

DRAGON PULSE



What are you most thankful for?



"I'm thankful for my wife and everything she does to support me."

—Sgt. Shane Koehler, Company A, 407th Brigade Support Battalion



"My health, family and God's love."

—Virginia Dawson, family member



"That I'm still living."

—Natalie Trumbo, Fort Bragg Animal Control



"I'm thankful that my unit arrived back from Iraq safely, and that I'm here with my family."

—Sgt. Michael McClain, 186th Quarter Master Company

Show support for troops — wear **RED** on Fridays

by Tom McCollum
XVIII Abn. Corps PAO

We received a letter via e-mail about a campaign to get citizens to wear red on Fridays out of respect for our service members. Looking closely at it makes me believe this encounter did not happen.

I know of no Marine who would say he is escorting a fellow "Soldier" home. Marines are Marines, not Soldiers, and they will be the first to correct you if you call one a Soldier. But then again that's not the point. The point is showing respect for our service members. If wearing a red shirt or tie, of which I own neither, on Fridays can show the Soldiers and Airmen I respect what they are doing, then OK, I'll do it.

Better yet though, why not thank them when you see a service member somewhere. Just thank them and maybe even shake their hand for what they are doing. It doesn't take much, but it means a lot. Being on a post with 45 thousand heroes does not mean you have to shake each one's hand. Do it randomly.

Eventually, all of our Soldiers will be thanked many times over. And don't do it once or twice, or for a week or two. Always do it, especially while they continue to deploy.

The following is the actual letter we received.

Last week, while traveling to Chicago on business, I noticed a Marine sergeant traveling with a folded flag, but did not put two and two together. After we boarded our flight, I turned to the sergeant, who'd been invited to sit in first class (across from me), and inquired if he was heading home.

No, he responded.

Heading out I asked?

No. I'm escorting a fellow Soldier home.

Going to pick him up?

No. He is with me right now. He was killed in Iraq. I'm taking him home to his family.

The realization of what he had been asked to do hit me like a punch to the gut. He told me that it was an honor

for him. although he didn't know the Soldier. He had delivered the news of his passing to the Soldier's family, and felt as if he knew them after many conversations in so few days. I turned back to him, extended my hand, and said, Thank you. Thank you for doing what you do so my family and I can do what we do.

Upon landing in Chicago the pilot stopped short of the gate and made the following announcement over the intercom.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to note that we have had the honor of having Sergeant Steeley of the United States Marine Corps join us on this flight. He is escorting a fallen comrade back home to his family. I ask that you please remain in your seats when we open the forward door to allow Sergeant Steeley to deplane and

receive his fellow Soldier. We will then turn off the seat belt sign."

Without a sound, all went as requested. I noticed the sergeant saluting the casket as it was brought off the plane, and his action made me realize that I am proud to be an American.

So here's a public "Thank you" to our military men and women for what you do so we can live the way we do.

Red Fridays.

Very soon, you will see a great many people wearing red every Friday. The reason? Americans who support our troops use to be called the "silent majority." We are no longer silent, and are voicing our love for God, country and home in record breaking numbers. We are not organized, boisterous or overbearing.

Many Americans, like you, me and all our friends, simply want to recognize that the vast majority of America supports our troops. Our idea of showing solidarity and support for our troops with dignity and respect

starts this Friday — and continues each and every Friday until the troops all come home, sending a deafening message that every red-blooded American who supports our men and women afar, will wear something red.

By word of mouth, press, TV — let's make the United States on every Friday a sea of red, much like a homecoming football game in the bleachers.

If every one of us who loves this country will share this with acquaintances, coworkers, friends, and family, it will not be long before the USA is covered in red and it will let our troops know that the once "silent" majority is on their side more than ever.

The first thing a Soldier says when asked, "What can we do to make things better for you?" is ... "We need your support and your prayers." Let's get the word out and lead with class and dignity, by example, and wear something red every Friday.

(Editor's note: This article was submitted to the Paraglide anonymously.)

The Army comes through, just when you need it most

by Michelle Cuthrell
Army News Service

"Hurry up and wait" is just one of those realities in the military — and one I usually confront with a tap of my toe and frustration on my face.

But a recent Wednesday night was a totally different story.

For the first time in my life as a military spouse, I stood in a line on a military base excited, smiling and completely content to wait on my feet for an hour and 15 minutes while the line crept slowly forward to the front of Murray Hall. I would even call the experience pleasant, if line-standing can be classified as such.

Hey, I'll sing a song backwards while standing on my head and writing love notes to the Army if it means that at the end of that line are tickets for my son and me to fly to

Anchorage for a weekend — For free.

For all the complaining I occasionally do about the military ("the Army stole my husband," "I hate deployment" and "Matt brought a third party into our marriage and I'm telling!" have all been household phrases in my home at one time or another), the commanders, rear detachment and base organizations at Fort Wainwright sure have reached out to Stryker families this year - and not just in a we'll-do-the-least-we-can-and-scrape-by-at-bare-minimum kind of way.

They've applied for grants that have given each family eight hours of free respite childcare each week, plus five hours of free care every Tuesday and Thursday night. They've set up a Family Assistance Center with staffed personnel nearly any time of day, and brought in teams of counselors (family life consultants) to consult with anyone at any time.

They've set up free bowling nights for Stryker families, set up free humor and motivation-inspiring events for spouses. They've even turned the Last Frontier Club into a family-friendly place where burnt-out single parents can bring their kids to play laser tag and crawl through playland tubes when they just can't take another round of who-can-beat-Mommy-the-hardest-with-his-He-Man-just-like-Daddy's-sword any more.

Some people tell me that that's the least the Army can do for keeping our spouses overseas for an additional four months, or for deploying them overseas at all. But my husband signed up to serve, and he considers his job an honor, and that means that everything the Army does for us beyond providing a paycheck, some health care and a form of communication is just icing on the cake.

The Army does not owe it to me to provide free childcare nearly any day of the week.

They do not owe it to me to send their rear detachment team out to hang up my Christmas lights because my husband isn't here to do it for me.

And they certainly do not owe it to me to arrange an incredible, all-expenses-paid trip to Anchorage for a weekend of shopping and fun with a plane ride down and a train ride back to cheer me up in the middle of an extension.

But the team at Fort Wainwright does it anyway — Because they want to. Because they choose to. Because that's a gift they can give us during a stressful time for our families. It's just that, in the middle of the heart-break and chaos, I haven't always been able to view it as one.

I'm done "surviving" the Army. Today, I am going to start appreciating not only the roof the Army puts over my head, but the hard work and sacrifices.



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