymore. It now bears the face of this beautiful family.

Jeannine joined the Army after 9/11 and bravely served in Iraq. Upon her return, she met and married Jeremy who has already served three tours in Iraq and is now on his current tour in Afghanistan. Because of FB, I've had the special opportunity to be a part of their every day lives and I can't even imagine the bravery, strength, and endurance they each must have to carry on their lives thousands of miles away from each other.

Entries leading up to Jeremy's deployment in July reflected sadness but resoluteness. Pictures posted showed family trips to visit grandparents. When it was time to leave, I saw pictures of a proud father in uniform cuddling with his children before getting on a plane which would take him to a Godforsaken land to fight an enemy hell-bent on destroying our

way of life. I read updates about his arrival in Afghanistan but never knew exactly where he was because of security concerns.

Back home, I read about Jeannine's daily life, getting the children up in the morning, getting her hair cut, going to the gym, taking the children to their activities, making dinners, and a thousand other things every Mom does for her children but whose husband is thousands of miles away for over six months. Never once did she complain nor did she express any fear although, I'm sure, in the middle of the night, in those darkest hours alone, she no doubt said an extra prayer for her husband to remain safe.

I read heartwarming messages from parents, relatives and friends, always sending their prayers and good thoughts and lots of "Likes." I don't have children but would've been very proud if a son or daughter of mine chose to serve in the military, but I also can't imagine the day-to-day angst a parent must feel knowing their child is constantly in harm's way.

Shared stories amongst Army wives whose husbands were either already there or leaving soon went back and forth across the pages of FB. The support these wives give to each other is remarkable.

I saw photos posted by Jeremy and his buddies of their life in Afghanistan. Each and every one of us would've demanded and expected better living conditions in America's campgrounds. Yet, under these deplorable conditions, never once did I read a comment from Jeremy or any of his guys amounting to a moan or groan. Their discipline and determination are beyond exceptional.

The best entries were always when Jeannine received a call from Jeremy in the middle of the night. Even if awakened, she was always thrilled to see him on Skype and her excitement

could be heard through the internet. It was always very precious when their children were awake when he called and they could see and talk with their Daddy.

I read the missives between husband and wife, shared with us all on FB, and the deep love and respect each has for one another is clearly apparent. Jeannine, having been in Iraq herself, knows the dangers Jeremy faces on a day-to-day basis and it's obvious she provides him with the assurance she's taking care of the home front while he's doing his job in Afghanistan.

Messages from other Army buddies letting Jeremy know they're on their way to "'stan" must strengthen the brotherhood amongst these guys. Their good-natured humor has to lighten the heavy psychological loads each is carrying.

We never knew exactly where Jeremy was stationed but we knew that he was away from his base for several days at a time because when he returned he'd always enjoy a long shower and relished his much-needed sleep.

We knew he'd be back in December for r & r but the real countdown began a few days ago. We knew Jeremy left wherever he was for Kandahar. Afterwards, he flew to Kuwait and he posted that, unlike on previous tours, he was processed very quickly. It was on to Shannon, Ireland, and we were happy to learn he slept very well on the plane. He's now in Dallas waiting for a flight home but, because everything's fully booked, he may not get back until tonight but he's happy to be on American soil.

I'm sure this story is replicated thousands of times for every military family. But over the past seven months, I've experienced something truly special. For me, our military men and women in faraway places and their families here at home have become very real to me thanks to Jeremy and Jeannine.

Jeremy is fortunate to be coming home to spend Christmas with

his lovely wife and their two beautiful children. And Jeannine, I know, can't wait to put her arms around her husband and enjoy some tv football games, family activities and quiet time with him. This year, they're the lucky ones.

But, sometimes, it's easy to forget their sacrifice. We easily take for granted the blessings we have in this country and often forget the sacrifice our men and women in uniform, as well as their families, make to preserve our way of life.

So, while I'm surrounded by my loved ones this Christmas and enjoying the warmth and security they provide, I will hardly forget the thousands of men and women, who were not drafted but voluntarily chose to be part of the military, who won't be given leave to come home this Christmas. To them, I send my deepest gratitude for protecting me and my family and friends here at home. I wish them all a very blessed Christmas and a safe New Year. Godspeed.

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